



## **Annual Report of Council for 2013-2014**

**22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2014**

The objective of the Society is to advance and promote science. During 2013-2014 Council has continued to raise the profile of the Society and bring to its members and the community, through Monthly Meetings, Public Forums, the Journal and monthly Newsletter, 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**

The current council was elected in 2013 for two years. Dr Tony Cockbain retired from Council in late 2013, but saw the Centennial Journal Issue through to publication in June 2014, retiring as Editor-in-Chief in March 2014. Prof Patrick Armstrong joined council in late 2013, agreeing to take over from Tony when he retired. Dr Helen Stace re-joined council in late 2013, and Prof Prof David Haig, Ms Miira Gallegos and Dr Jane Rosser resigned from Council in early 2014. We thank Tony for steering the Journal into a new age, Jane and Miira for their work over the years and David for his contribution in 2013.

### **Vice-Patrons**

Prof Lyn Beazley AO FTSE retired from the position of Chief Scientist of WA at the end of 2013, but kindly agreed to continue as Vice-Patron of the Society for the Centenary year. Lyn will continue to be an 'Ambassador for Science'. Council has conferred Honorary Membership status on Lyn and thanks her for her incredible support during her Vice-Patronage, for officiating at numerous events, her advice and guidance and her endless enthusiasm for the promotion of science. Prof Peter Klinken was appointed Chief Scientist of WA in June 2014. Council will formally invite Prof Klinken to be a Vice-Patron of the Society when Lyn Beazley retires from the position.

The Governor of WA has traditionally been a Vice-Patron of the Society. We thank Mr Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC, who retired as Governor of WA in June 2014, for his patronage. The newly appointed Governor, Kerry Sanderson AO, the first female Governor of WA, will be formally asked to be a Vice-Patron of the Society.

### **Journal.**

The Journal continues to be the flagship publication of the RSWA despite the challenges we face in a rapidly changing publishing environment. It is now published twice yearly, with the provision for Special Issues, and in line with the direction of other Australian Royal Society journals, it now includes extended abstracts (from the Society's Postgraduate Symposium), obituaries, and book reviews.

Under the direction of now retired Editor-in-Chief, Dr Tony Cockbain, assisted by members of the Editorial Board, the special Centennial Issue was published in June 2014. It contains 17 contributions from eminent WA scientists reviewing significant aspects of WA science, as well as a history of the RSWA since its inception. Council thanks Tony for this major contribution and his work over the past few years as he has successfully guided the journal through this rapidly changing publishing environment.

The Museum of Victoria, at no cost to RSWA, has almost completed retro digitising all RSWA Journals, including those from precursor societies dating back to 1890. These will all be available on the website shortly.

Council appreciates Prof Patrick Armstrong agreeing to take over the position of Editor-in-Chief, and acknowledges and thanks all members of the Editorial Board, the reviewers and contributors for their support of the Society and its Journal.

### **Newsletter (former Proceedings)**

A hard copy of the Proceedings, published monthly, was for many years how members were informed of upcoming events and received news of past events. As we have now moved to largely electronic notifications of events, news and delivery of the RSWA Newsletter, the Newsletter will, in future, be published approximately quarterly and mailed to the few members who opt to pay (currently \$10/ann) for hard copies. Events are also advertised on the website ([www.rswa.org.au](http://www.rswa.org.au)), and members without emails have been notified of events by mail.

### **Website**

The updating of the website, funded by a Lotterywest grant, has been a great success. Website manager Dr Peter Williamson has worked with Councillors Sandra Toby on the design, and Lynne Milne on the content. Using their email and membership number and password, Members can now login to change and update their details and access the most recent journal issues online.

All events are now advertised on the website, with links to information on the speakers. Members and the public can register for events online either via Eventbrite, or by downloading a registration form with payment details and emailing it to the Secretary.

### **Postgraduate Symposium**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Postgraduate Symposium, held on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October at Murdoch University, was a resounding success with 16 oral presentations and eight posters. The quality of the presentations was excellent and the topics diverse, from the role of organic matter in the source of gold deposits to the genetic cause of muscular dystrophy in sheep, managing secondary salinity, native rodent foraging behaviour and vertebrate diversity and biostratigraphy in the Canning Basin - and generated lively discussions during the tea and lunch breaks. Students were given the opportunity to have an extended abstract published in the RSWA Journal.

