

Melbourne Protein Group: an ASBMB Special Interest Group

History

The Melbourne Protein Group (MPG) was established in 2002 by the Lorne Conference on Protein Structure and Function organising committee. The purpose of the MPG was to hold an annual, single day symposium with the aim of giving early-stage Victorian researchers an outlet to present their science. In 2009, the Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) formally recognised the MPG as a Special Interest Group (SIG). This affiliation enabled the MPG to expand its activities to include EMCR symposia and networking events, while aligning the group with other state-based protein societies across Australia.

The Student Symposium remains the cornerstone of MPG activities, providing emerging researchers with a supportive, conference-style environment in which to develop presentation skills, showcase their research and build professional networks. Increasingly, the symposium also serves as a forum for career development, exposing attendees to both traditional and non-traditional career pathways. Keynote speakers are selected for their achievements across academia, industry and related sectors, and are encouraged to share insights from their own career journeys and perspectives on the future of protein science.

From 2002 to 2019, hosting duties rotated between Bio21, La Trobe University and Monash University. Following the COVID-19 interruption, the MPG revised the hosting model, to better reflect the breadth of protein research conducted across Melbourne. Since then, the symposium has been hosted by the Chair's home institution, resulting in host venues at SVI, MIPS, RMIT and WEHI between 2021 and 2024. Now entering its 24th year, the 2026 MPG Student Symposium was held at Monash University, on 13 July 2026.

MPG Executive Committee

President: Dr Chris Langendorf (St Vincent's Institute (SVI))

Treasurer: Associate Professor David Thal (Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS))

Secretary: Associate Professor Jessica Holien (RMIT University)

General Committee Members:

Dr Rhys Grinter (Bio21 Institute), Dr Tom Murray-Rust (CSL), Dr Abdel Belaidi (Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health/University of Melbourne), Dr Laura Osellame (Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute (ONJ)/La Trobe University), Dr Adam Shahine (Monash University), Dr Chris Szeto (Swinburne University of Technology) and Dr Nadia Kershaw and Dr Gabby Watson (Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (WEHI))

MPG Student Symposia

2023

Chair: Associate Professor Jess Holien

Host: RMIT University, city campus

About: Together with the Royal Australian Chemistry Institute (RACI) VIC Branch, the MPG organised a joint student and early/mid-career research symposium, which combined the annual student symposia for RACI (day 1) and MPG (day 3), as well as a cross-discipline day aimed at both students and EMCR researchers from RACI and MPG (day 2). The MPG would like to acknowledge the generous support provided by the ASBMB, which supported our student symposium presentation awards winners. The Tilley Award is given annually to the best student oral presentation at the symposium. The award is named after Distinguished Professor Leann Tilley, in recognition of the significant impact of her research and advocacy on shaping the Melbourne proteins community.

Keynote speakers: Professor Mibel Aguilar (Monash), Dr Rhys Grinter (Bio21), Dr Jai Rautela (Audax Biosciences) and Dr Sarah Henneby (FPA Patent Attorneys)

EMCR best oral presentation award: Dr Jia Truong (RMIT) and Dr Stephanie Nguyen (WEHI/University of Adelaide)

Tilley Award: Jordan Crameri (Bio21) and Kaisel Sarson-Lawrence (WEHI)

Best poster presentation awards: Phoebe Lemming (Bio21), Fabian Munder (Monash Uni), Minal Chaturvedi (RMIT) and Imesha Hettige (MIPS)

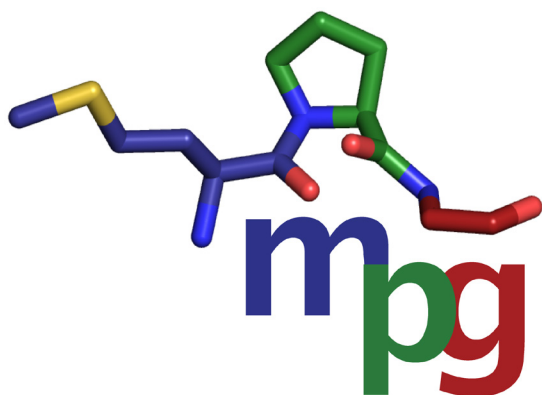


2023 Tilley Award for best student oral presentation awardees, Kaisel Sarson-Lawrence (left) and Jordan Crameri (right), joined by Chris Langendorf (MPG President).



