



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The objective of the Society is to advance and promote science. During 2011-2012 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.

RSWA Office

As we are approaching our centenary in 2014, for which we are developing a comprehensive program of events, we felt that it is necessary to have a formal base for our operations. The Faculty of Science at Curtin University and RSWA have entered into an agreement to lease an office in the new Chemistry Precinct. The Faculty has kindly funded a laptop for RSWA use for three years and provided access to printers, internet and venues. The office is located on the ground floor of the building and is adjacent to the Exhibition space, the lecture theatre/seminar space and the coffee shop. These spaces/venues can be booked for future RSWA events. The office will provide a base for all RSWA records to be kept and will be manned two half days a week by our new part-time Administrative Secretary, Charlotte Mack. The office is only just being set up so office times and contact details will be advised shortly.

RSWA thanks Prof Jo Ward, Dean, Faculty of Science and Jeremy Lu for facilitating these arrangements, and the Faculty for assistance with the lease and laptop.

Joint Royal Societies Meeting

The Royal Societies of Australia meeting is generally held in November in one of the member States, but this year it was conducted by teleconference between New South Wales and Western Australian officers (Alex Bevan, Phil O'Brien and Lynne Milne). The Constitution of the RSA is currently being revised towards encouraging former State members to rejoin to present a united front federally, and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas for the '*Promotion and Advancement of Science in Society for Society*'. The independence and separate identity of each of the State Societies remains unchanged.

Postgraduate Symposium

The 13th Annual Postgraduate Symposium, held on Saturday 17th September at the University of Western Australia, was a resounding success. More than 60 students, their colleagues, supervisors, RSWA members and councillors attended the event at which there were ten oral presentations and 10 poster presentations. The presentations this year were outstanding, ranging from gravitational wave detectors to Rottneest's frogs, and generated lively discussions during the tea and lunch breaks and end of day drinks.

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.

Dr 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.

Achievements by Members

A number of our members/past members have distinguished themselves during the year.

These are:

1. Prof Steve Hopper, Order of Australia
2. Dr Harry Butler, Officer (AO) in the General Division
3. Adj Prof Alex George and Em Prof. Jennifer McComb of Murdoch University - Membership in the General Division.
4. Assoc. Prof Kate Trinajstic, Curtin University, shortlisted for the Eureka Prize.
5. Dr Hugo Bekle, University of Notre Dame, awarded a Fellow of the Institute of Australian Geographers.
6. Prof Richard Hobbs, UWA, WA Scientist of the year.

We once again extend out congratulations to all of these for their outstanding achievements.

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. I would like to thank those past editors for their efforts.

However, the journal publishing scene has changed greatly in recent years. The total number of publications has increased significantly and a large number of new journals have emerged. In the latest journal citation reports a total of 1,075 journals received an impact factor for the first time. Thus we have greatly increased competition for authors.

In addition, authors want a lot more from their journals. They expect online manuscript management, pre-publication online, RSS feeds, capacity to have supplementary material on the web, provision of endnote styles and so on. It is also critical that the journal has an impact factor so that it can be competitive in continuing to attract high quality papers for publication. All of this means that the Editor's duties have expanded beyond what can be reasonably handled by one person. For this reason we have established an Editorial Board.

We were fortunate indeed to secure the services of Tony Cockbain who has 17 years experience as Editor of the *Australian Journal of Earth Sciences* as our founding Editor-in-Chief.

The other members of the Editorial Board are:

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 Wright, Curtin University
K Trinajstic, Curtin University

The board are currently undertaking discussions with several publishers in order to find a publisher for the journal. In addition to publishing the journal, a publisher is important for marketing the journal to institutions both nationally and internationally. We see this as being important for the growth of the journal.

Council Retreat and Moving Forward

In early 2012 the RSWA Council held its fourth 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 the previous Retreat that have come to fruition are the establishment of an Editorial Board, revision of the Instructions to Authors, acquisition of an office and administrative assistant, and emailing of most Proceedings.

Change in Council membership

After several years as a councillor, Prof Kate Wright has resigned from council due to pressures of work. We thank Kate for the valuable contribution she has made to the Society over the past several years and wish her all the best for the future. Kate will continue to play a role in the Society as a member of the Editorial Board.

