

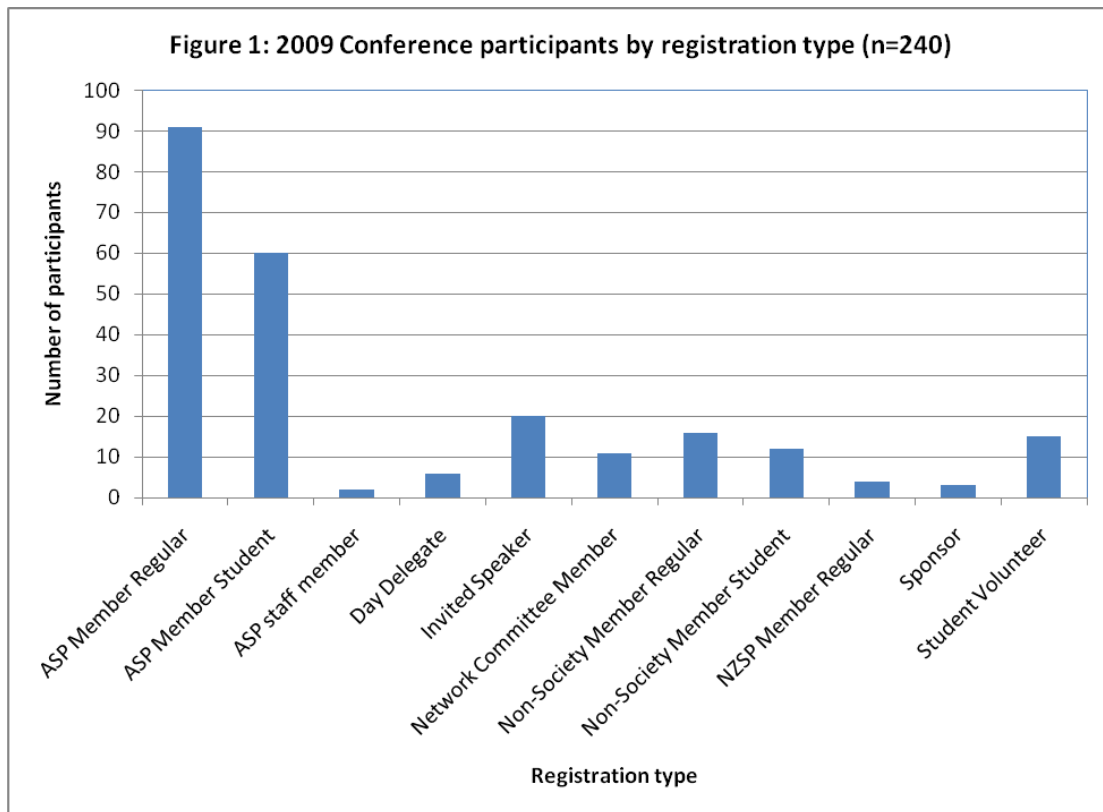


2009 ASP & ARC/NHMRC Research Network for Parasitology Annual Conference Survey Results

We surveyed the 240 conference attendees following the 2009 ASP & ARC/NHMRC Research Network for Parasitology annual conference and 89 conference participants responded, this is a response rate of 37%, similar to previous conference survey results in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Participant information:

Of the 240 conference delegates 91 (37%) registered as regular ASP members and 60 (25%) registered as ASP student members. 28 (12%) were non-society members (12 were students). The remaining delegates were student volunteers (15), sponsors (3), ASP invited speakers/guests (20), conference staff and committee members (11) and there were 6 day delegates (see Figure 1). A majority of delegates (82.5%) registered during the early registration period before 30 April 2009. This year we were pleased to offer on-line credit card processing using paypal (used by 87% of fee-paying conference delegates) as well as an option to pay by cheque (used by 12% of fee-paying conference delegates).



This year respondents represented a greater number of different institutions. Most respondents were from Queensland Institute of Medical Research (16%), The University of Melbourne (9%), University of Technology, Sydney (8%), Monash University (6%), Burnet Institute (4.5%), Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (4.5%) and The Australian National University (4.5%). Respondent age ranged from 21 to over 65 years (see Figure 2), with 77% under 50 years and 30% between 21 and 30 years. Similar numbers of males (53%) and females (47%) responded to the survey (see Figure 3) and 62.5% were either students (51%) or early career researchers (11%). (See Figure 4.) 84% of respondents were ASP members.

