

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Monday 28 June 2010**

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO SHOWCASE INDUSTRIAL MICROBIOLOGY**

Melbourne will host key researchers and pioneers of modern biotechnology this week for the 11<sup>th</sup> *International Symposium on the Genetics of Industrial Microorganisms* – GIM2010.

Professor Ian Macreadie, Chair of GIM2010, said the conference will bring a large contingent of Australian and international researchers, students and industry representatives to the city.

“Australia is a leader in the innovative use of microbes for industrial purposes, and this conference aims to showcase Australia’s world-class expertise in industrial microbiology to a global audience.

“Held every four years, the conference attracts world leaders in industrial biotechnology including Arny Demain, who has inspired scores of talented young people to pursue careers in industrial biotechnology. Arny’s Army, a large group of his students, will be at GIM to celebrate the legacy of his training,” he said.

Mr Macreadie said GIM will also inform the public about industrial microbiology, with some of the world’s leading experts coming to Melbourne for this unique conference.

“Although we benefit daily from the use of microbes in foods, beverages, and medicines, people are generally unaware of the latest contributions of microbiology. For example, natural viruses that are harmless to humans are now being targeted to fight infection-causing bacteria as an alternative to antibiotic therapy.

“Viruses can also be used to deliver genes, to overcome genetic defects. And microbes are also used as cell factories, to produce new products – many of which are either very rare or don’t yet exist in nature at all!

“Microbial technologies have averted millions of deaths due major diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart diseases, such as in the latest cervical cancer vaccine which is produced in microbes. In the future we can expect therapeutic antibodies to be produced by microbes. Microbes are also being used to provide renewable fuels and assist with bioremediation,” he said.

Innovation Minister Gavin Jennings said the decision to host the conference in Melbourne was testament to the state’s reputation as a leading life sciences centre.

"Biotechnology has a major role to play in the delivery of solutions to the challenges faced in our day-to-day lives, and the Victorian Government recognises that microorganisms often underpin these major advancements, which is why we support this conference.

"Over the past 10 years we’ve invested almost \$4 billion in innovation-related initiatives which is strengthening our research and development capabilities," Mr Jennings said.

A free public forum will be held as part of GIM on Wednesday 30 June. Professor Peter Coloe will moderate a panel discussion titled *Are we losing the battle against infectious diseases?* followed by a Q&A session with the panelists.

**A special issue of *Microbiology Australia* showcasing some of Australia’s contribution is available at the conference website [www.gim2010.org](http://www.gim2010.org)**

**Further details are available from Prof Ian Macreadie (Chair of GIM2010) mob: 0402 564 308.**