2023 poster prize winners, from left: Fabian Munder, Minal Chaturvedi, Chris Langendorf (MPG President), Phoebe Lemming and Imesha Hettige.

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2024

Chair: Dr Gabby Watson

Host: WEHI

About: The 22nd MPG student symposium was attended by 80 delegates

Keynote speakers: Professor Louise Purton (SVI), Associate Professor Bernhard Lechtenberg (WEHI) and Dr Katherine Jackman (Brandon Capital)

Tilley Award: Alayna Caruso (Florey)

ANSTO best poster presentation awards: Alexander Ziegler (UoM), Fabian Munder (Monash), Yiling Yu (Florey), Taylor Cunliffe (La Trobe), Alicia Yong (Florey), Evelyn Huang (Bio21), Daniel Fox (Monash) and Emily Park (WEHI)

2024 Tilley
Award
awardee,
Alayna
Caruso, and
Professor
Leann Tilley.



2025

Chair: Dr Rhys Grinter

Host: Bio21 Institute, University of Melbourne

About: The 23rd MPG student symposium was attended by over 100 delegates

Keynote speakers: Professor Max Cryle (Monash), Dr Michael Pasternak (Denteric) and Marilyn Jones (Mexec)

Tilley Award: Daniel Fox (Bio21)

ANSTO best poster presentation awards: Emily Park (WEHI), Riya Joseph (UoM), Helen Barber (Bio21), Javaid Jabbar (Bio21), Danise Onda (SVI) and Geoff Zhang (SVI)

I would like to congratulate all students who have presented their research at an MPG student symposium and thank all delegates for their attention, questions and engagement, you have helped to grow the symposium and the Melbourne protein science community. A big thanks to our many symposium sponsors whose support allow us to hold this great event, our brilliant keynote speakers, the MPG Committee for your organisational efforts (especially the symposium chairs) and the host institutes/universities for providing us with amazing spaces and support. Your contributions allow us to make the student symposium better every year!

ECMR activities

Each year the MPG provides early career researchers an opportunity to represent the Melbourne protein research community at the SIG session of an ASBMB associated conference. Selected representatives are awarded funds to cover their conference registration.

Congratulations to the recent awardees, Dr Joshua Hardy (WEHI) ComBio2023, Dr Winnie Tan (WEHI) Biomolecular Horizons 2024 and Dr Chris Horne (WEHI/ MIPS) ASBMB2025.

In 2024, Melbourne hosted one of the largest biochemical/biological conferences to be held in Australia, Biomolecular Horizons (BMH2024), bringing together representatives from all ASBMB-affiliated protein groups to Melbourne. This presented the MPG with a unique opportunity to host the inaugural Australian Protein Groups EMCR social mixer, a free event held at the conclusion of Sir Richard Roberts evening plenary presentation at the nearby Boatbuilders Yard on South Wharf. The event was well attended with ~40 researchers from across Australia's Protein Groups making the most of free food and libations. It is my hope that networking opportunities like this can continue at future ASBMB/ ComBio conferences.



From left: 2025 Tilley Award awardee, Daniel Fox, and ANSTO poster prize winners, Geoff Zhang, Emily Park, Riya Joseph, Javaid Jabbar, Helen Barber and Danise Onda.

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MPG sponsorship

In 2023, the MPG committee sponsored the inaugural Melbourne Emerging Leaders in Biomedical Research (MELBR) Symposium Q and A panel session and social mixer at the Leveson Hotel in North Melbourne. MELBR was attended by more than 80 local EMCR researchers.

President's note

After eight years on the MPG Committee (4.5 years as President) and many fond memories, I will be stepping away from the committee at the conclusion of the 2026 MPG student symposium. The MPG will be in terrific hands with Associate Professor Jess Holien taking over as President and Dr Rhys Grinter stepping into the new role of Vice President and Communications. I have no doubt that the MPG will continue to go from strength to

strength under their leadership. It has been an enormous privilege to be president of the MPG, a group I have always held in high esteem for the role it plays in our community. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the MPG; it is exciting to see the quality of the next generation of protein scientists coming through and the knowledge that the MPG has played a small role in their development is deeply gratifying. I'd like to thank the amazing people that I have worked alongside on the committee, your dedication and support is greatly appreciated!

Chris Langendorf, MPG President

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