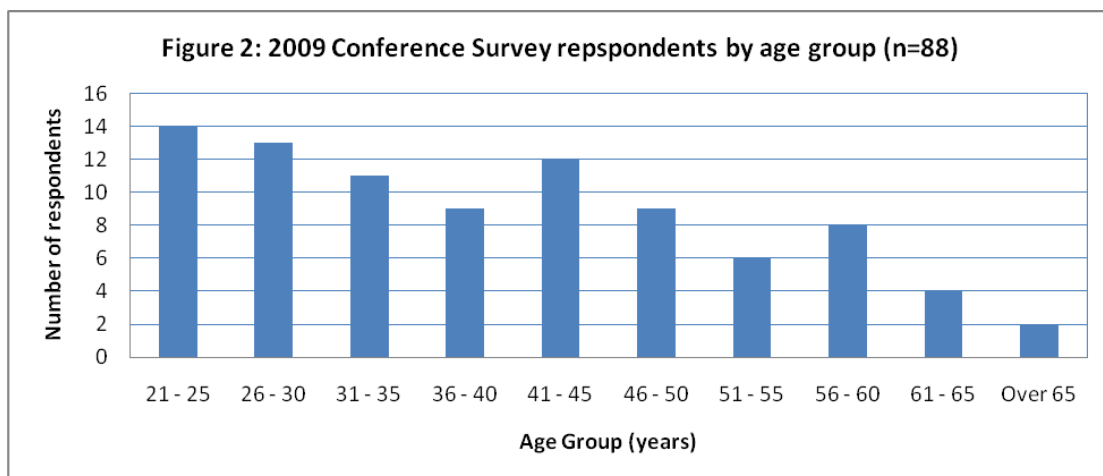


Figure 3: 2009 Conference Survey Respondents by gender (n=88)

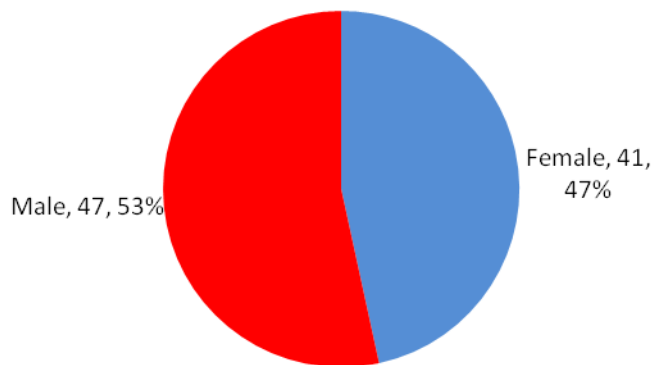
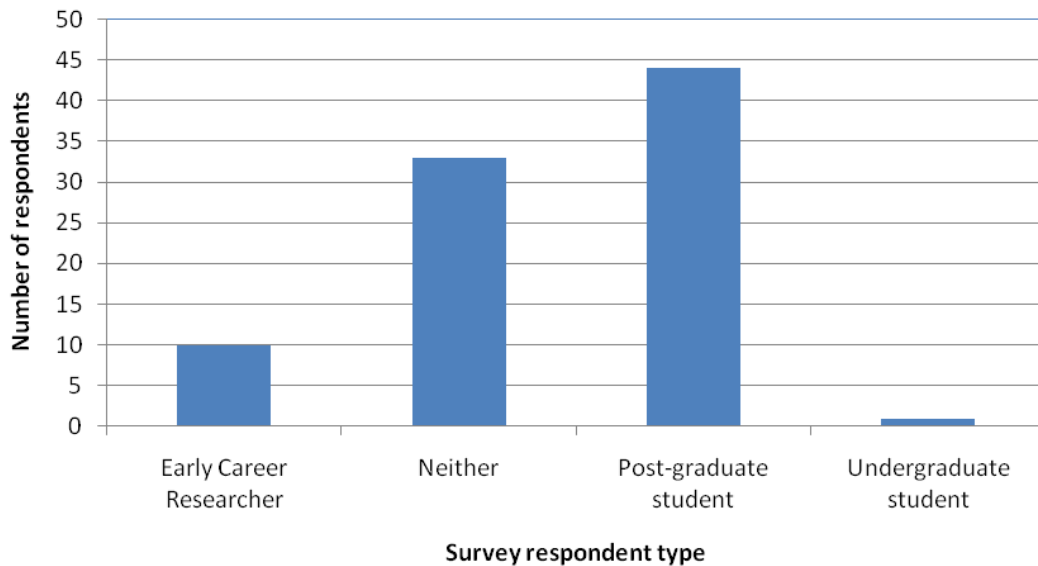


