



Annual Report of Council for 2012-2013

15th July, 2013

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The objective of the Society is to advance and promote science. During 2012-2013 Council has continued to raise the profile of the Society and bring to its members and the community, through Monthly Meetings, Public Forums, the monthly Proceedings and quarterly Journal, scientific insights into the major issues facing us locally and globally. We celebrate the role of scientific exchange in making the world a better place.

Council 2013-2015

As the number of vacancies on the 2013-2015 council exceeded the number of nominations, a formal election was not held. Councillor Myles Menz, who joined us several years ago, resigned from Council after finishing his PhD and taking up a position overseas. We thank Myles for his contribution. All other current Councillors renominated for the 2013-2015 Council and are joined by Prof David Haig. David has been a member of RSWA for many years and retired from a UWA professorship three years ago to concentrate on research. He is renowned for his diverse work on foraminifera in Western Australia, New Guinea and Timor that has ranged from environmental to stratigraphic and tectonic.

Postgraduate Symposium

The 14th Annual Postgraduate Symposium, held on Saturday 29th September at Curtin University, was a resounding success. Despite this also being Grand Final Day more than 50 students, their colleagues, supervisors, RSWA members and councillors attended the event at which there were ten oral presentations and 4 poster presentations. The quality of the presentations was exceptional with topics ranging from *Lake Clifton: thrombolites under stress*, to *Vanadium (IV) complexes of organic acids in aqueous environments*, and generated lively discussions during the tea and lunch breaks and end of day drinks. Students were given the opportunity to have an extended abstract published in the RSWA Journal.

Centenary

The RSWA received Royal assent to assume the name Royal Society of Western Australia on November 18th 1913. However, the name was not formally adopted until a meeting on 10th March 1914 when a new Constitution was approved. This marked the transition from the former 'Natural History and Scientific Society' to the RSWA. We received a letter from Government House on 11th March 1914 informing us that the King (George V) had agreed to become Patron of the RSWA. Our Centenary clearly dates from the meeting on the 10th March 1914.

Prof Alex Bevan heads the RSWA Centenary Sub-Committee and has already planned an exciting scientific programme for the year. We expect to have several formal social events around the time of the important dates and to end the year. Members will be kept abreast of developments as the Centenary approaches and the program of events is further developed.

Council Retreat and Moving Forward

In early 2013 the RSWA Council held its fifth one-day Retreat to look at the current status and direction of the Society, and review the progress made since the last Retreat. Amongst the recommendations from this and the previous Retreat that have come to fruition is the successful application for a Lotterywest grant to upgrade the website and appoint a website manager, a new

name for the RSWA Medal and progress towards modernising the RSWA banner and Journal and Proceedings covers to be launched during the Centenary. We were very pleased that Dr Peter Williamson agreed to take on the position of website manager for the RSWA. Peter has considerable experience in website management having very successfully managed the website for the Australasian plant Pathology Society for a number of years.

RSWA Forrest Medal

The Medal of The Royal Society of Western Australia was instituted in 1924 to mark the centenary of the birth of Lord Kelvin (26 June, 1825), British mathematical physicist and engineer. The Royal Society Medal is awarded approximately every four years for distinguished work in science connected with Western Australia. Originally referred to as the 'Gold Medal' and then subsequently sometimes as the 'Kelvin Medal' it bears in relief on its obverse side the head of Kelvin. The first three medals were struck in gold, and all subsequent medals in silver. RSWA is a multidisciplinary Society so having the medal named after Kelvin is not representative of what the Society is about.

Council has decided that the Centenary is an appropriate time to change the name of the medal and have agreed to rename it the RSWA Forrest Medal after Sir John Forrest, first Premier of Western Australia and well known naturalist. He was the first President of the first scientific society in Western Australia, an unnamed Natural History Society established in 1891. This Society was the precursor of the Meuller Botanical Society formed in 1897, later to be renamed the Western Australian Natural History Society in 1903, the Natural History and Science Society of WA in 1909, and finally, The Royal Society of Western Australia in 1913. Council decided that Sir John Forrest was a suitable candidate to have our medal named after because he was Western Australian born, eminent, associated with science but not with any specific scientific discipline.

Editorial Board

The journal continues to be the flagship publication of the RSWA despite the challenges we face in a rapidly changing publishing environment. The journal is published under the direction of its Editor-in-Chief, Tony Cockbain, who is ably assisted by the members of the Editorial Board. I would like to thank Tony and the members of the Editorial Board for their contribution.

Proceedings

Our monthly newsletter continues to be published and it is now distributed largely by email in order to reduce costs of printing and postage (although those members without an email address continue to receive it by post). The Proceedings contains information about upcoming events, items of general scientific interest to WA, and accounts of the recently delivered presentations to the monthly meetings. I would like to thank Lynne Milne for her efforts in producing the Proceedings.

Appreciation

Finally, I wish to thank all RSWA Councillors for their hard work during what has been a very successful year and I look forward to celebrating an exciting and innovative program of events with all members during our centenary year, 2014.

MEETINGS

Annual General Meeting

The Royal Society of Western Australia's 2012 Annual General Meeting was held on Monday 16th July in the Webb Lecture Theatre at the University of Western Australia. The meeting was preceded by refreshments, giving the medallists and their guests an opportunity to meet councillors, members and each other. The meeting opened at 7.30 pm and the President Dr Philip O'Brien presented the Annual Report and Treasurer's report. The student medals and certificates were presented by Prof Lyn Beazley AO, WA's Chief Scientist and Vice-Patron of RSWA. Dr Phillip

Playford gave a presentation titled *The Wreck of the Zuytdorp – 1712*, followed by further refreshments and discussion.

