

History and roles of the Royal Society of Western Australia

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The Royal Society of Western Australia (RSWA) was established on 10 March 1914 under Royal assent granted by King George V, and remains to the present day the only multi-disciplinary scientific society in the State. In the hundred years of its existence, the Society has published 10 volumes of the Journal and Proceedings of the RSWA and, following a name change, 87 volumes of the Journal of the RSWA, including many significant thematic issues. Due to printing difficulties, three volumes of the Journal were lost in the 1940–1950s. Since 1924, the Society has awarded 24 RSWA medals to scientists for outstanding contributions to science. The Society is the peak body for science in the State, and continues to be involved in many scientific issues of the day. In its Centenary year, this paper provides a history of the Society; its formation, Journal, insignia, and scientific roles.

KEYWORDS: awards, history, insignia, journal, library, management, roles, Royal Society of Western Australia, science.

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Society of London was founded in 1660 as ‘a Colledge for the Promoting of Physico-Mathematicall Experimentall Learning’. Through the patronage of King Charles II, the ‘Colledge’ became the Royal Society. The name Royal Society first appears in print in 1661, and under a second Royal Charter in 1663 the Society is referred to as ‘The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge’. In the context of societies, the use of ‘Royal’ without further qualification is confined to multi-disciplinary scientific bodies sharing the same purview as the Royal Society for ‘improving natural knowledge’. Other ‘Royal’ societies are further qualified and subject-specific, such as the Royal Zoological Society, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal Historical Society, and the Royal Astronomical Society. Following in the tradition of the first Royal Society, ‘Royal Societies’ were established in some of Britain’s former colonies and many persist to the present day, like the Royal Societies of Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. Of the six state-based Royal Societies in Australia (the others being New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland), the Royal Society of Western Australia (RSWA) is the youngest. All of these societies follow in the tradition of the original Royal Society.

This year (2014), the RSWA celebrates its Centenary of establishment. However, the RSWA was born out of several pre-existing scientific societies, and their histories, along with the subsequent history of the RSWA, document the rise in interest and involvement in science in Western Australia. Several histories of the RSWA have been written. The earliest was an unpublished account written by W M Traylen in 1924. Later, a Presidential Address by C F H Jenkins gave a broad and detailed account of the Society’s history to that date (Jenkins 1965). In addition, historical details of the Society were mentioned in a thesis submitted to the University of New

South Wales (Summers 1982). Most recently, P C Withers, a former President of the RSWA and Honorary Editor of the Journal of the RSWA, published an account of the 100 years (1897–1997) from the establishment of the forerunner ‘Mueller Botanic Society’ (Withers 1998). In the present paper a comprehensive history of the RSWA is presented in its true Centenary year.

EARLY YEARS

Western Australian Natural History Society 1891–1898

In 1891, the Western Australian Natural History Society was founded under the Presidency of Sir John Forrest KCMG, the first Premier of Western Australia. This coincided with the opening of the then Geological Museum (now Western Australian Museum) at the Old Gaol in Perth, an institution to which the subsequent RSWA would later become closely linked. The activities of the society appear to have concentrated on the preservation of lands, and one of its significant achievements was the establishment of a nature reserve of some several thousand acres between Pinjarra and Bannister. Unfortunately, this society did not flourish and by 1898 it had ceased to exist. However, its brief existence provided the impetus for the later establishment of natural history societies in the State.

Mueller Botanic Society

In 1897, a group of amateur botanists established the Mueller Botanic Society, again under the Presidency of Sir John Forrest KCMG. This society was named in honour of the renowned botanist Baron Ferdinand von Mueller. The first Chairman of the society was E J Bickford. The society was extremely active and, with the aid of a grant of £50 from the State Government, published a journal. The *Journal and Proceedings of the Mueller Botanic Society* ran for 11 issues (Volume 1) between 1899 and 1903 and contained some seminal botanical works.

By 1903, the Mueller Botanic Society had broadened its interests to other aspects of natural history. The name of the society was changed to 'The West Australian Natural History Society (with which is incorporated the Mueller Botanic Society)' and the first President of the expanded society was C R P Andrews MA, a botanist.

The newly named *Journal of The West Australian Natural History Society*, continued on from the former *Journal and Proceedings of the Mueller Botanic Society* publishing six parts of Volume II, beginning with No.I in May 1904 and ending with No.VI in 1909.

Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia

The West Australian Natural History Society struggled during the early 1900s, and in 1907 several meetings of the society failed because of a lack of a quorum. To address the problem, the society's council suggested that monthly meetings be held when a paper was presented. A subcommittee was established to explore the possibility of establishing a Royal Society, or affiliating with the Royal Society of South Australia which had been established in 1880. In 1909, Andrew Gibb Maitland, then Government Geologist, and member of the former Mueller Botanic Society, suggested that, in recognition of sciences other than natural history and in an attempt to broaden the society's appeal, the name should be changed to the 'Western Australian Science and Natural History Society'. At the next general meeting of the Society, the name was formally changed with minor amendment to that suggested by Maitland to 'The Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia'.

The first President of the newly named society was Dr Frank Tratman. While a keen natural historian and member of the former Mueller Botanic Society, Tratman was a Doctor of Medicine, a member of the Medical Board of Western Australia and president of the Dental Board of the colony (Kimberly 1897).

Publication of papers continued as the *Journal of the Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia* with Volume III no.1 in 1910, and no.2 in 1911. Volume 'The Fourth' was published in 1912, and the series ended with Volume 'The Fifth' before the outbreak of World War I in 1914 (Withers 1998).

Royal Society of Western Australia

Once again Maitland was prominent in attempting to improve the standing of The Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia. In March 1913, Maitland gave notice that at the next meeting he would suggest that:

'the time has arrived for obtaining a Royal Charter for the Society and, if granted, altering the designation to the Royal Society of Western Australia'.

Maitland was absent at the next meeting in April and discussion was deferred to the May meeting. At the May meeting, noting the inauguration of 'The University' (of Western Australia), Council agreed that it was opportune to consider seeking a Royal Charter. Maitland resolved that:

'...the time has arrived for taking the necessary steps for

altering the designation to "The Royal Society of Western Australia", and for obtaining Royal assent thereto; and that the matter be left in the hands of the Council'.

A resolution was carried that:

'A sub-committee of Mr Maitland, Mr Grasby and the Secretary [Mr Browne] consider and report on the best manner of obtaining a Royal Charter'.

In June, the sub-committee recommended that a memorial be addressed to His Majesty King George V, and a letter to be written to His Excellency the Governor, Major-General Sir Harry Barron KCMG requesting that the memorial be forwarded to the King. At the Council Meeting of 10 June 1913 draft letters were tabled and a recommendation carried to proceed. On 27 June 1913, a memorial to the King along with a covering letter both signed by the President, C G Thorpe, and the Secretary, M A Browne, were submitted to the Governor.

Assent for the Royal Charter was received by the Society from His Majesty via the Governor in a letter dated 18th November 1913 and this was announced at the next meeting of the Society on 2nd December 1913.

[Transcription of a letter dated from Government House, Perth, on November 18th, 1913, and addressed to the Honorary Secretary of the Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia.]

Dear Sir

I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to inform you that His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to accede to the application of the Natural History and Science Society of Western Australia for permission to assume the title "The Royal Society of Western Australia"

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant

(Signed) H. F. Wilkinson

Major,

Private Secretary

On 11 March 1914, an article (from which the following are extracts) was published in *The West Australian* newspaper reporting the formal assumption of the new title.

At the general meeting of the Natural History and Science Society, held last night [10th March 1914], the draft rules for the new Royal Society, as submitted by the Council, were discussed in detail, amended, and on the motion of the President (Professor Dakin) adopted. Professor Ross then secured a vote of thanks to the three members of the sub-committee, viz., Professors Dakin and Woolnough, and Mr Maitland, to whom the onerous duty of compiling the rules had fallen.

On the motion of Mr. M. A. Browne, it was resolved "That this Society be henceforth called "The Royal Society of Western Australia", and that its management be vested in the present council until the election of the new council in July." Effect is thus given to the change of title for which the permission of His Majesty the King was received last November. The Royal Society, properly so called, will therefore hold its first meeting in April.

