

13th Australasian Plant Virology Workshop, Waiheke Island, New Zealand 20-22 Feb 2018

Lisa Ward and Robin MacDiarmid (co-organisers)

What a wonderful conference we had at Waiheke Island at the end of February this year as we hosted the 13th Australasian Plant Virology Workshop (APVW). We were briefly ruffled as the skirts of uninvited guest ex-cyclone Gita blew by but we managed to safely host 69 attendees from a wide range of countries (including NZ, Australia, China, and Korea). A particular highlight was the invited speakers including plenary and key note speakers from Europe (Spain, Finland and France) and the USA (California, Arkansas and New York). David Teulon, Director of Better Border Biosecurity (B3), also provided a keynote talk for New Zealand. We also greatly benefited from the four industry representatives who were able to attend the conference.

The APVW was organised by the MPI Plant Health and Environment Laboratory (with Lisa Ward as Co-chair), Plant and Food Research (with Robin MacDiarmid as Co-chair) and the Auckland University of Technology. The APVW series provides a forum for scientists from Australia, New Zealand and the rest of the world to meet on a biennial basis to provide updates on their recent research relating to plant viruses, viroids, phytoplasmas and other obligate pathogens. Although many of the APVW activities are focused in the Australasian region, these activities are of international importance and significance.

The conference sessions covered the themes of Diagnostics and advancing technologies, Biosecurity and emerging risks, Epidemiology and virus ecology, Virus-vector and virus-host interactions, and Virus evolution. In total 52 talks were presented over the course the three day workshop. Both 12 minute and quick-fire, 3 minutes, talks kept the pace changing and was surprisingly successful mix that enabled everyone to speak.

The conference was flanked by two workshops, the first on Grapevine viruses and the second on Citrus viruses. International experts, Rodrigo Almeida (University of California, Berkeley, CA) and Marc Fuchs (Cornell University, NY) gave talks on the USA experience of *Xylella fastidiosa* (which causes Pierce's disease in grapevines and is one of our high impact pests) and *Grapevine red blotch virus* (which is currently impacting grape yields in the USA and Canada). They were joined by members of the New Zealand Winegrowers Association who sponsored Rodrigo's travel and the workshop.

The Citrus workshop and orchard visit focused on managing a disease already present in New Zealand, *Citrus tristeza virus*. Bill Dawson (University of Florida, FL), a world-renown scientist studying the molecular genetics of virus-host interactions, joined members of New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc. to share the USA experience in managing the virus and to discuss the New Zealand strategy for management. New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc. sponsored Bill's travel and this workshop.

Two memorial lectures punctuated the conference. One given by Kristiina Mäkenin started the ball rolling in memory of REF (Dick) Matthews (sponsored by the University of Auckland at which he was employed) on virus host interactions at the molecular and cellular level. The other was given by Santiago Elena in

memory of RSL Forster and surely Richard would have been enthused by the use of infectious clones to study virus evolution.

Overall, the delegates loved the conference venue (The Venue, Onetangi beach) and commented that the conference was really well organised, that the caliber of the keynote speakers was impressive and that the food was outstanding. Delegates commented especially that the opportunities to network with other scientists in their field of work during breaks, lunches and dinner was invaluable.



We would very much like to thank and acknowledge **our guest speakers and delegates** for attending the 13th APVW and making the conference really special with their participation.

The next meeting is to be held in Melbourne in December 2020.