

4<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**To: The Executive Committee of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV).**

**Re: Binomial nomenclature for virus species: a consultation.**

We the undersigned are concerned about proposals by the ICTV to establish a Latinized binomial nomenclature for virus species (Siddell, Walker et al. 2020).

Many members of our Society have voiced opinions that a Latinized binomial nomenclature is unworkable. We see no imperative to conform with other biological taxonomies which adopted Latinization in a past era. We do not see that Latinization is necessary to make it obvious that a name is that of a species. We see the stated advantages of Latin as a language (minimal character set, no diacritics, universality, stability and keyboard access and grammatical forms) also apply largely to English.

We expect the application of Latinization would be cumbersome, requiring that virologists understand and apply correctly Latin grammatical rules. We see that creating Latinized species names for tens/hundreds of thousands of new viruses will become entirely unmanageable when there may be little specific information accompanying the genome sequences.

We believe that 2020, the year of COVID-19, is not an appropriate time to undertake a major change of naming virus species. Our members are stretched to the limit with other tasks, and many have not had time to properly consider this matter.

Our consensus view is that a binomial nomenclature using a freeform species epithet, as proposed by Professor Peter Walker, is a better option, for the reasons listed in his proposal.

Our preferred options, in order of preference, are:

1. The status quo.
2. Binomial nomenclature using freeform epithet.
3. Latinized binomial nomenclature: this is our least preferred option and a legacy that none of us would want to leave.

The Australasian Virology Society represents over 700 members that include Australia and New Zealand's most prominent researchers, clinicians and scientists working with viral infectious diseases and the means for their management and prevention.

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**Executive Committee:**

Prof Gilda Tachedjian, President AVS  
Burnet Institute

Prof Jason Mackenzie, Treasurer AVS  
The University of Melbourne

Prof Heidi Drummer, Vice President AVS  
Burnet Institute

A/Prof Peter Speck, Secretary AVS  
Flinders University

## Reference:

Siddell, S. G., P. J. Walker, E. J. Lefkowitz, A. R. Mushegian, B. E. Dutilh, B. Harrach, R. L. Harrison, S. Junglen, N. J. Knowles, A. M. Kropinski, M. Krupovic, J. H. Kuhn, M. L. Nibert, L. Rubino, S. Sabanadzovic, P. Simmonds, A. Varsani, F. M. Zerbini and A. J. Davison (2020). "Binomial nomenclature for virus species: a consultation." Archives of Virology **165**(2): 519-525.

## Signatories:



Professor Gilda Tachedjian, Burnet Institute, President, Australasian Virology Society.



Professor Heidi Drummer, Burnet Institute, Vice-President, Australasian Virology Society.



Associate Professor Peter Speck, Flinders University, Secretary, Australasian Virology Society; Chair, Nomenclature sub-committee, AVS.



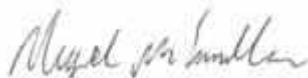
Professor Jason Mackenzie, University of Melbourne, Treasurer, Australasian Virology Society.



Professor Damian Purcell, University of Melbourne, past President, Australasian Virology Society.



Professor Paul Young, University of Queensland, past President, Australasian Virology Society.

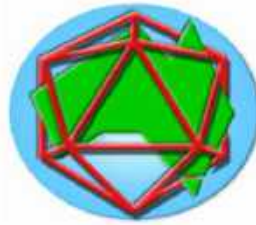


Professor Nigel McMillan, Griffith University, past President, Australasian Virology Society.



Dr Lara Herrero, Griffith University, Convenor, AVS11: Australasian Virology Society Biennial Scientific Meeting, 2021.

Dr Natalie Prow, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute and University of South Australia, Membership Secretary, Australasian Virology Society.



**Australasian  
VIROLOGY Society**

AVS - building virology connections

Professor Miguel E. Quiñones-Mateu, University of Otago, New Zealand, Committee Member, Australasian Virology Society.

Dr Greg Moseley, Monash University, Member, Australasian Virology Society, Committee Member, Australasian Virology Society.

Dr Kirsty Short, University of Queensland, Committee Member, Australasian Virology Society Committee

Associate Professor Karla Helbig, La Trobe University, Committee Member, Australasian Virology Society Committee

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Professor Edward Holmes, Fellow Australian Academy of Science, Fellow Royal Society, University of Sydney.

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