

# **ANNUAL REPORT OF COUNCIL FOR 2003-2004**

## **PRESIDENTS REPORT**

### *Planning*

The Society has had a successful year with plans being put in place for a number of new developments next year. The April 2004 *Proceedings* contained a statement indicating Council's views on possible developments and sought comment from the membership. The most significant of these developments is that Council plans to host a couple of public lectures on topics of general scientific interest with a view to attracting more people to our general meetings. The first of these is planned for August 2004 where spokespersons for the three major political parties will outline their environmental plans for the next three years. It is hoped the membership will support these meetings with their attendance. In addition, Council plans to establish a secure website that will enable members to pay their dues online. This should make it easier for members to pay their annual subscriptions.

### *Postgraduate symposium*

Prof. Phil Withers and his students organised a very successful postgraduate symposium that provided an informative range of presentations and showcased some of Western Australia's new scientists. The number of student members in the Society is continuing to grow, mostly because of the postgraduate symposium. Postgraduate student involvement on the Council ensures that the Society remains relevant to this cohort of scientists.

### *Eureka prize*

In partnership with the Royal Societies in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland we now sponsor an Australian Eureka prize for Interdisciplinary Scientific Research. This prize was first awarded in 2004.

### *Multimedia projector*

The Society purchased a multimedia projector which it gave to the Botanical Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA) to install permanently in the Kings Park administrative building board room. The BGPA authority has been very generous over many years allowing the Society to use their board room without charge.

### *Risk management*

With the growing concern about litigation, Council is currently assessing its public liability and risk management responsibilities. It is probable that a member of Council will be given the responsibility for overseeing this area of the Society's activities early in the life of the new Council.

### *Partnerships*

The Society has had fruitful discussions with the Australian Institute of Biologists about developing closer links and undertaking some joint projects. There are tentative plans for these two bodies to jointly host a workshop in 2004 on genetically modified crops and products.

### *Appreciation*

Finally, I wish to thank the Council for their hard work this year. It has been a pleasure to work with people that are committed to the development and promotion of science in Western Australia. I particular want to thank Prof. Phil Withers who has been a member of Council for many years, and is the retiring Editor for the *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia*. The task of being the editor is an onerous one, and has been capably handled by Phil for many years. The Society thanks you for your significant contribution in this regard. To the other members of Council that are not standing for re-election, Robert Davis and Graham Fulton, thank you for your contribution. I also thank the BGPA for allowing us to use their facilities and the Western Australian Museum for looking after our library and acting as our 'mail box'.

## **MEETINGS**

The 2002 Annual General Meeting was held on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2003 in the Jennifer Arnold Lecture Theatre, Zoology Department, University of Western Australia. The University Science Medals were presented by the President, Dr Jamie O'Shea, with Medals awarded to Jo-Anne Blunn (Edith Cowan University), Jason Heath (Curtin University of Technology), Ben Smith (University of Western Australia) and Nicola Fox (Murdoch University). RSWA Council for 2003-2004 was announced by the returning officer Mr Kyle Armstrong. The 2003 Presidential Address was presented by Dr Jamie O'Shea "Tales of the Heart – or adventures in learning how animals control their heart" The Incoming President, Dr Graham

Thompson, was installed by Professor Alistair Robertson, Dean, Faculty of Natural & Agricultural Sciences, University of Western Australia.

Monthly ordinary meetings, an address by the Premier, and a Christmas function in December, were held in 2003-2004. An excellent 2003 Christmas function was held at the Herbarium, and the Society's thanks go to Neville Marchant and the staff of the Herbarium. This event follows on a tradition established with a similarly excellent 2002 Christmas function at Scitech.

Ordinary meetings 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 their high quality science to Western Australians during this past year. A set of three recent meetings has focussed on the issues of Waste Management, an area that is now supported by the establishment of a State Waste Management Board. Such science discussions have allowed a broadening of the understanding of scientific subjects, the associated viewpoints, and their basis among audiences.

## **LIBRARY**

The Royal Society's library, which is ably managed and looked after by Margaret Triffitt and other staff at the Western Australian Museum, has been relocated along with the Museum's library to the new site at 49 Kew Street in Welshpool. To protect many of the Society's early publications, storage boxes were purchased to house much of our collection. These containers will provide long-term protection for the Society's books and journals. A number of the early editions of the Society's *Journal* are deteriorating and Prof. Phil Withers is progressively scanning these so that we can retain a digital copy for long term storage.

## **JOURNAL**

The Society continues to publish 4 issues of *The Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* per year. In 2003-4, the issues of volume 86 of the Journal were published with 17 research papers & notes, an obituary and a copy of the Society constitution. 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*.

The *Journal* continues to receive a substantial number of manuscripts and be a very active area of the Society's work: as of June 2004, publication of issue 87 (Part 1) was being prepared, a further seven manuscripts were in various stages of preparation as issue 87 (Parts 2-3), and two further manuscripts had just been received.

Council acknowledges the continuing efforts of the Honorary Editors, Philip Withers and Kathy Meney, 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 which they have generously devoted to critique submitted manuscripts.

## **Workshops and Symposia**

*Postgraduate Symposium* - The 7<sup>th</sup> annual postgraduate student symposium was held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and hosted by the University of Western Australia. Thirteen speakers (Doctoral/Masters students) presented 20 minute talks outlining their research and a further six posters were presented.

*Iron & Sulphur Bacteria Workshop* - The Society sponsored the Iron & Sulphur Bacteria Workshop held at Murdoch University over 11-14 February 2004. The program started with an exhibition of astronomy photography and a public lecture on the exploration and microbial colonisation of the hull of the *Titanic*. Twenty three papers, a field demonstration afternoon and a day-length laboratory session on these remarkable and pervasive organisms were received by up to 80 attendees over the 3½-day workshop.

## **Awards**

### *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 2003 were awarded to Pierre Ulric Achour, Curtin

University; Douglas Bearham, Murdoch University; Emma Louise Craven, University of Western Australia, and Christopher Zadow, Edith Cowan University.

#### *Eureka Prize*

As noted earlier, the Society has collaborated with other interstate Royal Societies to develop and award a Eureka prize in the area of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research.

#### **Internet**

Council thanks Rob Davis for his 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. Past councillors can even check that their record of service on council has been accurately noted for posterity!

#### **NATIONAL TRUST**

Dr Jamie O'Shea represented the RSWA on the Council of the National Trust (WA) in 2003-2004. The Trust runs a number of programs relevant to the Society's interests, including the Conservation Covenanting Program, Bushbank, Advocacy, Classification and Education.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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 Postgraduate Symposium, and the Annual General Meetings. The Society acknowledges the support of the State Government in providing a subsidy (through the Library and Information Service) for publication of the *Journal*.