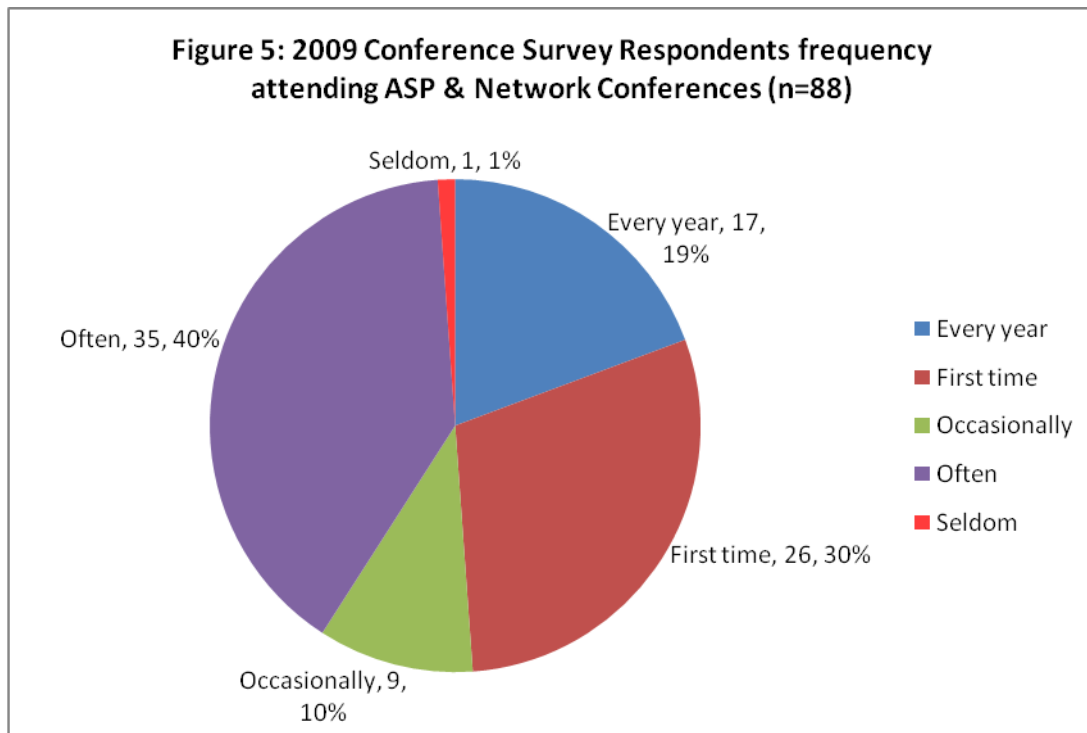
Figure 4: 2009 Conference Survey Respondents by type (n=88)



Conference attendance:

Most of the respondents said they either attended the annual ASP conference every year (19%) or often (40%) or it was the first time they had attended an ASP conference (30%). (See Figure 5.) 39% of respondents had attended the 2006 ASP & Network Conference in the Gold Coast, 45% had attended the 2007 ASP & Network Conference in Canberra, 42% had attended the 2008 ASP & Network Conference in Glenelg and 81% of respondents plan to attend future ASP Conferences. This is very positive feedback for the Conference Organising Committee of the previous ASP & Network conferences and, if we assume that the survey respondents reflect the conference delegates, each year we are seeing about 40% conference delegates returning and 60% who

are either new or who have not attended a recent ASP Conference. Feedback from all conference participants is very helpful for future planning purposes.



