



The Mars Society Australia
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Mars Comes to Adelaide this Weekend

Mars is coming to Adelaide this weekend, with the 8th Australian Mars Exploration Conference (AMEC) being held at the University of South Australia on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th July. AMEC is the annual conference of the Mars Society Australia (MSA), which brings together researchers from across Australia and internationally, and provides the opportunity for the public to find out the latest in the multi-disciplinary field of Mars research.

The conference comes after an exciting month for Mars enthusiasts, with the successful landing of the Phoenix mission near the Martian northern pole, and its sensational discovery of frozen water close to the Martian surface and soil so hospitable to life that garden vegetables could be grown in it. Phoenix joins a record number of spacecraft already operating at Mars, bringing the total to three in Mars orbit and three on the surface.

The weekend will begin with a public lecture at 7.30pm on Friday 4th July by Professor Russell Boyce from the University of Queensland on 'Australian Hypersonic Research and the Road to Mars'. A leading Australian expert on this promising propulsion technology, Professor Boyce will talk about how to get there, with special reference to the challenges of entering the Martian atmosphere.

AMEC will open on Saturday morning, when MSA Vice-President Dr Jonathan Clarke will give an overview of the current Phoenix mission. Other conference speakers will include Professor Rob Morrison ('Rob' from the Curiosity Show), Dr Lizabeth K Coe, Assistant Chief (Acting) of the NASA Education Division, Dr Mark Bishop from the University of South Australia and Ms Artemis Westenberg Director, International Relations for The Mars Society and also President of the Mars Society of the Netherlands. There will be updates on Australian Mars research by people in the MSA including land site selection, rovers, propulsion systems, robotics, and Mars habitats. Mars-themed photographic art by Adelaide artist Steve Hobbs will be on display.

The theme for the conference will be 'Spaceward Bound Australia'. Spaceward Bound is an educational program developed at NASA Ames and funded by the Exploration Systems Mission Directorate (ESMD), which aims to train the next generation of space explorers by having students and teachers participate in the exploration of scientifically interesting but remote and extreme environments on Earth as analogs for human exploration of the Moon and Mars.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between MSA and NASA Spaceward Bound in July 2007, opening the way for MSA to collaborate with NASA in this program. Two Australian teachers participated in a Spaceward Bound expedition to the Mojave Desert in March. MSA will be conducting its first Spaceward Bound Australia One (SBA1) expedition after AMEC, leaving Adelaide on the 7th of July for an educational program taking in Woomera, Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary and Wilpena (Rawnsley Park) returning to the University of South Australia in Adelaide on Tuesday 15th of July.

Leading the Expedition will be Professor Vic Gostin of the University of Adelaide, South Australia and MSA Education Officer Mr Mark Gargano, St Joseph's School, Northam, Western Australia. Attending SBA1, will be Dr Lizabeth K. Coe, Manager, Ames Educational

Technology Team, of NASA's Spaceward Bound from Ames Research Center, California, Ms Artemis Westenberg, Director, International Relations for The Mars Society and also President of the Mars Society of the Netherlands, and Dr Jon Clarke, Vice President MSA. This expedition will provide the ground work for a larger Spaceward Bound Expedition in 2009.

Mars Society Australia is a not-for-profit, CSIRO approved research organisation pursuing research and education opportunities to ensure the exploration and settlement of the Red Planet, Mars. Information on Mars Society Australia and AMEC 2008 can be found at <http://www.marssociety.org.au/> and information on Spaceward Bound is to be found at <http://quest.nasa.gov/projects/spacewardbound/>

Media interviews with Professor Russell Boyce or Mr Jonathan Clarke of Mars Society Australia can be arranged upon request. Please contact Mr Jonathan Clarke on 0418 401 612 or email him at vice-president@marssociety.org.au