Monthly Meetings

The monthly talks this year, held after every Council Meeting, have been exceptionally well - attended. The third John de Laeter Memorial Lecture, delivered by Winthrop Prof Malcolm McCulloch, was titled *From the Cosmos to Corals: geochemical insights into past, present and future planet Earth*. A wide variety of other topics presented by WA scientists included: *Computerised tomography: a new way of looking at old Bones*; *Fusion – a sustainable energy source for the future*; *From Fossils to Forensics – why the recovery of old and degraded DNA is really useful*; *Stratigraphic reconstruction of Timor Leste: implications for the uplift of a chaotic island*; *Disappearing urban wetlands: A case study of Pipdinny Swamp, Western Australia*; and *Mega-tsunami deposits in the Shark Bay, Pilbara, and Kimberley areas of Western Australia*

We thank all speakers who gave of their time and went to considerable effort to ensure that our members were informed on major scientific developments.

Christmas Function

The Annual RSWA Christmas Party was held on Monday 10th December at WA Maritime Museum Shipwreck Galleries, with Dr Ian MacLeod, Executive Director of Fremantle Museums and Maritime Heritage, taking guests on a tour through the Museum. Members and guests then gathered in the Museum courtyard for a BBQ, with salads, desserts and nibbles brought along by everyone to share. We thank Ian for the tour and helping to arrange the event.

OTHER REPORTS

Editorial Board

As you know the Journal is the flagship of the RSWA. We produce a high quality scientific journal that is important for dissemination of the results of WA Research and that is the envy of the other Royal Societies' across Australia. The quality of the journal is testament to the efforts of a string of past Editors who have given freely of their time and expended great effort to attain this quality.

In 2013 we will moved from publishing four times a year to twice a year. The Journal now includes extended abstracts (from the Society's Postgraduate Symposium), obituaries, and book reviews. Plans are well under way to produce a Centennial issue of the Journal in 2014 that will have papers reviewing significant aspects of WA science, as well as a history of the RSWA since its inception.

Our search for a publisher for the journal failed to find a suitable tender. With the new website, that is being continually improved, we believe that self-publishing is the most economical way to continue to produce a high-quality journal.

The Editorial Board for 2013–2015 continues unchanged from last year.

A E Cockbain, South Perth (Editor-in-chief)

H Bekle, University of Notre Dame

A Bevan, Western Australian Museum

R Davis, Edith Cowan University

K A Haskard, Data Analysis Australia

P Ladd, Murdoch University

D Laird, Murdoch University

M van Keulen, Murdoch University

K Trinajstic, Curtin University

K Wright, Curtin University

Tony Cockbain thanks the Associate Editors, as well as all reviewers, for their work during the past year.

Membership

We currently have more than 200 paid up members of the Society. This year we have welcomed quite a few new members, and we hope to attract more this year with the upcoming Centenary celebrations. Like all societies and associations, attracting new members is a continual challenge and we are working hard to extend the range of benefits to members.

Constitution Sub-committee (Prof. Bill Loneragan, Dr Jane Rosser, Dr Hugo Bekle, Dr Lynne Milne)

Based on the advice of the Department of Commerce and the Electoral Commission that the current RSWA Constitution is cumbersome and dated, the RSWA Council has appointed this subcommittee to develop a new Constitution, which is now in the final stages of drafting. Once Council has approved the document then the new Constitution shall be presented to the RSWA Membership at an Ordinary Meeting later in the year, followed by a formal Postal Ballot of Members to determine whether it is accepted by the RSWA Membership.

Library

The Society's Library continues to be incorporated within the Library of the Western Australian Museum, and is located in the Museum's Collections and Research Centre at Welshpool. The library is used by Museum staff, and during opening hours (9.00-5.00 Mon-Fri) is open to Society members. It can also be used by other researchers and items are available to users of other libraries, both within Australia and overseas, via the inter-library loans system.

Proceedings

The Proceedings are published every month and aside from advertising and reporting future and past events run by the Society, the Proceedings are also used as a vehicle for notices of interest to the Membership. Members for whom we have an email address now receive the Proceedings electronically unless they specifically request hard copies and pay a surcharge of \$10.

Website

We see the website as being critical for communication with members and for offering services. In 2011 we established a new website with a new provider, funded by a small grant from Lotterywest. However, the original provider, recommended by Lotterywest, was not able to provide the services required and with the approval of Lotterywest another grant was successfully applied for and the new provider is in the process of revamping the website and developing the members area so that members can access their details and update them, and also access the most recent copies of the Journal.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Society thanks the Western Australian Museum for their housing of the Society's library and storing additional copies of the Journal. 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 Faculty of Science at Curtin University for subsidising the lease of a laptop and our office on campus; The School of Earth and Environment at UWA for sponsoring venues and facilities for the Annual General Meetings, Curtin University for providing the venue for the 2012 Postgraduate Symposium and the John de Laeter Memorial Lecture, and Prof Lyn Beazley for support as Vice-Patron along with His Excellency, Mr Malcolm McCusker, Governor of Western Australia. The Society acknowledges the support of the State Government in providing a subsidy through the Library and Information Service for publication of the Journal.