Conference fees, venue and conference dinner venue:

There were 80 comments about the conference food; most were extremely positive comments about the quality and variety of food. Some comments were: “Best vegetarian meals I have ever had at a conference”, “Quite amazing quality for catering to such a large group” and “The food was delicious and plentiful”. Some people would prefer buffet food they can help themselves to rather than waiting for tray-service “Food carried round by waiting staff didn't seem to work very well as it reduced choice” and “I have liked the mix of nibbles and buffet style for the dinners in the past”.

There were 58 comments about conference fees; almost all thought the fees were “reasonable and very generous for students” or “a bargain”, and one wrote “Fantastic that the society still subsidises meetings so heavily, enables more students, techs and staff to attend who greatly benefit from what is often their first conference experience.” Only two felt they were too high and one commented “On the high side. I would have preferred to have had the choice about dinner and not be locked in.”

There were 73 comments about the conference venue. Most comments about the venue were very positive with comments about the lack of heating in the Footbridge;

- “Beautiful venue, enjoyed the location very much”,
- “I really enjoyed professionalism of the hospitality service and would like to compliment them on their job. I liked the venue, it provided

special climate. I liked the way the student breakfast was organised. I have thoroughly enjoyed the conference.”

This conference was held at a University which prompted some to comment about their preference to hold conferences in hotels; “excellent - but prefer accommodation on site as in previous years”.

There were 79 comments about the annual conference dinner on Wed 15 July, held at The Great Hall, The University of Sydney; “Well organised. Great entertainment, food, and wine. No complaints.”

Some commented about the entertainment;

- “Excellent overall. Band should have turned the volume down during the meal time but were an excellent choice for dancing - both bush and more ‘contemporary’!” and
- “The dinner was a big success; the hall was impressive, the food-fantastic, the service- great and the entertainment terrific. The only pitfall might have been the loud music, maybe because of the acoustic properties of a hall, but most of us enjoyed that too.”

Conference Registration System and Conference Website

Most respondents registered on-line for the conference (98%), 64% submitted an abstract on-line and visited the conference website (97%).

Almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to register for the conference on-line (89%) and 89% agreed or strongly agreed it was easy to submit and abstract on-line.

Almost all respondents agreed that the conference website contained all the information needed for the conference; that the website was easy to navigate; and that information was up-to-date and accessible.

There were 30 comments about the on-line conference registration system most people said “Very user friendly” There were 23 comments about the 2009 ASP & Network conference website; many thought it “A very comprehensive, helpful website.” Some conference delegates commented that they would like to have access to the conference programme and full abstracts earlier, to help planning.

Student and Early Career Researcher Workshop

There were over 70 participants who attended the student breakfast workshop at this year’s conference. Of those attendees 30 gave feedback about this event, 18 identified as students, 6 identified as early career researchers and 4 were speakers at the event, 1 was an observer.

Almost all respondents to this section agreed or strongly agreed that the speakers were inspirational and interesting to listen to (87.5%); that “this event enabled me to meet other early career researchers and discuss our

science careers and research” (81%); and “Overall, I found the whole experience of attending the early career and student workshop valuable” (77%). Most (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that the event gave them the “opportunity to discuss my future career.”

Following the 2008 ECR and student event feedback from participants was a need for “having separate PhD student and ECR sessions” so this year the committee of ECRs and students who organised the 2009 event directed it at PhD students. There were three main sessions where Early Career Researchers discussed their career experiences:

- Session 1 - A panel of early career researchers shared knowledge and answered questions on the 'PhD experience'
- Session 2 - A panel of early to mid-career scientists from different Institutes and Industry shared their stories on different career paths post PhD, shed light on the importance of track records and gave tips for building CVs
- Session 3 – “The importance of mentoring” A young scientist and their mentor talked about their experience with the Network Mentoring Scheme.

There were 29 comments from respondents with comments and suggestions for running this type of event for early career researchers and students. Most thought the event was “very well organised”, and gave the following comments;

- “Good choice of topics, but not enough time for discussion”,
- “Very worthwhile and it was very beneficial to hear the experiences of others”,
- “Was very well done, interesting speakers giving useful information for aspiring scientists. Trivia was exciting at the end, and provided a good way to meet new people” and
- “I found it really inspirational and great to receive advice, especially as a lot of speakers had similar advice.”

