



## Issue 4: March/April

### FROM THE EDITOR

Dear ABSA-ites

**Welcome back!** I hope you are all refreshed after the summer break (those of you who got one). ABSA has been gaining momentum nicely as the year rolls out, having held two general committee meetings already.



The **biggest news** is the new **Chair, Lorae Harbottle-Purs**. Lorae is very well known among biotech students in Brisbane and with more than two years of ABSA under her belt, is well equipped to take the organisation to even greater heights in 2009. Lorae will be well supported by **Vice-Chair, Vee Halilovic** from Griffith University. We also welcome our project leaders: **Sally Fry** and **Chris Gaffee** for **BioFutures**, **Andrew Quay** will be heading up **BioCareers**, and the **Student Excellence Awards** will be led by **Melanie Andrews**. Two new events are set to mark the ABSA calendar this year, with **Bio at the Bar** led by **Lizz Heizmann** and **Paula Souvannavong**, and a **BioBall** led by **Brigitte Hallam**.

Last but not least we welcome our new **campus representatives**: **Chris Gaffee** (UQ), **Adrian Luscombe** and **Sasha Selivanova** (QUT), and **Vee Halilovic** and **Ichhya Shrestha** (Griffith).

**What a fantastic team.** Organising has already begun on every event, and the campus reps have had a busy time at O-Week, spreading the word about ABSA (check out the report in the 'Be Seen Be Heard' section).

In other news, this year sees the formation of an **ABSA National Advisory Committee** comprised of **Dr Olgatina Bushi** (ABSA Coordinator), **Ms Sarah Wakefield** (ex-SA ABSA Chair) and **myself** (ex-QLD ABSA Chair). The aim of the committee is to streamline critical aspects of ABSA that are not managed on a state level, such as branding, communication between states, and communication between each state and head office. As you can see, ABSA is already super-organised for 2009 and is anticipating a fantastic year.

■ Caroline Hopkins

Got news? Got comments? Let us know!

[absa.qld@ausbiotech.org](mailto:absa.qld@ausbiotech.org)

### BE INFORMED

Can't imagine life without your best friend Fido? Neither could a couple in Florida who recently paid \$150,000 to have their dearly departed labrador retriever cloned. Korean company Sooam Biotech Research Foundation was provided with DNA from 'Sir Lancelot', who died in January 2008, and ten-week old puppy, 'Lancelot Encore', was delivered to the couple in January this year.

Recently-elected US president Barack Obama has announced an intention to lift bans on federal funding for human, embryonic, stem-cell research. Under the previous government, funding was limited to research on existing stem cell lines only, however, one of Obama's campaign promises was to reverse the ban.

It's an exciting time to be working with stem cells, as the first human clinical trial utilising embryonic stem cells to treat spinal-cord injury was approved by the US FDA in January. California-based Geron Corp will be injecting stem cells into paraplegic patients within two weeks of injury. Primarily the trial is designed to ensure that the therapy is safe, but researchers also hope to see signs of returning sensation to lower parts of the body and potentially a return of movement to the legs.

■ Melanie Andrews

For more industry news, check out **Industry Spotlight** at [www.ausbiotech.org](http://www.ausbiotech.org)

**"You know you've worked too long in a lab when..."**

- 1. You have to check the web to determine the weather outside;**
- 2. You wonder what absolute ethanol tastes like with orange juice.**

- Facebook group

## JOB ALERT

### Quick Stats

#### Company:

Pfizer Animal Genetics

#### Job Description:

General lab duties including DNA extraction, PCR and molecular data analysis.

#### Work type:

Part-time and casual with flexible hours.

#### Ideal For:

University students or recent graduates.

#### Contact:

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**Pfizer Animal Health**  
Animal Genetics

## Pfizer Animal Genetics - Casual Production Scientists/Technicians Positions Available

Pfizer Animal Genetics is currently expanding its production capacity in preparation for expected and substantial growth. Its Brisbane-based laboratory is seeking part-time and casual Production Scientists / Technicians to carry out laboratory tasks associated with Pfizer Animal Genetics' products and services. The roles involve general laboratory duties associated with DNA testing in a high throughput environment, including sample extraction, PCR, marker detection and molecular data analysis. Production scientists also participate in the company's focussed R&D program, developing new DNA and information-based products and services.

The positions being offered are for casual positions with flexible hours. The successful candidates will demonstrate:

- Motivation, enthusiasm and an outcome focus;
- Active contribution to a tight-knit and dedicated production team;
- Good attention to detail and adherence to quality systems;
- The ability to work independently.

Prior laboratory experience in DNA extraction will be regarded favourably.

These positions would ideally suit university students / graduates looking for experience in the biotechnology industry. These current roles have flexible working hours that could be tailored to suit university commitments.

