



## Head of School Column

Dear colleagues

It has been quite an earth-shaking year for BABS; what with the move and the upheaval caused by workplace change. I've certainly felt it and I haven't even been on the receiving end – the real pointy end of it.

But let's start with some positives. This year we've welcomed many new staff, which is terrific, including Dominic, Emily, Fatemeh, Megan, Gus, Seda, Viv and Lucy.

BABS continues to be productive in terms of excellent research and teaching, and so we should all pat ourselves on the back for more stellar publications, grant success, and increasingly innovative teaching.

And certainly 2017 has been a very productive year in terms of a metric that BORIS (a creature that lurks in the Chancellery) really needs to include: BOI or Baby Output Index. These are the new BABS babies that I know about: Madison to Kylie; Sophie to Vicky; Tabitha to Laura; William to Winnie; Zeinab to Fatemeh; Madeleine to Marlene. That's six in one year – which must be a record. Congratulations to one and all!

No wonder everyone's saying that there must be something in the water. No doubt, Estate Management (the artist formerly known as FM) must also have heard about BABS' bubs and consequently set the hot water in the new building to 'sterilise' mode.

The move into the new building went really well, all things considered, and I think we're all getting used to communal living in our new shared labs and office spaces, which will be made easier now that we have a research support team appointed – Jeff, Dixie and Jason, who will start at the end of January.

The technical and professional team, especially the teaching tech team, has been shaken up big time as part of the University's workplace change. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for their long and loyal service: Kim, 40 years; Sharon, 38 years; Ned, 28 years; Khaled, 22 years; Li, 16 years; Shamima, 13 years; Alvin, 9 years; and Jenny, 3.5 years.

That's more than 170 years of collective service, which is a very long time! To put it into some context: 170 years ago, in 1847, NSW was 'disestablished' as a convict colony.

We've managed to catch up with most of our tech staff to formally thank them and gain their very useful insights in what we might be able to do better as we rebuild. To top it off, Gus is also sadly leaving us. In his very short time with us, he has done wonders, not only holding our tech staff together in a major period of uncertainty to ensure delivery of our prac classes, but also pointing the way to how a positive tech team can be forged and operate.

I for one would like to draw a big red line through 2017, whereas 2018 is shaping up to be a much better year. We've had our fill of angst and disgruntlement this year, so I wish you and your families an angstless and gruntleing New Year!

Best wishes and happy holidays!

Andrew

## RAT Research

- Congratulations to all the recent BABS Category 1 grant awardees:  
*ARC Discovery Project*
  - **Paul Waters**: \$ 432,108*NHMRC Project Grants*
  - **Ruiting Lan & Mark Tanaka**: \$480,531
  - **Irina Voineagu**: \$621,128
  - **Jai Tree**: 521,559
  - **Rob Yang**: \$758,472
  - **Rob Yang & Andrew Brown**: \$888,340 & \$466,400

After the WPC, our new research tech staff are:

*Level 6 Technical Officers (Research)*

- **Dixie Papast** (has commenced)
- **Jason Sercombe**, start date 29 January

## Administration

Following the disestablishment of Jenny Campbell's admin role in the School Office, **Jessica McConkey** has commenced in a new shared BABS/BEES role, initially appointed for 12 months.



## Teaching

Our new teaching tech staff are:

*Level 5 Technical Officers (Teaching)*

- **Tammy Tang** (has commenced)
- **Gee Ling** (has commenced)
- **Kate Roberts** (has commenced)
- **Tim Nguyen**, start date 2 January

*Level 4 Technical Assistants (Teaching)*

- **Zakia Begum**, start date 2 January
- **Bianca Lawrence**, start date 9 January

### Two new BABS Professors

**Ruiting Lan** and **Mark Tanaka** have been promoted to Professor, effective 1 January 2018. Ruiting joined BABS in 2002, following a postdoc position at USYD. His PhD was in molecular genetics and he combined his research on bacterial population structures and the evolution of pathogens to make a unique contribution to this research field.



Mark also joined BABS in 2002, following a postdoc position at Emory University in Atlanta, US. His research primarily concerns the evolution and population biology of microorganisms, using mathematical and statistical methods to study the dynamics of bacteria and viruses.

### Two new Scientia Research Fellows

**Kate Quinlan** and **Matt Baker** were both successful in their applications for the prestigious UNSW Scientia Research Fellowship program. Their 4-year fellowships will commence on 1 January 2018. The program is one of the cornerstones of UNSW's 2025 Strategy, with its aim being to enhance UNSW's research performance by attracting and retaining exceptional researchers at the highest level relative to career stage and supporting them with a unique development and collaboration package and career pathway commitment.



