

ANNUAL REPORT OF COUNCIL RSWA FOR 2004-2005

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Planning and events

For much of this year, Council has concentrated on raising the profile of the Society. Better publicity led to higher attendance at the eight Ordinary General Meetings held during the year. The best attended meeting was the public forum for Science Week, "The State of the Environment – where to from here" in August 2004. Presentations were given by the Minister for the Environment, The Hon Dr Judy Edwards MLA, opposition spokesman for the environment, Mr Brendon Grills MLA, and the Greens candidate Ms Rachel Siewert. In December, the President attended the first ever Joint Meeting of Royal Societies of Australia in Sydney. This historic meeting heralds a new era of cooperation between Australia's six Royal Societies of Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, and South Australia. Following the meeting, a special reception was given by the Governor General and the Governor of NSW. A significant achievement of Council is the establishment of regular monthly meetings with the Minister for the Environment and Science, The Hon Dr Judy Edwards MLA, the first of which is to take place in August. Council members will raise matters with the Minister pertaining to aspects of Science and the Environment in Western Australia.

Postgraduate symposium

In April, Leah Delfs (together with Vic Semeniuk and Margaret Brocx) organized a very successful postgraduate symposium at Curtin University of Technology. There were eleven oral contributions and six poster presentations. The number of student members in the Society continues to grow, largely because of the postgraduate symposium. Postgraduate student representation on the Council continues to form an important link between the Society, research students and Universities.

Eureka prize

Together with the Royal Societies of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, the Society continues to sponsor an Australian Eureka prize for Interdisciplinary Scientific Research. The Society's sponsorship of the Eureka Prize is subject to annual review.

Risk management

Council continued to deal with matters of public liability and risk management. Dr Colin Walker (Senior-Vice President) has been given the responsibility for risk management of the Society's activities. Obtaining public liability insurance cover under the government sponsored scheme remains the top priority of Council.

Joint Royal Societies Meetings

As the result of the Joint Meeting of the Royal Societies of Australia in Sydney, the RSWA hopes to forge closer ties with interstate colleagues. It is planned to have annual joint meetings in different states. The next meeting will be in Melbourne later this year.

Appreciation

Finally, I wish to thank the Council for their hard work this year. I look forward to working with Council for a second term to promote science in Western Australia. One member of Council not standing for re-election, Marilyn Bennet-Chambers, is thanked for her contribution as Membership Secretary. I also thank the BGPA for allowing us to use their facilities, and the Western Australian Museum for holding our library and receiving our mail. I look forward to serving in the office of President for a second term.

MEETINGS

The 2003-4 Annual General Meeting was held on Monday, 19th July, 2004 in the Jennifer Arnold Lecture Theatre, Zoology Department, University of Western Australia. The University Science Medals were presented by the President, Dr Graham Thompson. Medals were awarded to Pierre Ulric Achour, Curtin University of Technology; Douglas Bearham, Murdoch University; Emma Louise Craven, The University of Western Australia; and Christopher Zadow, Edith Cowan University. The RSWA Council for 2004-2005 was announced, being accepted by default as all nominations were unopposed. The 2004 Presidential Address was delivered by Dr Graham Thompson on 'Better terrestrial vertebrate fauna survey protocols for the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments'. The Incoming President, Dr Alex Bevan, was installed by Professor Alan Robson, Dean, Vice-Chancellor, University of Western Australia.

Monthly meetings

Monthly ordinary meetings, commencing at 7.30 pm instead of 8.00 pm as in previous years, were preceded by a full Council meeting and included a presentation from an invited speaker. The thanks of Council go to these speakers for their contributions of high quality science to Western Australians during this past year.

Christmas function

An excellent 2004 Christmas function was held in December at Whiteman Park with the Astronomical Society of Western Australia (ASWA). Members of ASWA are thanked for kindly providing and manning their telescopes for members to view the new Moon, star clusters, the Orion nebula and other wonders of the night sky. Thanks go to Vic Semeniuk and Margaret Brocx for organising the event.

PROCEEDINGS SECRETARY

The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia were published and sent by post and by email Monthly in 2004-2005 to all members of the Society, and posted onto the RSWA Web page. The Proceedings were also used as a vehicle for notices of interest to the members.

PUBLICITY OFFICER

The Publicity Officer, on a routine basis, organised and publicised the monthly presentations and other special events of the Society via a number of media outlets, posters, and electronic outlets. This past year also saw a well-attended special event held for Science Week, wherein a public forum was held inviting various politicians (Dr Judy Edwards, Rachael Siewert, and Brendon Grylls) to present their views on the "State of the Environment" in WA.

Other events

The Publicity Officer and the President also represented the Society at two functions. The first was during Science Week in August for a theme "Local Science Global Impacts", co-hosted by RSWA, the Department of Agriculture, and Murdoch University, where Alex Bevan was a speaker. This event was promoted and publicised jointly by RSWA and the Department of Agriculture. The second was at AstroFest, a weekend Expo of astronomy science, where Alex Bevan and Vic Semeniuk provided presentations.

