



Press Release: Adelaide, July 14 2009

Enjoy a Weekend on the Red Planet!: Registrations Still Available for the 2009 Australian Mars Exploration Conference

The 9th Australian Mars Exploration Conference or AMEC will open with a coup – a free public lecture in Adelaide on **Friday 17 July** by one of the world's leading space researchers, **Dr Chris McKay**, a Planetary Scientist at the NASA Ames Research Center. Dr McKay is a co-investigator on the Titan Huygen's probe in 2005, the Mars Phoenix lander mission for 2007, and the Mars Science Lander mission for 2009. He is currently the Program Scientist for the Robotic Lunar Exploration Program.

The free public lecture, held at the City East Campus of the University of South Australia at 7.30 pm, looks at the results of the Phoenix Mission to Mars and work done on Earth to further Mars research, at some of the analogue sites around the world, including Australia. Dr McKay is in Australia to lead the Spaceward Bound expedition from July 11-16, a collaborative program between NASA and Mars Society Australia, in the Flinders Ranges. This program aims to allow scientists to increase their knowledge about desert conditions and further their research in linked areas, while participating teachers have the unique opportunity to assist with this research and develop an appreciation for field science and data gathering techniques, which they can then pass on to their students back in the classroom.

Conference speakers across the weekend include **Dr Rosalba Bonaccorsi** from NASA Ames Research Center and the SETI Institute, **Reut Sorek-Abramovich**, **Brendan Burns** and **Brett Neilan** from the Australian Centre for Astrobiology and **Dr. John Malos** and **Dr. Jonathon Ralston** from the Queensland Centre for Advanced Technologies (QCAT), Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). A conference banquet will also take place on the Saturday evening at the historic Ayers House restaurant. Details of the 2009 AMEC Conference are found on the Mars Society Australia Website, including registration information.

The 2009 Conference will highlight some of the innovative and exciting Mars-related research taking place here and internationally, with the goal of nurturing and developing the pioneering culture and methods required to explore Mars.

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 2009 can be found at <http://www.marssociety.org.au/> and <http://www.marssociety.org.au/AMEC.php> Information on Spaceward Bound is to be found at <http://www.marssociety.org.au/SBA2009.php> and <http://quest.nasa.gov/projects/spacewardbound/>

Media interviews can be arranged upon request. Please contact Mr Guy Murphy on 0416 794 688 or via the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary (11 July – 16 July) on (08) 8648 4848.