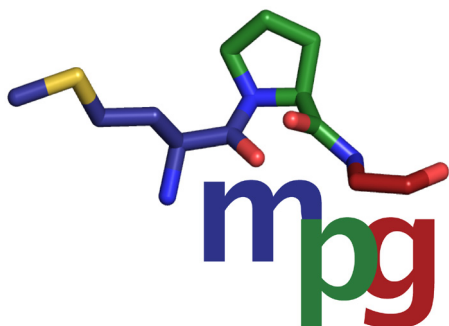


# Melbourne Protein Group: an ASBMB Special Interest Group



The Melbourne Protein Group (MPG) was founded in 2002, initially running as an offshoot of the Lorne Conference on Protein Structure and Function. From 2002–2008, the MPG held an annual single-day symposium with the aim of giving young Victorian researchers an outlet to present their science. In 2009, the MPG became a Special Interest Group (SIG) of the ASBMB, allowing the MPG to broaden its focus and output, and aligning it with the other state protein groups. The aims of the MPG are to provide students (PhD and Honours) and early career researchers with opportunities to present their research and facilitate networking with peers and the broader Victorian protein science community, facilitate mentoring opportunities through the involvement of senior researchers at events, liaise with the ASBMB and other state protein groups and raise awareness of upcoming events and conferences from our network.

The MPG committee is represented by individuals from across the Melbourne protein research landscape, from the Bio21 Institute, the Florey Institute, Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS), and Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (WEHI) in Parkville, to Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute (ONJCRI) and St Vincent's Institute (SVI) across the city, to our suburban research hubs at La Trobe, RMIT and Monash universities. We also have an industry representative from CSL.

The student symposium remains the highlight of the MPG calendar, running annually from 2002–2019, traditionally rotating between the University of Melbourne (Bio21), La Trobe University (Bundoora) and Monash University (Clayton). After skipping 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions, the MPG held its first virtual student symposium in 2021. In another the first, the symposium was hosted by St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research. The MPG committee is now determined to share the hosting of the annual student symposium, rotating through as many different institutes and universities as possible.

Eighty student delegates attended the 20th annual MPG student symposium, held on 17 July 2022, in the amazing Cossar Hall at the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (Parkville). The program, chaired by David Thal (MIPS), included six student speakers (chosen from

submitted abstracts) and three invited keynote speakers (two research-focused presentations and one career-perspective presentation), followed by a Q and A with the keynote speakers.

Our first research-focused keynote was delivered by Associate Professor Denise Wootten (MIPS), who gave a fabulous presentation on the structure and dynamics of class B peptide hormone G protein-coupled receptors, while the second presentation by Associate Professor Andrew Ellisdon (Monash BDI), delighted the audience with his team's latest cryo-EM structures. Associate Professor Ashley Buckle (Head of Protein Engineering at Replay) delivered the career-focused keynote presentation, discussing the permeable barrier between academic and commercial research, while emphasising the importance of maintaining networks, from PhD throughout the many stages of his scientific career. The MPG committee would like to give a big thanks to our amazing keynote speakers, who not only gave up their time and gave tremendous presentations, but were also involved with the judging throughout the day.

We had an excellent lineup of student speakers from across Melbourne (selected from 35 applications), whose research topics include the study of proteins involved in hydrogen oxidation, cell signaling, cell death, mitochondrial disease, male contraception and breast cancer. The six outstanding candidates selected were Lisa Williams (Florey), Morgan Marshall (Monash), Yanxiang Meng (WEHI), Ashleigh Kropp (Monash), Linden Muellner-Wong (Bio21) and Felix Bennetts (MIPS). The winner of the Tilley Prize for the best oral presentation was Ashleigh Kropp, whose presentation revealed the structural basis of hydrogen oxidation in *Mycobacterium smegmatis* and had the added disadvantage of preparing a last-minute prerecorded presentation due to COVID-19 isolation requirements.

In addition to the student oral presentations, the 2022 meeting saw 55 student poster presentations. The posters were of a very high-quality, with the judges selecting eight best poster prizes over two sessions; the



*Socially distanced keynote speakers at the 20th MPG student symposium panel Q and A, from left: Andrew Ellisdon, Ashley Buckle and Denise Wootten.*

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best poster prize winners were: Kaitlyn Clarke (La Trobe), Hayley Turnham (Bio21), Jaison Sa (WEHI), Peter Calic (Monash), Maht Mansouri (Monash), Ayesah Rosdah (RMIT/SVI), Scott Williams (La Trobe) and Sum Shi Xuan (La Trobe).

The symposium finished with a 45-minute keynote speaker panel Q and A. This session always generates amazing discussion between the audience and the keynote speakers, and this year was no different. There were many topics covered over the session, but there was a distinct desire from the audience to delve into the panels knowledge on commercial/industry work and funding opportunities, a sign of the times perhaps? Happily, the discussions started in the panel session continued over some tasty snacks and beverages at the social hour mixer held at Naughtons Hotel, Parkville. We would like to thank our fantastic sponsors who supported symposium, the ASBMB, MIPS and BMG Labtech.

One benefit from being a SIG of the ASBMB is we can sponsor an outstanding early career researcher to present their science at ComBio2022. The winner (selected from abstracts and CVs) was Luke Formosa from Monash University.

The MPG committee is committed to providing more networking opportunities for our postdoctoral members. In the past, the MPG, has held postdoc symposiums on alternate years to ComBio, but due to the increased number of workshops, methods symposia, and technique specific meetings in and around Melbourne each year, we feel there is no longer a need (or time) for another day-long event. Instead, the committee is in the process of setting up shorter events geared toward socialising and networking – protein postdocs of Melbourne, watch this space!

The MPG committee has undergone significant change in the past year, with President Mike Griffin (Bio21) and long-standing members Mihwa Lee (La Trobe), Daniel Scott (Florey) and Onisha Patel (WEHI) stepping down. On behalf of the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing members for their hard work and dedication to the MPG community. Changes to the executive committee include Chris Langendorf (President) and Jess Holien (Secretary). New representatives to the MPG committee are Debnath Ghosal, Laura Osellame, Lisa Williams and Tom Murray-Rust (industry representative). We will announce shortly the date for the 21st student symposium, hosted by RMIT University (city campus). We hope you all have a successful 2023, may your proteins be folded and happy.



Poster prize winners at the 20th MPG student symposium, from left: Kaitlyn Clarke, Scott Williams, Ayesah Rosdah, Jaison Sa and David Thal (chair).



Poster prize winners at the 20th MPG student symposium, from left: Petar Calic, Maht Mansouri and Hayley Turnham.

## MPG Executive Committee

President: *Chris Langendorf (SVI)*

Treasurer: *David Thal (MIPS)*

Secretary: *Jessica Holien (RMIT)*

General committee members: *Debnath Ghosal (Bio21), Tom Murray-Rust (CSL), Laura Osellame (ONJCRI/ La Trobe), Adam Shahine (Monash), Gabby Watson (WEHI) and Lisa Williams (Florey)*

**Chris Langendorf, MPG President**

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