That the notice was so rapidly transmitted to the newspaper (the night before publication) was due to the Society holding its meetings in the building of *The West Australian* newspaper (Summers 1982). There remained the administrative details for the complete transition of membership from the Natural History and Science Society, to the Royal Society of Western Australia. *The West Australian* reported:

A motion by Mr. E. S. Simpson provides for the immediate transference of membership from the old to the new Society, such membership to remain in force till the annual meeting in July next. Two resolutions of importance both to present members and those wishing to join the Society, were proposed by Professor Ross and carried. They are worded as follows:— (1.) "That payment of the subscription of half a guinea for the year 1913-14 by members of the Natural History and Science Society, exempt them from any further contributions to the Royal Society of Western Australia until July 1, 1914." (2.) "That all members elected to the Royal Society of Western Australia between this date and July 1, 1914 shall pay only one annual subscription for the period to June 30, 1915, provided the sum be paid before June 30, 1914."

Thus the Royal Society of Western Australia was established under a new constitution adopted on 10 March 1914. A petition to His Majesty George V to act as Patron of the Society was granted via a letter from Government House, Perth, dated 11 March 1914 and noted in the Minutes of the Society at its meeting of 21 April 1914. At the same meeting, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Harry Barron KCMG, was unanimously elected Vice-Patron of the Society. Over the last 100 years the Society has continued to enjoy Royal Patronage by King Edward VIII and King George VI in 1936, and by George VI's successor, Queen Elizabeth II in 1952, and the Vice-Royal patronage of successive Governors of the State of Western Australia. In 2007 Council appointed Professor Lyn Beazley AO FTSE, Chief Scientist of Western Australia, as an additional Vice-Patron of the Society.

Incorporation

Recognising the legal and operational benefits of being a corporate body, at its meeting on 8 June 1936 the RSWA resolved to seek incorporation. To this end, the Society engaged the assistance of John Nicholson MLC and the legal firm of Nicholson & Nicholson. Mr W E Shelton, one of the Society's secretaries, was nominated as Trustee on 13 October 1936 to enable incorporation to proceed under an amended Constitution. In due course a certificate of incorporation was obtained and presented at the meeting of the Society on 7 July 1937.

JOURNAL AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE RSWA

Breaking with the previous practice of a continuous volume run throughout society name changes, the RSWA published Volume I of the new Journal for the year 1914–1915 that was printed in 1916 (priced at five shillings) (Figure 1). As an example of the truly multi-disciplinary nature of the RSWA, the first paper in Volume 1 is a mathematical contribution by one of the then Editors of the Journal, and former Secretary, Maurice A Browne

entitled: *The approximate summation of series, in which each term is a function of the corresponding term of an arithmetical progression* (Browne 1914).

The combined *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia* was eventually divided at Volume XI into the *Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia* and the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia*. The *Proceedings* was then, and is now, essentially the 'newsletter' of the Society containing at various times, notices of meetings, annual reports, financial statements, lists of members and announcements of new members, summaries of meetings, abstracts of monthly talks, and other items of interest to the membership.

As part of the normal Journal run, many issues have been published that are devoted to special thematic subjects, often resulting from topical Symposia. The first thematic issue is a compilation of papers devoted to research in the southwest of Western Australia (McComb 1973) to mark the occasion of the 45th Congress of ANZAAS held in Perth during April 1973. This was followed by an issue devoted to research on Rottneest Island (Bradshaw 1983). The most recent is a volume that arose out of a Symposium held jointly with the Western Australian Marine Science Institute on Kimberley marine and coastal science (Brocx & Meney 2011). Others include a Symposium on the Leeuwin current (Meney & Brocx 2009) and a Symposium on evolutionary biology (Meney & Brocx 2009)

While the Journal has enjoyed a run for 100 years, this year marks the publication of Volume 97. The discrepancy arises from a publication gap of two years between volumes 35 and 36 (1948–1949 and 1952) during which time the Society was negotiating with the Government regarding the printing of the Journal by the Government Printer on a new basis and, subsequently, from the serious setback caused by power restrictions, and a coal strike (Annual Report of the RSWA, 30 June 1949; P C Withers pers. comm. 2013). A further year was lost between volumes 39 and 41 (the period 1955–1958), again the result of printing difficulties. Since that time, no further years have been lost.