LIBRARY

Consolidation of the library in its new premises at Welshpool continued as shelving, labels and databases for the combined Western Australian Museum and Royal Society Libraries were updated. The rare books were freeze-treated for pests before being unpacked, sorted, and shelved in a secure, windowless room. The new location provides plenty of free parking, but please ring first if you plan a visit.

Some early journals remain at the Perth site, utilising shelving on the top floor of Hackett Hall. These can be accessed only by Library staff on request. The library catalogue of all books and journals held is accessible via the Internet.

JOURNAL

The Society continues to publish 4 issues of The Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia per year, and the publication of the Journal continues to be a very important part of the Society's work. In 2004-5, Volume 87 of the Journal was published with 18 research papers and notes. The Journal continues to receive a substantial number of manuscripts, and between July 2004 and June 2005, 19 manuscripts were received for consideration for publication. As of June 2005, Volume 88 (1) of the Journal is in press, and Volume 88 Parts 2 & 3 are being prepared. Also, currently, the Society is preparing a Special Issue of the Journal, in conjunction with FESA, on Fire Management in peat wetlands.

Council acknowledges the work of the former Honorary Editor Philip Withers and current Honorary Editor Kathy Meney and Sub-editor Margaret Brocx, in ensuring that incoming manuscripts are properly processed. The quality of papers in the Journal remains at an international standard, reflecting the high quality of articles that are submitted for publication. Its circulation continues to grow, both through expanding membership of individuals and institutional exchanges and subscriptions. The Editor, Council and Society would like to thank the reviewers for the time and effort that they have generously devoted to reviewing

submitted manuscripts. The Journal continues to be typeset and printed by the Western Australian Museum. The Society thanks the staff of the Publications Section for their help with publishing the Journal.

ARCHIVES

The ex-officio position of Archivist to the Royal Society of Western Australia is to be formalised by the Council (subject to a vote by the membership), with the following responsibilities:

- 1) Organise, list and submit archival materials to the Battye Library at regular intervals.
- 2) Maintain an updated list of all submitted items into the future.
- 3) Promote an interest in the archival holdings of the Society.
- 4) Deal with any historical issues that may arise.

The existing archival holdings in the Battye Library comprise material up to the 1970s, albeit rather patchy. Recent (2000 to 2005) material is presently being submitted to the Archive, but there is a gap in the 1980s and 1990s which still needs finding, organising and submitting.

WORKSHOPS AND SYMPOSIA

Postgraduate Symposium - The 8th annual Postgraduate Student Symposium was held on Sunday 3rd April 2005 and hosted by Curtin University of Technology. Eleven speakers (Doctoral/Masters students) presented 20 minute talks outlining their research and a further six posters were presented. Thanks are due to Leah Delfs for her outstanding organization, and to Vic Semeniuk and Margaret Brocx for their logistical support. Professor Jonathan Majer is also thanked for providing local support.

AWARDS 2004-2005

University Science Medals

These medals are awarded to the top student eligible to graduate with a degree in natural or physical sciences from each of the four major local universities. Medals for 2004 were awarded to Kirsten Muir, Curtin University; Alexander Rea, Murdoch University; Megan Jordan, University of Western Australia; and Joanne Bowyer, Edith Cowan University.

Royal Society of WA Medals

Medals of the Royal Society of Western Australia for 2005 were awarded to Professor D. I. Groves, University of Western Australia, for his work on Economic Geology and Mineralogy, and to Adjunct Professor K. J. McNamara for his work in Palaeontology and Evolutionary Palaeobiology.

INTERNET

Council thanks Vic Semeniuk and Margaret Brocx for their management of the Society web site. The site, <http://www.ecu.edu.au/pa/rswa.htm>, includes general information on the Society and continues to be upgraded and improved. Many of the recent activities of the Society can be reviewed in the years issues of the Proceedings, which have been placed there in .pdf form. The web site has details on the *Journal* (such as purchasing back issues and special symposia issues) and on Society events, such as current and future symposia hosted by the Society and outside organisations. It now includes *Journal* issues as .pdf files that can be downloaded, starting from volume 79 and continuing up to the middle of volume 85. Our library holdings are available and searchable from the web-site. In future, it is hoped that Geoff Deacon, who has been co-opted onto Council, will assume management of the web-site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Society thanks the Western Australian Museum for their cooperation in housing the Society's library. It is also indebted to Murdoch University Library for housing its Journal stocks. The Board of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority is thanked for allowing the Society to hold meetings on the Kings Park premises under their jurisdiction and for providing support for Society activities. Council acknowledges the support of the Zoology Department, University of Western Australia, for providing facilities for the Annual General Meetings, and Curtin University of Technology for hosting the Post Graduate Symposium. The Society acknowledges the continued support of the State Government in providing a subsidy (through the Library and Information Service) for publication of the *Journal*.