

The Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics... Newsletter

ACPF Official Opening

The ACPFG was pleased to celebrate its first functional year of operation. To celebrate, an official opening ceremony was held at the Plant Genomics Centre on Friday 17th September, 2004. The event was compered by ACPFG CEO, Professor Peter Langridge and featured distinguished speakers including Mr Nick Begakis AM (ACPF Chair), Senator Alan Ferguson, Minister Rory McEwen (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries) and Mr Terry Enright (GRDC, Chair). This function gave ACPFG staff a chance to meet and thank people who participated and contributed to the activities of the ACPFG in its first year. We would like to thank all who attended the event and helped make it a success. Photos and media from the day can be viewed on the ACPFG web site.

Exciting news... ACPFG First patent

The ACPFG has filed its first provisional patent application in the United States. The application was in the field of salt tolerance. The inventors are Dr Christina Lunde, Dr Andrew Jacobs, Dr Juan Juttner, Dr Alfio Comis, Professor Mark Tester, Professor Geoff Fincher and Professor Peter Langridge. The patent application represents an important step towards protecting the research at ACPFG. Further patent applications are on the way.

Genomics in the Barossa

From the 5th - 8th of October 2004, the ACPFG held the first of its new symposium series, 'Genomics in the Barossa', at the Novotel Resort, Rowland Flat in South Australia. The Symposium attracted 105 plant research scientists from around the world to discuss how plants respond to abiotic stress.

One of the many highlights was the opening day of the symposium, which featured eminent speakers responding to the question, 'What future for plant biotechnology?'. South Australia's position on GM crops, what SA farmers want from biotechnology, non-GM applications of biotechnology and the perspectives of politician's and the press were addressed by Dr Jim Peacock (President, Australian Academy of Sciences), Mr John Lush (President, South Australian Farmers Federation), Professor Peter Langridge (CEO, ACPFG), Robyn Williams (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and the Honourable Rory McEwen.

One of the many highlights from the symposium, was the powerful statements from Mr John Lush, who commented that 'he would not be farming without science'. Mr Lush further commented that "I will support the research and support the new technology that will bring the next

generations many benefits... I will be more proactive in supporting GM technologies". We would like to thank John for his outstanding presentation and acknowledge how great it is to have such strong support from such an important group of users who we think will benefit from our technology.

We would also like to extend a huge thankyou to our guest presenters and to the research scientists who attended the conference. We trust you enjoyed yourself, and hope to see you all next year. If you have any comments / suggestions or would like to be involved please contact us for further details.

Thankyou also to the efforts of Marilyn Henderson and Mark Tester for making the conference a success.

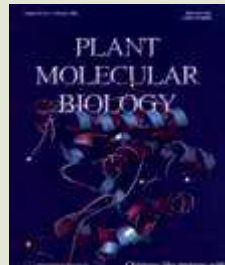
The ACPFG Book!

The ACPFG has had its first book chapter published in 'cereal functional genomics'. The chapter focuses on grain development in cereal crops and the application of functional genomics to improving grain quality and yield. Professor Peter Langridge, Sergiy Lopato and Andrew Milligan were the major contributors to the chapter, you can purchase the book from all quality book stores (i.e. Unibooks)!

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Journal cover

Associate Professor Maria Hrmova and Professor Geoff Fincher have made the front cover of a magazine well... their protein models have! Their outstanding research has been acknowledged by being the major feature of the February 2004 Issue of 'Plant Molecular Biology'. The journal features 3D models of a cotton chitinase-like protein (GhCTL2, magenta) and the template chitinase, barley 1cns (cyan) (see cover above).

Fun at the Royal Adelaide Show!

The ACPFG in collaboration with the Molecular Plant Breeding CRC had a stand at this years Royal Adelaide Show in the Golden Grains Pavilion. The stand was hosted by PhD and Honours students, the Education team and research staff from the ACPFG and MPBCRC. Thanks to all those who participated and contributed their time... Overall, the show was an extremely valuable experience. We

conducted over 750 DNA extraction experiments and chatted to the general community about the importance of DNA in a breeding program, plant breeding and gene technology. It served as a valuable tool in helping to increase the community's awareness of plant biotechnology (see pictures above).

Upcoming social Events

- **ACPF BBQ, Friday 29th 1:00 in the PGC Seminar Room!** We have bought a new BBQ and need to christen it, come along for a snag or two!
- **Melbourne Cup Luncheon, Tuesday November 2...** Put on your favourite hat and party outfit and head to the Plant Genomics Centre Seminar room. Calcutta Auction begins at 11:00 am, followed by Chicken and Salad lunch. Drinks will be provided. Please RSVP to Belinda Barr for catering.

October highlights

- A big congratulations is extended to Mr Michael Gilbert, ACPFG's General Manager, Michael has been appointed a Director of AusBiotech. Michael is Ausbiotech's only South Australian Director, so we wish him well in making valuable decisions on behalf of our state and on behalf of the ACPFG research team.
- ACPFG have successfully tendered to manufacture a BAC library for the US Department of Agriculture.
- The ACPFG would like to extend a warm welcome to Dr Yuri Shavrukov, who has joined the ACPFG as a Post Doctoral Research Fellow.
- Welcome to Mark Tester's research team who have flown the globe to join the ACPFG in Adelaide... Darren Plett (via France), Fran Tracy (via Cambridge) and Gigi El-Hussieny (via Cambridge). Also, welcome to Mary Beilby who is on sabbatical from the Department of Physics, University of New South Wales.
- Welcome to Natasha Boase, who will be working as a Research Officer with Dr Ute Baumann.
- Welcome to Tim Mok, who has begun a summer scholarship with Dr Klaus Oldach.
- Welcome to Katie Gustafson and Sheena Chapman, who are visiting from the US. Both are working with Dr Alfio Comis.
- And finally... Good luck to the ACPFG Honours students who are due to hand in their theses in early November.