With the closure of the Government Print in the early 1990s, the Society had to find a new printer and this was provided by the Publications Department of the Western Australian Museum. To compensate for the loss of the subsidised printing provided by the Government Print, the State Government first through the Library of Western Australia, and then through the Department of Culture and the Arts, provided the Society with an annual printing subsidy of \$17 600 (including GST). This enables the Society to maintain the quality of the Journal and distribute copies to Government Departments.

Since 1992, the Journal has had only three Honorary Editors, P C Withers (President 1998–2000), K Meney (assisted by M Brocx) and, most recently, A E Cockbain (since 2012). However, it should be noted that Dr Cockbain (President 1982–1983) also acted as Editor for the period 1976–1982. Following the appointment of Dr Cockbain in 2012, an Editorial Board was instituted with several Associate Editors drawn from Council and the wider membership.

Journal and Proceedings

OF

The Royal Society of Western Australia

PATRON: H.M. THE KING.

Volume I.
1914 - 1915.



Published August, 1915.

The Authors of Papers are alone responsible for the statements
made and the opinions expressed therein.

Price: Five Shillings.

PERTH:

BY AUTHORITY: FRED. WM. SIMPSON, GOVERNMENT PRINTER.

1916.

Figure 1 Cover page of Volume 1 (1914–1915) of the Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia.

CREST, MEDALS, SEAL AND EMBLEMS

The Crest of the RSWA, sometimes referred to as the 'medallion', was designed in 1915 for use on the Society's publications and letterhead, and first appeared in Volume I of the Journal (printed in 1916) (Figure 1). Subsequently, following incorporation in 1937, the Crest was modified to signify this. In addition, a 'common seal' to be used as an official stamp on documents was purchased from Shannon's Engraving & Stamp Co for 17s 8d (Withers 1998). The Crest was further revised and redesigned in 1997, and remains unchanged to the present day (Figure 2).

In 1924, the medal of the RSWA was inaugurated to mark the centenary of the birth of Lord Kelvin (26 June 1824). The medal (Figure 3) was instituted as an award for outstanding work in science, and it was to be known

as the Royal Society's Medal or, more formally, the Medal of the Royal Society of Western Australia. Because the medal bears the image of Lord Kelvin on its obverse side it has sometimes been referred to incorrectly as the 'Kelvin Medal' (Withers 1998). Professor A D Ross, as President in 1924, loaned his 'Kelvin Medal' that had been awarded to him by Glasgow University to make the die for the Medal of the RSWA. Professor Ross stipulated that the name 'Kelvin Medal' should not be used by the RSWA for its new medal.

The medal was designed by Miss Enid Isabel Allum for which she received an honorarium of five guineas. Miss Allum was a member of the Society, Treasurer from 1922 to 1927, and a member of the Social Committee. Through the Royal Mint in Perth, Messrs Stokes & Co. of Melbourne were commissioned to make the die for the



Figure 2 Current Crest of the Royal Society of Western Australia.



Figure 3 The Medal of the Royal Society of Western Australia.

medal which is preserved to the present day. In the Society's Constitution, the rules provide that the medal shall not be awarded more frequently than every four years, and that the recipient(s) of the medal shall be chosen by Council following recommendations from a special Medal Committee of five, usually comprising the incumbent President and past presidents. In any given year more than one medal may be awarded. For

example, in 1979 there were three recipients of the medal; Professor R. M. Berndt (President 1952–1953 and 1972–1973), Emeritus Professor B J Grieve (President 1970–1971), and Dr D L Serventy (Vice-President 1946–1949). In all 24 medals have been awarded (Table 1).

The first three medals were struck in gold, and all subsequent medals have been struck in silver. The first medal was awarded in 1924 to Dr William J Hancock

