

Australasian Cytometry Society 43rd Annual Scientific Meeting Postponed

In response to the global pandemic of COVID-19, we have taken the decision to postpone the Australasian Cytometry Society 43rd Annual Scientific Meeting in Queenstown, New Zealand until 2021.

Why have we taken this action?

The annual scientific meeting is the heart and soul of the society. It is the main event we all look forward to each year. It is an important opportunity for members to present their scientific work, undertake continuing professional development, and interact with trade and the community of scientists who share our professional interest. The conference is the product of hundreds of hours of work by volunteers on the local organising committee, as well as considerable time and investment from sponsors, speakers and the whole team. We are very proud of it and it has not been an easy decision to cancel our plans to hold a conference in 2020, and postpone the outstanding event we have planned for Queenstown until 2021.

After delaying opening of registrations, we surveyed members and consulted with stakeholders and experts over the past weeks, considering a range of options and alternatives. It is clear that a postponement is necessary for the best interest of the members, the ACS, and the safety of the community.

While the annual conference is the core business of the ACS, the event is not the core business of our members. Our decision is in line with advice to avoid unnecessary travel and large gatherings following the official designation as a global pandemic earlier this week.

Given the uncertainty of the duration for which increased caution and restriction of travel might be necessary, we felt it was most prudent to postpone until next year and will move forward with plans to hold the 43rd Scientific Meeting in Queenstown in 2021.

What is the financial impact of postponement?

We have taken this action prior to opening registrations and therefore there are no registration fees to refund. Invoices to sponsors have been cancelled. We hope that early notice means disruption to members already booked travel plans will be minimal. However, if you are impacted we encourage you to discuss force majeure event options with your carrier.

There is some financial exposure for the ACS around deposits and payments for work already carried out. However, this is manageable and we expect to be able to carry forward

most of this as we plan for an event in 2021. Our conference partner Dinamics, as well as Rydges hotels and our colleagues at Queenstown Research Week have been understanding and very helpful under difficult circumstances.

Through many years of successful conferences and good financial planning, the ACS remains in a good financial position, despite the setbacks caused by this unforeseen global pandemic.

What are plans for 2021?

We plan to hold the 43rd Scientific Meeting in Queenstown in August of 2021, alongside Queenstown Research Week. We have reached out to our sponsors and speakers and hope that many will be able to join us then. However, we recognize that our colleagues across the globe are facing an unprecedented situation and need time to deal with urgent matters right now. We will keep our members updated with plans for 2021 as these unfold.

What about ACS2021 in Hobart, Tasmania?

Plans for hosting the ACS conference in Hobart will be delayed until 2022. The ACS begins planning its meetings two years in advance, and had already announced plans to host ACS2021 in Hobart, Tasmania. We had drawn up contracts with The Grand Chancellor around hosting the event. We are working through details to move these plans to 2022 and will keep you informed.

How can I present my research, or undertake continuing professional development?

We recognise that postponement of ACS, as well as a number of other conferences in 2020 means that traditional opportunities to present your research, or learn about the state of the art in cytometry will be limited. The ACS education taskforce will begin planning for digital options to present your abstracts, posters and seminar in 2020, as well as access the latest from ACS members.

What is the impact on ACS membership?

The annual membership dues are included in the registration cost of the annual scientific meeting. As such, the majority of members retain their membership through regular attendance at our annual conference. Given the cancellation of plans for this year, we anticipate a large number of members will have their membership expire. We are working through options to retain membership and outreach in 2020.

What about the AGM?

The Annual General Meeting must be held each calendar year. This is normally held during the conference for the convenience of members. It is not clear whether the force majeure event of a global pandemic will impact our obligation to hold the AGM. Regardless, we will

explore digital solutions to facilitate an AGM and allow discussion of and voting on general business this calendar year.

Thank you

Thank you for your understanding as the ACS leadership group responds to these difficult events. Please also join me in thanking Dr Anna Brooks (conference chair) and her team Alicia Didsbury (conference secretary), Joanna Roberts (conference treasurer), Dr Pranav Dorwal (clinical program), Sally Chappell and Thaize Chometon (conference committee) for their massive effort to organize a first class conference, and their willingness to put that aside in the interest of the society and its members. Anna and her team look forward to welcoming you to Queenstown in 2021.