

# PRESS RELEASE – MARS SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

18 October 2001

## FAREWELL THE AUSSIE MARS SCIENCE TEAM BEFORE THEIR EXPEDITION TO RED CENTRE

Mars Society Australia announced today that the media and general public will be able to meet members of their Project Jarntimarra expedition, before they depart later this month to scout for Mars-like locations in the Australian outback. A highlight will be the rare opportunity to meet high-profile NASA space scientists Dr Carol Stoker and Dr Larry Lemke, both of whom work on Mars-related projects aimed at getting humans to the Red Planet.

The expedition, known as Project Jarntimarra, will wind its way through some of the most spectacular terrain on the planet, much of which is considered to be Mars-like in appearance. A group of Australian and international scientists, over a period of two weeks, will identify places which could be used for testing technology and elements required for a successful future human mission to Mars. It is hoped that a research facility or habitat may eventually be built in the outback to accommodate this research.

In the lead-up to their departure, a free public forum on Mars, 'Mars: Exploring the Red Centre', will be held in conjunction with Adelaide University's Department of Geology and Geophysics. Media are welcome to attend and are also invited to a photo and interview opportunity with expedition members on the morning they set off, at the South Australian Museum.

"This will be a wonderful chance to meet Dr Stoker and Dr Lemke, distinguished researchers who have been involved in a number of NASA Mars projects, and spent time in the Canadian Arctic on simulated Mars missions. Dr Stoker will be sharing her experiences at our forum in Adelaide the night before the expedition leaves," said Mars Society Australia President Guy Murphy. "She will be joined by Dr Mark Bishop of the University of South Australia, who will compare Earth and Martian geology, and the Technical Director of Mars Society Australia, Jason Hoogland. Jason will talk about our expedition, its goals and itinerary. The public will be able to ask questions of our speakers and find out more about exploration of Mars, present, past and future."

The South Australian Museum was deliberately chosen for the media event to highlight the historical parallels between the early exploration of Australia and the exploration of contemporary frontiers. "The South Australian Museum houses one of the best collections in the world on Sir Douglas Mawson and his work in Antarctica. Mawson also went on numerous geological field trips to South Australia's Flinders Ranges, one of the places we will visit on Project Jarntimarra. We thought it was a appropriate tribute to his work to hold this event at the Museum," said Murphy.

A breakfast and briefing for those scientists participating in the Jarntimarra expedition at the Museum café will held on the morning of departure, followed by a group photo in the forecourt, facing North Terrace. The media will be able to take photographs, as well as interview participants, before the convoy leaves Adelaide on its way to Woomera, the first night's stop.

Aside from Dr Stoker and Dr Lemke, scientists taking part in Project Jarntimarra include Dr Graham Mann, Murdoch University, WA, Dr Jonathan Clarke, Australian National University, ACT, Dr Vic Gostin, Adelaide University, SA, and Prof. Malcolm Walter, Macquarie University & the Australian Centre for Astrobiology, NSW.

"The fact that people of this calibre are joining in on this event is testimony to its solid scientific goals and importance for the future of Australian space science," said Jason Hoogland. "They will bring their strengths in a variety of disciplines, such as robotics, geology, remote sensing and astrobiology, to this Project, which is the culmination of months of planning. We hope that people will come along and find out about the work we are doing, which may one day help to send people out from the 'cradle' of Earth, into the Solar System."

Details of the public and media events in Adelaide are as follows:

### **Free Public Forum – Mars: Exploring the Red Planet**

**Where:** Mawson Theatre, Department of Geology and Geophysics, Adelaide University

**When:** Friday 26 October 2001 at 7.00 pm – 8.30 pm

### **Media Photo/Interview Opportunity – Project Jarntimarra**

**Where:** South Australian Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide

**When:** Saturday 27 October 2001 at 9.00 am

**Media inquiries and requests for interviews should be directed to:** Jennifer Laing, Public Relations Director, Mars Society Australia - ph 0417 135 113 or email: [pr@marssociety.org.au](mailto:pr@marssociety.org.au) For further information on Mars Society Australia, visit <http://www.marssociety.org.au>