Some suggestions included;

- “Session on career alternatives went particularly well - would be a useful, longer session for consideration in the future as it stimulated quite a bit of discussion and interest. The speakers chosen were excellent” and
- “Include a person who is non-native English speaker, student or postdoctoral researcher, it would be great to discuss about the experience to live in a different country speaking other language.”

Conference Programme – scientific

Almost all respondents agreed or strongly agrees that the 2009 ASP & Network Conference programme reflected the wide variety of parasitology research occurring in Australia and internationally; and that the conference invited speakers were a good mixture of national and international experts

who gave depth and structure to the conference programme. Many (62%) agreed or strongly agreed that “there was always a session that was interesting to me in the conference programme”; while 87% agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed looking at the posters at the conference.

Once again there were a wide variety of suggestions for future conference themes and some of these are listed below:

- No changes - balance is great.
- Epidemiology
- Mathematical Modelling
- Drug development
- Immunoparasitology
- Pathogenesis
- Evolutionary and Ecological Biology of Parasites
- More drug research/chemistry
- Environmental parasitology
- warm climate parasitology (practical)
- Pathogenesis of parasitic diseases.
- Diagnostics and also genetics
- Maybe a "Vaccine Development" stream
- Different diagnoses/genetic techniques being currently used
- Research in taxonomy of parasites
- Host-parasite interaction, functional genomics/proteomics
- More kinetoplastida - especially given all that is going on with RNAi in tryps.
- Being involved in the animal health industry I am interested in learning more about on farm research
- More of the climate change & parasitology talks
- The balance between agriculturally and medically important parasites was about right. I am not so sure about parasites of wild life, but then one cannot include everything. The themes were well thought out and coherent.
- Strongyloides
- more clinical and teaching aspects
- continued variety - perhaps technology themes rather than parasite themes - wider audience interest
- More on zoonotic parasites. Or aspects of epidemiology and host-parasite-environment-vector interactions.

When asked “**What did you particularly like about the 2008 ASP & Network conference?**” there were 51 comments:

- great chance to interact and catch up socially within the conference program (poster sessions)
- The chance to meet and talk to people all across the country working in a similar field as myself.

- The itchies and scratchies night was terrific and a good way to start it all off
- Invited speakers were top class as were the student presentations.
- The talks which were generally good.
- Plenary presentation by John Boothroyd was very interesting, excellent.
- The speed dating was really excellent despite my contrary expectations. Great to have the strong emphasis on posters.
- International speakers were outstanding.
- The breadth of the program
- Everything. I think this was a great conference with great people.
- The friendly atmosphere and networking opportunities.
- Good opportunities for talking with other participants. Some interesting plenary and symposium talks.
- The posters were displayed nicely that you could still move around and talk with other people. It is always a good opportunity for networking.
- President's address.
- Livestock parasite sessions.
- The format, the length, the social setting, the smallish size, the food. Loved the speed dating session.
- being exposed to a wide variety of different aspects of parasitology
- Poster speed dating was excellent
- Everything. It was very enjoyable.
- very interesting and inspiring presentations, plenty of time for catching up with colleagues
- The international speakers were excellent.
- Plenary lectures, atmosphere, venue, food, organisation.
- The proximity of the two lecture rooms and their sizes. The opportunity to meet a lot of past colleagues.
- Nice to see papers and poster from outside of Australia.
- The opportunity to network and meet other likeminded people in a social and discipline setting. Also, the great people at the registration desk - very welcoming and helpful.
- Great student talks.
- well organised and interesting high quality talks
- The wealth of information shared
- The program and the international speakers and the large representation of students and post docs among the oral presentations.
- Meeting the people.
- invited talks were great-excellent science
- enjoyed the itchies and scratchies night and conference dinner
- A couple of the plenary speakers were really interesting.
- I think that the speed dating is particularly worthwhile, it's interesting and it made me look at some of the posters.
- Caught up with David Rollinson - what a gentleman and role model. John Boothroyd was an excellent pick for plenary as well, great speaker and extremely approachable. Having good plenary speakers

who are passionate about their worms reminds me how much fun parasitology can be.