Kate's role on Council is being taken on by Myles Menz. Myles is currently completing his PhD thesis on the Landscape Ecology and conservation genetics of a rare pollination interaction. He has a broad interest in landscape ecology and conservation and experience working with birds, invertebrates, reptiles and flora. Myles is the Managing Editor of *Amytornis*, a peer-reviewed online journal under the banner of BirdLife Western Australia which focuses on Western Australian ornithology. He sat on the Birds Australia Western Australia Executive Committee and Conservation and Research Committee for 2 years from 2004-2006.

Appreciation

Finally, I wish to thank all RSWA Councillors for their hard work during what has been a very successful year. I especially acknowledge Tony Cockbain, our Editor-in Chief for establishing the Editorial Board and producing an excellent first issue in this position, and Lynne Milne for production of the Proceedings, and negotiating with Curtin University for office space and the Science Teachers of WA Association for storage space.

MEETINGS

Annual General Meeting

The Royal Society of Western Australia's 2011 Annual General Meeting was held on Monday 18th 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 Minutes of the 2010-2011 AGM were accepted. The President, Dr Lynne Milne, briefly explained why a formal election for the 2011-2012 Council was being held, and that it had been delayed due to the Returning Officer, Dr Harry Phillips being unwell. She reported that the Electoral Commission had now been engaged to conduct the election and that she and the current Council would continue to manage the affairs of the Society until the new council was announced at the August 2011 meeting at UWA.

The student medals and certificates were presented by councillor Prof Kate Wright, Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research Training (Research and Development), Curtin University. The Presidential Address, *Grains of Truth: Pollen in the forensic arena*, was presented by Dr Lynne Milne, the retiring President, and followed by further refreshments and discussion.

Monthly Meetings

The monthly talks this year, held after every Council Meeting, have been very well attended. The year began with the second John de Laeter Memorial Lecture delivered by Fred Jourdan of Curtin University on Volcanoes, Asteroid Impacts and Mass Extinctions. A wide variety of other topics presented by WA scientists included:

1. Wedge tailed eagles
2. Algal biofuels
3. Fire and evolution of pre-Mediterranean type floras.
4. Invertebrate surveillance on Barrow Island.
5. Shark Bay's World Heritage Assets

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 Wednesday 7th December at the new Western Australian Conservation Science Centre in Technology Park, Bentley and was attended by more than 60 members, friends and guests and our Vice-Patron, Prof Lyn Beazley. Tours of the Centre and the newly established planter boxes featuring an interesting selection of WA native plants were conducted by Juliet Wege, Ryonen Butcher and Kelly Shepherd. The tours were followed by a BBQ and salads, desserts and nibbles brought along by everyone to share.

OTHER REPORTS

Membership

We currently have approximately 215 paid up members of the Society. This is slightly down from last year. However, this year we have welcomed 13 new members.

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 to put to the Members via a postal ballot as stipulated in the rules of the current Constitution.

The committee is currently investigating comparable Society Constitutions that may reflect the RSWA situation and so provide a basis on which to guide and build our new constitution. Current models being used and/or reviewed include the Harmony Constitution (provided as an example by The Dept of Commerce), The Ecological Society of Australia Incorporated Constitution and Model Rules for Incorporated Societies.

The sub-committee has identified particular areas that it believes need revision or inclusion in the new constitution. These include but are not limited to

- Editorial Board responsibilities
- Codes of Conduct for Council, Committees, Editorial Board and Members.
- Aspects relating to Membership (item 59 of the current Constitution.
- Aspects relating to the election of Councillors (items 26 and 27)

The aim of this sub-committee is to have a final version of the revamped RSWA Constitution ready to present to Council for consideration at this year's Annual Retreat. Once Council has approved the

document then the new Constitution shall be presented to the RSWA Membership at an Ordinary Meeting early in 2013, 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 Australians 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 on appointment and can also be used by other researchers. Items are available to user 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. Council has resolved that a surcharge of \$10 will be charged to members who receive a hard copy of the Proceedings as of September 2012.

Website

We see the website as being critical for communication with members and for offering services. So far this year we have had over 2,300 visits to the website. Last year we established a new website with a new provider. Development of the website continues and we are looking at streamlining the services we offer through the website over the next few months.

Priorities are:

1. Getting the journal on the website.
2. Developing the members area so that members can access their details and update them.
3. Up to date event announcements.

We will keep you informed of developments in this area.

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 School of Earth and Environment at UWA for sponsoring venues and facilities for the 2011 Postgraduate Symposium and Annual General Meetings, 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.