



PRESS RELEASE

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MARS CONFERENCE WELCOMES LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A Russian scientist examining the psychological effects of a human visit to explore Mars and a British professor managing the Beagle 2 lander project, which aims to collect samples for study on the surface of Mars, will headline presenters taking part in a space conference in Perth next month.

Speakers at the Third Australian Mars Exploration Conference (AMEC), to be held at Trinity College, Perth in Western Australia on 22-24 August, will cover the full gamut of researchers and academics involved in Mars-related studies from around the country and internationally. AMEC, the annual conference of Mars Society Australia, is designed to give those with an interest in space, and Mars in particular, the opportunity to showcase the latest developments on human Mars exploration. Mars Society Australia, the national chapter of a global non-profit organisation dedicated to raising public awareness of human exploration of Mars, also runs these conferences to bring like-minded individuals together involved in research which may perhaps one day help to put the first human being on Mars.

"We're very pleased with the response we have had to the conference so far," says David Cooper, Vice-President, Mars Society Australia, and co-organiser of the 2003 conference. "Perth is an ideal setting for this conference, with many local academics involved in ground-breaking research with application to Mars, and the nearby New Norcia Ground Station, which will provide support to the Mars Express mission, the first European mission to the Red Planet."

The conference will start with a welcome cocktail party on Friday 22 August and there will be a conference dinner on Saturday 23 August at the Perth Aquarium. Speakers, panels and workshops will discuss such issues as the likelihood and difficulties of finding life on Mars, and the medical challenges of sending humans to Mars.

Key speakers at AMEC 2003 are Dr Vadim Gushin, Lead Researcher from the Institute of Bio-Medical Problems, part of the Ministry of Health in Moscow, Russia, and Manager of the British Beagle 2 lander project, Professor Colin Pillinger, from the United Kingdom.

"Their presence continues the tradition of inviting speakers of the highest calibre to address AMEC," says David Cooper. "Last year, we welcomed Apollo 17 astronaut Dr. Harrison Schmitt, one of the last two men to walk on the moon, who spoke at our conference on the reasons why we should send humans to Mars. This year we have international guests who are involved in both current and future research directly related to exploring Mars. Delegates to AMEC 2003 should enjoy a fascinating program."

Dr. Gushin has 20 years of varied experience in the areas of psychological selection, training, assessment and support of human performance in extreme environments, including space flights, and has participated in the psychological selection, training, monitoring and support of Russian space crews. He is now involved in a program

which is undertaking a full, earth-based long duration space flight simulation, and will speak about the application to human exploration of Mars, where crews will have to cope with missions lasting up to two or three years. In addition to speaking at AMEC 2003, Dr. Gushin will also be guest speaker at a breakfast at the Hyatt Ballroom, Perth, on Tuesday 19 August at 7.00 a.m., organised by the Western Australia chapter of Mars Society Australia.

Professor Pillinger, who will be addressing the Conference via video-link, is a Fellow of the Royal Society and Head of Planetary and Space Sciences Research Institute at the Open University, Milton Keynes in the UK. His involvement in the Beagle 2 project will give delegates an insider's perspective of robotic exploration as a possible prelude to future human missions. Beagle 2, scheduled to land on Mars on Christmas Day 2003 will conduct observations and experiments on the surface for about six months, relaying data back to Earth via the orbiter on Mars Express.

Other speakers include the six Australians who earlier this year completed a month-long increment known as Expedition One on the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in south-west Utah; conducting research and testing the functionality of systems, technology and hardware which might be one day used on Mars. They include Dr. Jonathan Clarke, Lead Geologist on Expedition One, and James Waldie, who is researching new forms of spacesuit design which may allow for greater flexibility and movement when exploring rough terrain, such as will be found on Mars.

Murdoch University lecturer Dr. Graham Mann, a robotics expert, will discuss his study comparing three simulated Mars rover vehicles, capable of carrying astronaut crews on sorties and field trips, and will discuss the progress of the Starchaser Marsupial Rover project, which is designing and building an Australian Mars rover vehicle based on a Land Rover chassis, for use in research to be carried out in the Australian Outback. He will be joined by another local academic, Dr. Rob Hart from the Department of Medical Imaging Science, Curtin University of Technology, who is looking at the use of medical imaging technology on the International Space Station and currently serves as a subject matter expert with the Medical Informatics and Health Care Systems (Advanced Projects) team at NASA's Johnson Space Center.

"It is great to see Australians involved in ground-breaking space-related research, even though we don't have a national space agency and research funding in this country for this type of work is limited," says David Cooper. "Space enthusiasts from Western Australia have a rare chance to find out just how good our local contingent is, as well as hearing from international experts. I would encourage people to register as soon as possible to avoid disappointment."

To register for AMEC and to find out the latest conference updates, including speakers, please see <https://monroe.vianet.net.au/~mhchost/AMEC2003.html>. This is a secure site and allows for online and postal registration of delegates.

For interviews, please direct inquiries to Jennifer Laing, Public Relations Officer on email at pr@marssociety.org.au or phone (Melbourne, Australia) on 0417 135 113 or contact

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The Mars Society was founded to further the goal of the exploration and settlement of the Red Planet.

For further information on MSA, see <http://www.marssociety.org.au>