- well managed, very professional, excellent and essential forum for the field
- The opportunities to speak with people from around Australia and overseas about my field of study.
- The venue was great (apart for the seats in the auditorium). the poster set up worked well not cramped
- Welcoming and supportive on students. Great number of delegates and parasitologists from variety of backgrounds.
- Diverse topics and approaches.
- Very good mix of young and more experienced parasitologists. Very good and enthusiastic PhD students and young post-docs, presenting their work to a high profession standard. Liked the idea of posters being presented as 2-minute talks, this worked very well.
- Student workshop, variety of seminar topics

When asked whether there was **“anything about the 2009 ASP & Network conference that you would like to see improved or changed?”**, besides the weather and the air-conditioning, there were 32 comments giving constructive criticism, some are listed below:

- The accommodation and conference site would be best located together
- Many colleagues from the veterinary pharmaceutical industry would have benefited greatly from attending, but weren't aware of the conference or the importance of the presentations, publicity directed at the companies would drag a few more delegates in.
- Map of the campus and surroundings of the venue; ensuring speakers keep their time (as at student's breakfast); even more diverse topics; perhaps a kind of workshop for students - open discussion
- A greater effort to get a plenary speaker to review the state of the art on animal/livestock parasitology.
- More focus on ecology, host relationships, taxonomy topics if possible.
- The availability of a sick room/quiet room would also be a good idea
- Have a time for discussion after the award presentation (given this year by Crabb). Discussion is where I learn the most, listening to others' questions.
- Have the sessions organized around biological themes rather than systems i.e. mix up the worms and protozoa around things like immune response, gene expression, cell biology, epidemiology, etc.
- I would like to see more time for discussion after the talks. Maybe it would be worth considering some round table discussions on specific topics without slides. For example, a discussion on the malaria vaccine was excellent, but could have been better orchestrated to extract most information and more of the panel's thoughts on the reality of its prospects.

- A good mixture of molecular and non-molecular parasitology is essential. Mixing related presentations from both of these categories would be interesting.
- I did not hear every question - not all Chairs repeated the question
- The talks were very laboratory orientated, would have liked to have seen some more public health and epidemiology
- Speed dating talks - they are great but information overload squeezing 30 into an hour. Would prefer to see them split over the two poster nights.

Conference Oral Presentations

This year there were 73 contributed paper presentations and 29 oral poster presentation sessions at the conference.

Respondents to this section identified themselves as invited speakers or session chair (16%), speaker in a contributed paper session (27%), speaker in the oral poster session (9%), or neither (48%).

Almost all respondents said they did not find it difficult to see the powerpoint slides, and they did not find it difficult to hear the presenter during the oral presentations. However, about half of the respondents found the conference room temperature uncomfortable (either too hot or too cold). There were 30 comments about the oral presentations, many commenting that the room was too cold; most thought the presentations were “Generally excellent”. There were some suggestions: “Some slides are still very crowded and there is a need for more concise communication”, and “Very smooth, excellent job behind the scenes. One request for future conferences would be to have a room with a couple of computers available for people to check their talks (last minute edits) prior to speaking.”

Conference Posters

This year there were 56 posters displayed at the conference.

Almost all respondents (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was enough time allocated in the programme to view the conference posters and half of the survey respondents thought that one evening was not long enough for viewing posters. Many respondents (76%) agreed or strongly agreed that the 2-minute poster presentations were generally well-executed and interesting to listen to. Almost half of the respondents (46%) agreed or strongly agreed that the 2-minute poster presentations were a highlight of the conference programme.

There were 34 comments about **the 2-minute oral poster presentations**, including four who complimented the chair of this session, Kieran Kirk. Others are listed below:

- Again, a great success.