### Doctor of Science

Professor **Marc Wilkins**, Director of the Ramaciotti Centre for Genomics and of the NSW Systems Biology Initiative, has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Science from UNSW in recognition of his contribution and knowledge in the field of biochemistry and molecular biology. In 1994, Marc developed the concept of the proteome and coined the term, with his research tackling many of the key issues in proteomics, with a particular strength being the capacity to combine analytical techniques with complex bioinformatics to open new avenues for biological investigation. The award will be conferred at the Graduation ceremony early next year.



### Australian Academy of Science 2018 Ruth Stephens Gani Medal

The 2018 Ruth Stephens Gani Medal has been awarded to BABS Scientia and ARC Future Fellow **Irina Voineagu**. Irina's research has made significant contributions to the genetics of neurodevelopmental disorders, including work on molecular mechanisms of DNA instability, autism genomics and transcriptomics. She has elucidated the role of DNA repeat expansions in neurodevelopmental disorders as well as identified a novel syndrome of intellectual disability caused by mutations in the *CCDC22* gene. Most notably, in the first landmark large-scale transcriptome study of autistic brain, Irina identified networks of genes that showed altered expression in autistic brain tissue.



### BABS staff in the news

**Belinda Ferrari** and team had a paper published in November in *Nature* (Impact Factor 40.14) on their discovery that microbes in Antarctica can scavenge hydrogen, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide from the air to stay alive in extreme conditions, which has implications for the search for life on other planets. The discovery received wide media coverage, including [ScienceAlert](#) and [news.com.au](#).



**Brendan Burns** was interviewed by media outlet Gizmodo after the announcement of the formation of an Australian Space Agency at the September International Astronautical Congress in Adelaide. Brendan advised he had been fielding calls from news organisations and would do his best to fly the BABS/UNSW flag ... to infinity and beyond!

<https://www.gizmodo.com.au/2017/09/what-experts-have-to-say-about-australias-space-agency/>



### China visit with VC

**Rob Yang** recently accompanied the Vice-Chancellor and a group of senior managers from UNSW to Tsinghua University for an official signing ceremony for the UNSW-Tsinghua Collaborative Research Fund. Each university has agreed to provide additional funding for a new round of seed grants commencing February 2018



### BABS postdocs achievements

**Frances Byrne** (Kyle Hoehn lab) attended the annual Hope Funds Cancer Meeting at the historic The Elms in Newport, Rhode Island, where she presented a talk as part of her Hope Fellowship. She and Kyle certainly stepped up the style compared to the usual lab attire!



Research Associate **Julia Wong** (Jai Tree lab) won the Early Career Researcher oral presentation award at BacPath14 in September. BacPath is the premiere biannual molecular bacteriology meeting held in Australia. This year the meeting was held in the spectacular setting of the Adelaide Hills. With its exclusive focus on bacterial pathogens, this meeting explored the full spectrum of molecular microbiology from fundamental research to translational applications.



### BABS students achievements



BABS3091 Professional Issues in Biotechnology students were once again successful in the annual UNSW Business School's Peter Farrell Cup under the guidance of **Wallace Bridge**. The finals were held in October at the Sofitel Wentworth Hotel and attended by well over 200 guests. Two teams from the class, 'Albuson' and 'Bump' were among the ten finalists selected from over 70 initial entries. The Albuson team which claimed 2<sup>nd</sup> prize (\$7,500) and the popular vote (\$2,000) on the night made it to the final by winning one of three lead-up PitchFest evenings in early September. Bump made it through to the finals based on the high quality of their submitted business plan (pitch deck).

### BABS social events

The School joined with our neighbour BEES for this year's Melbourne Cup, 'christening' the E26 staff lounge.



Our end of year event this year was themed 'Vivid' and doubled as a farewell to those leaving the School following the Workplace Change process. Held at Coogee Beach, it was a truly delightful party!



### Pitter patter of little scientists

Congratulations to **Kylie Jones** and family on the arrival of their daughter Madison. Born on 2 October, arriving a little late but perfectly formed, Kylie and husband Chris are "beyond excited" to welcome her as a sister to Brooklyn.



We've cracked 1,000! Our [facebook](#) 'likes' are now 1,006, up from 973 in September 2017.

If you would like something included in the next BABS Quarterly please email Michele at [m.potter@unsw.edu.au](mailto:m.potter@unsw.edu.au)