### **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<sup>th</sup> June, 1825), British mathematical physicist and engineer. It is awarded approximately every four years for distinguished work in science connected with Western Australia, and bears the image of Lord Kelvin on one side of the medal. In the 2012-2103 year, Council decided that as RSWA is a multidisciplinary Society, having the medal named after Kelvin is not representative of what the Society is about, and that the Centenary year was an appropriate time to change the name and image on the medal. It was agreed to rename it the RSWA Forrest Medal after Sir John Forrest, first Premier of Western Australia and well known naturalist. The first Forrest Medal will be presented in 2015.

### **New Designs**

The new Logo, Journal cover, Newsletter (formerly Proceedings) cover and membership cards designed to be launched for the Centenary, which were shown at the 2013 Annual General Meeting, came into use. The Centennial Journal Issue is the first to carry the modern banner of *WA Science*, originally used as the banner of the former Proceedings, and the Proceedings became the RSWA Newsletter. The official title of the Journal remains unchanged, that is, *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia*.

### **Lotterywest Grant**

Due to the changing way science is disseminated, and because of the changing expectations of the public and scientists, RSWA applied for and was successful in being awarded a Lotterywest grant of \$42,100 to commission a strategic review and a plan for the future, and to fund the latter part of the Centenary advertising and marketing, venue hire, and coordination and project management. The review will be conducted by Mike Donnelly of OBH Consulting in consultation with Council, members and other not-for-profit societies. The Society's governance, operations and its place and purpose in the wider and scientific communities will be reviewed.

## **Membership**

After some significant decline, our membership is once again growing and now approaching 250. This year, the Centenary events and our new website have helped us reach a wider audience and attract many more young and enthusiastic members. It has also drawn past members back to the Society. Council hopes that the Centenary year and upcoming review will be a springboard for the revitalisation of the Society.

## **Centenary**

The RSWA received Royal assent to assume the name The Royal Society of Western Australia on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1913, and the name was formally adopted in 10<sup>th</sup> March 1914 when a new Constitution was approved. Planning for the 2014 Centenary celebrations began in early 2013 under the guidance of A/Prof Alex Bevan and assisted by Dr Lynne Milne. In early 2014 a formal Centenary sub-committee of Dr Phil Playford, Prof Lyn Beazley, A/Prof Kate Trinajstic, Prof Lindsay Collins, Ms Sandra Toby, Dr Lynne Milne and Dr Helen Stace, headed by A/Prof Alex Bevan, was formed to bring the programme to fruition. Council provided seed funding and, to contribute to the cost of venue hire and catering, entry fees have been charged.

The Centenary programme has highlighted the wealth of scientific excellence in Western Australia, with presentations by eminent WA scientists and public forums with high profile participants drawn from Government, Community, Industry and Academia. The social highlight of the year for members was the Gala Centenary Cocktail Party, held in the Government House Ballroom on 17<sup>th</sup> July.

All Centenary events have been exceptionally well-attended by members and the public, with attendee numbers ranging from 50 – 120. The provision of refreshments prior to and after each event has been a great success, providing opportunities for networking and discussion. Poster boards have been available at all events for speakers and postgraduate students to display posters.

**Donations.** Council appreciates and thanks a number of members who wish to remain anonymous, for their generous donations towards the Centenary Year Fund. These donations, the entry fees, seed funding and assistance from Lotterywest, have helped defray the costs of the Centenary programme.

## **MEETINGS - 2013**

### ***Annual General Meeting***

The Royal Society of Western Australia's 2013 Annual General Meeting was held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> 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 President, Dr Philip O'Brien, opened the meeting at 7.30 pm and presented the Annual Report and Treasurer's report. He announced the RSWA council for 2013-2015, welcoming new councillor A/Prof David Haig, and presided over the rest of the meeting as the President Elect, Dr Hugo Bekle, was unable to attend the meeting. The student medals and certificates were presented by Prof Kate Wright, Assoc. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Training, Curtin University, to: James Tsakalos, Edith Cowan University; Georgina Sauzier, Curtin University; Jessica Skelton, Murdoch University; Luke Barrett, The University of Western Australia; and Harriet Carter, University of Notre Dame. Retiring President, Dr Philip O'Brien, presented the Presidential Address *Phytophthora, the Plant Destroyer*, followed by further refreshments and discussion.

### ***Monthly Meetings 2013***

The monthly talks in 2013, held after every Council Meeting, were exceptionally well-attended. Topics included: *The Kimberley Marine Research Program* (Dr Kim Friedman), *Antarctic Runabout* (Prof Patrick Armstrong) and *The de Vlamingh Plate* (Dr Ian Macleod). We thank all speakers for giving of their time and their excellent presentations.

### ***Christmas Function***

The Annual RSWA Christmas Party was held on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December at the Gravity Discovery Centre, Gingin, and was attended by more than 50 members and family who enjoyed free entry and conducted tours in the morning and afternoon. We thank the Centre for their generosity and staff for the excellent tours and activities.