### Dear DR *Expert career advice from AusBiotech's own Dr Olgatina Bushi*

**• I know I like biotech, but I'm not sure which bit I'm interested in. Is there somewhere I can get a list of all the different areas to see what I like?**

You can check out the AusBiotech website as we have advisory groups in AgBiotech and Medical devices, with information about these sectors. The national AusBiotech conference program also has many biotechnology streams and you can see which one interests you the most.

**• I need to beef up my resume a bit with something other than academic studies. Can you suggest some activities that will strengthen my position?**

Work experience and volunteering is a sure-fire way to up-skill and boost your employability. In the current employment market any extra skills that you have will give you an advantage over your peers.

*Got questions for Dr Bushi?  
Email [absa.qld@ausbiotech.org](mailto:absa.qld@ausbiotech.org)*

### OUT & ABOUT *Don't miss these upcoming events.*

#### ✓BrisScience Talk - Tools of Science: Napoleon's Influence on Science

6:00-7:30pm, 11 March, Parnell Building, Room 222, UQ, St Lucia

The BrisScience series is aimed at the general public with easy-to-understand lectures on interesting topics. A/Prof Colin Kennard gives a talk on Napoleon's contribution to the development of science during his reign. The talk will cover topics including anthropology, biology, exploration and physics.

#### ✓Women in Technology Special Breakfast Briefing

7:30am 12 March, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Level 15, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane

Join Susan Pond, Chairman and Managing Director of Johnson & Johnson Research as she presents on "spinning out from a standing start" – her recent activities with three spin-out companies involved in therapeutics and diagnostics. Breakfast included, free for WIT members only.

*Check out more events at [www.ausbiotech.org](http://www.ausbiotech.org)*

## BE SEEN, BE HEARD

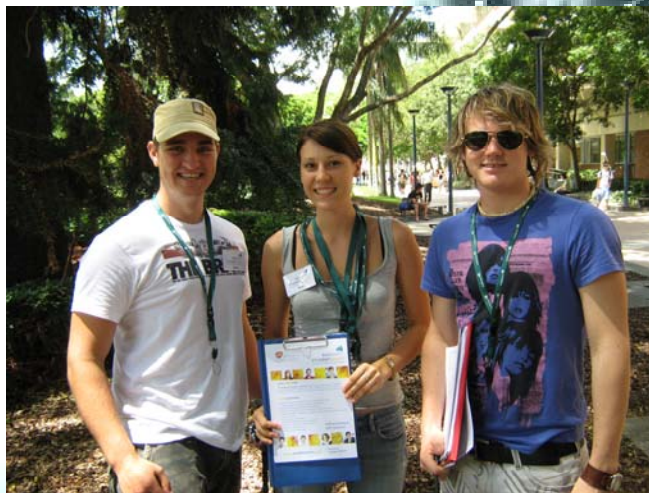
The back-to-uni blues are always lightened by the festivities of market day and all the freebies that come with it. Armed with M&M falcon tubes, pens, lanyards and brochures, the ABSA crew set out recruiting last week around Griffith, QUT and UQ.

The first hurdle to jump was choosing which students were potential candidates. Surprisingly, looking for the stereotype science students with big glasses and dishevelled hair did not prove fruitful. The next hurdle was the raging sun above, which threatened to turn us into puddles of water if we faced it too long. Clearing both of these with an ingenious "DO YOU STUDY SCIENCE?" sign while standing in the shade proved successful.

Each student was asked to fill out a survey about which ABSA events interested them and how much they would pay to attend. Very positive feedback was given on the forms, indicating a great 2009 ahead for the committee. However, the real measure of how the recruiting went will be this Wednesday night at the first meeting for the newbies. Fingers crossed for lots of interest. I would like to extend a big thankyou to all the members that helped out at the market days. Well done!

■ Adrian Luscombe

*Top: QUT campus reps Adrian (left) and Sasha (middle) with a new recruit. Bottom: Sasha signs up some new students to ABSA.*



## STUDENT PROFILE



*Elaine Haase is out from Germany to do her PhD at the University of Queensland. She has been an ABSA committee member for about a year and was a finalist for the 2008 GSK-AusBiotech Student Excellence Awards. Caroline Hopkins catches up with Elaine to get the 'good oil' on the PhD and German beer.*

**Where are you up to in your studies, and when will you finish?**

I'm a 3rd year Phd student, finishing next year.

**•You did your Bachelor degree in Germany, what made you want to come to Australia?**

Did some backpacking through Australia after finishing school, loved the country, the people and

the weather, especially Brisbane, so I thought coming back for my Masters degree would be awesome. I did that and then got stuck here.

**•What's your PhD on, and where?**

It's on medulloblastoma (a form of brain cancer), specifically on the interaction of Sonic Hedgehog and Notch signaling. My PhD is in Prof Brandon Wainwright's lab at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, UQ.

**What's the one thing you can't live without?**

Red wine and cheese (ok, that's two but they sort of belong together).

**Is the PhD glass half empty or half full?**

Half full!!!!

**Do German's make the best beer?**

Oh yes they sure do!