- This is an entertaining way to 'advertise' posters.
- Originally I thought that 2 minutes was not enough, but the session ended up working out quite well and was quite interesting to listen to.
- They were great. Keep it up for next time. Be clearer about the one slide rule and don't let people stretch this with absurd animations or multi-part slides that distracted. Kieran chaired warmly, firmly and expertly. Install him permanently!
- Break up the talks into two blocks each evening.
- Loved the speed dating session. This worked very well and you should definitely do it again.
- I thought it was a great way to get an overall view of the parasitology research taking place around Australia
- It is a good opportunity to get an overview of the highlights of the posters, and a good opportunity for the presenters to learn to be succinct.
- All talks should be that long :)
- They were very entertaining! And increase my interest in some of the posters.
- I like the 2 minute advertisements for the posters. It makes it easy to target the people of interest to me following the session.
- It would have been helpful if all of the presenters gave the reference to their papers abstract in the Conference Publication of Abstracts. Some did and this was helpful.
- They are very good, draws attention to various posters that you may just read and walk ... it provides the gist of many and highlights the ones you want to know more about.
- Unfortunately, had to miss these but love the idea and fits with my attention span...
- Good to see the students sell themselves and their work. Need to be kept short and to the point.
- It was well done again.
- Prefer to split them into 2 x 30 min sessions over 2 nights. Too much information in one hit - by half way through most people had switched off.
- As stated earlier, a very good idea, very well presented and timed, should be repeated.
- The 2-minute oral poster presentations were very informative and demonstrated creativity. I have most certainly enjoyed listening to them, but do not agree they were the highlight of the conference programme.
- I thought they were a great idea for an introduction where people could find out more if they wished via the posters.
- Loved the speed dating session. This worked very well and you should definitely do it again.
- The speed presentations were a great idea and not choosing too many was good also.

There were 25 comments about the **Conference Posters**, some are listed below;

- Turn out to view the posters was disappointing, especially on Tuesday night. Need to consider holding a single poster viewing evening and/or having more poster presenters give 2-minute talks.
- They were good and I liked the forum for presentation.
- They were generally of a high standard. I would encourage the addition of a photograph of the presenter for easier identification.
- Liked the speed dating session and the poster room setup. Maybe a split in the middle (perpendicular to the long rows) to make access to other rows and movement easier.
- Generally of a good standard and the arrangements for the posters was good and effective.
- Good quality, varied and interesting.
- Very interesting, would be great to have pictures of people so you know who to ask about a poster if they're not about. But then that's the point of wandering around chatting to people.
- Good standard. Well positioned to allow informal discussions. Good that they remained in place for several days.
- Conference posters covered a variety of topics and of significant interest.
- For a general audience, it might be helpful to ensure that each contains a summary that is understandable by non-experts. This was not a major problem at ASP.

When asked for any "**final comments**" there were 34 responses and some are listed below:

- Many thanks to the conference organizers for all their hard work and putting together an excellent program!
- First time at the conference, and had a terrific time, very memorable experience.
- Well organised. I think Nick Smith and his team did a really great job.
- Seemed like a lower attendance this year, some sessions were poorly attended (except for the conference dinner, where people came from all directions! Many more people than attended the sessions)
- Overall, I loved it - but I always do. One thing is it would have been good to have had a couple of terminals for public email. The wireless network reception was not that great (quite poor in the main lecture theater) and there was no Eduroam coverage.
- A great opportunity for me in terms of learning about parasites, research in parasitology that's being undertaken, and networking.
- Overall, very well done. The organising committee did a great job.
- Not a gripe but a general observation. The conference was geared towards out-of-towners staying close by in hotels. People like me who commuted in from home each day found it hard to get good value out of the extra sessions such as dinners and breakfasts, and maybe missed out on some good information as well.
- A great experience. Thank you!

- The Registration process was smooth and effective. The venue was excellent.
- As always, a well-organised congress, with efficient registration and check-in procedures. Obviously, an experienced team!
- I enjoyed the meeting thoroughly.
- I enjoyed it from a social and scientific perspective.
- Excellent conference
- Great meeting - excellently organized in advance and excellently run during the meeting itself. Great job!
- This was a very enjoyable meeting with excellent speakers and a very good program.
- The conference was well run. Catering was excellent, venue was good.
- Remains my favourite conference of the year. Great work, keep it up.
- Well run, enjoyable conference, congratulations.
- Overall, the conference was really well organised and seemed to go flawlessly in any way. I consider it both very informative and enjoyable. Thank you to the organisers.
- It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience with an amazing range of topics and showed the great vitality of parasitology in Australia - you are very fortunate.
- I really enjoyed the conference, it was a great experience.