## CENTENARY MEETINGS 2014

The Centenary programme began in **March** with Dr Phillip Playford presenting the *Geology and History of Shark Bay* at Curtin University's Exhibition Space. In **April**, Prof Stephen Hopper spoke on *The Western Australia Flora – Retrospect and Prospect* at Scitech, and in **May**, the two *Energy for the Next Century Forums* were held at the UWA University Club. The Forums brought together a diverse group of people in similar fields, provoked interesting debate during the Q and A sessions, and instigated useful networking opportunities. In **June**, W/Prof Malcolm McCulloch presented *Is there a Future for Corals in a High CO<sub>2</sub> World?* at Scitech.

The **Gala Centenary Cocktail Party**, held at Government House Ballroom on **17<sup>th</sup> July**, was attended by more than 120 members and their guests, student medallists and their families, and invited dignitaries from WA Universities and Science facilities. Ambience was provided by *Les Trois Amies* (flute, violin and cello) while guests enjoyed canapés and drinks prior to presentations by A/Prof Alex Bevan on the *History of RSWA*, and Prof Lyn Beazley on *100 years of Science in WA*. Both Lyn and Alex highlighted the contribution to science in WA by eminent RSWA members. The 2013 RSWA Student Medals were presented by Lyn to Jackson Bailey (Curtin University), Renée Lynch (University of Notre Dame) and Samuel Lymbery (The University of Western Australia). Medallists Joel Schier (Murdoch University) and Sarah Wycherley (Edith Cowan University) were unable to attend. Mara Schier, Joel's sister, accepted the medal on his behalf, and both Joel and Sarah will attend meetings later in the year to be formally recognised for the achievements.

In **August**, WA's newly appointed Chief Scientist Prof Peter Klinken, presented *Opportunities for Science in Western Australia* at the State Library, and in **September**, the two *Water for the Next Century Forums* were held at the UWA University Club – again, bringing together speakers from different aspects of the same field and provoking lively debate.

## OTHER REPORTS

### **Editorial Board**

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.

Prof Patrick Armstrong took over as Editor-in-Chief on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, following the able editorship of Dr Tony Cockbain. He has been assisted by Dr Desirée Moon. The Editorial Board met in May for useful discussions on policy. Full papers and shorter research notes continue to come in - the standard remains very high. It is intended to include several book reviews of local scientific interest in forthcoming editions. The Journal's 2014 issues include the Centenary issue and another devoted largely to papers given at a recent conference on freshwater fish held in Perth. The Editor and Editorial Board offer their most grateful thanks to those who referee papers for the journal.

*The Editorial Board is currently:*

P Armstrong, The University of Western Australia  
(Editor-in-chief)

H Bekle, Curtin University

D Laird, Murdoch University

A W R Bevan, Western Australian Museum

H M Stace, Subiaco

R Davis, Edith Cowan University

K Trinajstic, Curtin University

K A Haskard, Data Analysis Australia

M van Keulen, Murdoch University

D W Haig, The University of Western Australia

P Ladd, Murdoch University

### **Constitution Sub-committee**

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 in 2013 appointed a subcommittee comprising Prof. Bill Loneragan, Dr Jane Rosser, Dr Hugo Bekle, and Dr Lynne Milne to develop a new Constitution. While progress had been made the development of a Business Plan as a result of the Lotterywest Grant is likely to lead to changes in the way the Society could operate in future. A new Sub-committee of Prof Bill Loneragan, A/Prof Kate Trinajstic,

Dr Helen Stace, Dr Lynne Milne with Dr Hugo Bekle (*ex officio*) will recommence this revision work in 2015. 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 of some 580 books and 983 serial titles 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. Of particular note are the over 84 monographs published prior to 1900 with several rare titles on early voyages to Australia and botanical work. 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.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Society thanks the Western Australian Museum for their housing of the Society's library and storing additional copies of the Journal and acknowledges the support of the State Government for its continuing subsidy, through the Library and Information Service, for publication 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 meetings; Murdoch University for use of facilities for the Postgraduate Symposium; and Scitech for partially sponsoring the hire of their venues.

All members of Council are thanked for their work and support throughout the year. However, we particularly acknowledge and thank three members of Council who have shouldered the major tasks associated with this, the Society's Centenary year: Dr Phil O'Brien as Treasurer, A/Prof Alex Bevan for the design and orchestration of the Centenary Programme and Dr Lynne Milne who has worked tirelessly to ensure not only that the Programme was successfully implemented but that the regular activities of the Society were maintained.