



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the proceedings of the 7th Australian Mars Exploration Conference (AMEC 2007), which has once again brought together national and international researchers dedicated to laying the groundwork for a future human mission to Mars. This year's theme, emphasising the role of education in furthering space exploration, is in line with a growing call for a revolution in Australian education to better serve the needs of the future. The space community generally, and the Mars Society in particular, needs to recruit new members from today's high school and university students and play a role in preparing them for the scientific, technological and cultural challenges which lie ahead. Accordingly, we have chosen a selection of talented high-school students to present their work and learn what they think about Mars.

Significantly, AMEC2007 has seen the announcement of two new prizes designed to recognise and reward student interest in space science, which you will read about in the presented papers. There is the Australian Space Prize, which accepts entries from Bachelor's degree graduates from a broad range of space sciences. The winner will attend the NASA Ames Space Exploration Academy. And the MSA is pleased to announce a new partnership with NASA: an extension of their Spaceward Bound training expeditions to Australia. These teacher profession development and high-school science expeditions have run successfully in the United States and Chile, and will soon embark on Mars analogue style studies of the central deserts of Australia. In addition, students were also encouraged to compete in the International Space Olympics, which this year became available to students outside Russia for the first time.

These prizes open up tremendous opportunities for the students involved. They can participate in exciting competitive space research projects, travel internationally, meet experts and generally build up a community of colleges in their chosen field.

The papers presented here represent a new hope, as well as pointing to a need for growth and development, of space science as a real career option in this country. I hope that future space conferences, including AMEC, will continue this important work. Whether or not people forge careers directly connected with Mars exploration, the scientific and technological skills we help build are a great asset to our society.

Sincerely,

Dr. Graham Mann
Program Chair