Table 1 Recipients of the Medal of the Royal Society of Western Australia

1924	Dr W J Hancock	Radiography; medical application of X-rays.
1929	Dr E S Simpson	Mineralogy and geology of WA.
1933	Mr W M Carne	Plant pathology; the bitter pill of apples.
1937	Mr A G Maitland	Pilbara survey and artesian water supplies.
1941	Professor E de C Clarke	Geology of WA.
1945	Mr L Glauert	Natural sciences.
1949	Mr C A Gardner	Botany, the flora of WA.
1955	Dr H W Bennetts	Vetinary science; live stock diseases.
1959	Professor E J Underwood	Animal nutrition and husbandry.
1966	Mr C F H Jenkins	Agricultural entomology and natural history.
1970	Professor R T Prider	Geology, petrology and mineralogy.
1979	Professor R M Berndt	Anthropology; aboriginal studies.
1979	Emeritus Professor B J Grieve	Botany; ecophysiology and the flora of WA.
1979	Dr D L Serventy	Zoology; ornithology and nature conservation.
1983	Dr J S Beard	Botany; vegetation classification and mapping.
1986	Professor C A Parker	Soil biology.
1993	Professor J R De Laeter	Geophysics and geochronology.
1995	Emeritus Professor A R Main	Zoology; ecology and nature conservation.
1997	Professor E P Hodgkin	Estuarine studies.
1997	Professor A J McComb	Plant growth and ecology.
2001	Dr P E Playford	Geology and history of discovery in WA
2005	Professor D I Groves	Economic geology and mineralogy.
2005	Dr K J McNamara	Palaeontology and evolutionary palaeobiology.
2010	Emeritus Professor S D Bradshaw	Ecophysiology; wildlife conservation.



Figure 4 William J Hancock (President 1918–1919), first recipient of the Medal of the RSWA in 1924.

(President 1918–1919) (Figure 4), Government Electrical Engineer and Honorary Medical Radiographer at Perth Hospital, for his pioneering studies in radiography and the medical application of X-rays. The second gold medal was awarded in 1929 to Dr E S Simpson for outstanding contributions to the scientific knowledge of the mineralogy and geology of Western Australia (Figure 5a, b).

The creation of Royal Society Top Student Science Medals for Perth’s four public universities was discussed by Council in March 1997. In 1998 the RSWA

inaugurated Student Medals to be awarded every year at its Annual General Meeting to those science students from each of Perth’s universities nominated by them as the most outstanding in Natural and Earth Sciences. The obverse of the medal is the crest of the RSWA. Initially, medals were awarded to students from the University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University. The University of Notre Dame was included later. Student Medals were first awarded at the Society’s Annual General Meeting on 20 July 1998.

In 2008, Council resolved to honour the life of Doug Clarke (Murdoch University) by initiating ‘The Doug Clarke Education Advocacy Award Medal’ of the Society. This award recognises the outstanding contribution to science education made by Doug Clarke. Clarke performed hundreds of chemistry shows at schools and regularly appeared on television. He inspired thousands



Figure 5 (a) Edward S Simpson, second recipient of the Medal of the RSWA in 1929. (b) Inscription on the Medal presented to Simpson.



Figure 6 The Doug Clarke Education Advocacy Award Medal of the RSWA.

of school children in the wonders of science, and assisted undergraduates and postgraduates. Three medals are awarded quadrennially for University Teaching Staff, a Secondary School Teacher, and a Primary School Teacher. The medal has Doug Clarke's image in relief on the obverse side (Figure 6), and the RSWA Crest on the reverse side. The inaugural award was presented to Doug Clarke at the Annual General Meeting of the Society in 2008.

Through an open competition of the membership, an emblem to appear on the front cover of the Journal was commissioned by Council. The winning design, by Jan Taylor, first appeared on Volume 75 (part 2) in 1992. The original emblem depicted one of the State's faunal emblems, the numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*), and the floral emblem, the red and green kangaroo paw (*Anigozanthos manglesii*), together with a stylised illustration of stromatolites from Hamelin Pool. Later, an illustration of a reconstruction of the State's fossil emblem (proclaimed on 5 December 1995) a Gogo fish *Mcnamaraspis kaprios* (named for K J McNamara, RSWA Vice-President 1989–1991, President 1991–1992) was added. The State's other faunal emblem, the black swan (*Cygnus atratus*), appears on the Society's Crest together with the Latin pun 'Cygnis Insignis' (Noted for Swans).

MEMBERSHIP

The first published list of members of the RSWA in Volume I of the Journal showed 7 Honorary Members, 51 Ordinary Members and 27 Associate Members, a total of 85 members. This was a healthy number considering that World War I was at its height, and that some members were on active military service. The membership included many of the eminent scientists of the time in Perth and stalwarts of the RSWA and its forerunner societies, including; W J Dakin DSc, FLS, FZS, Professor of Biology at the University of Western Australia

(President 1913–1915); A G Maitland FGS, Government Geologist at the Geological Survey of Western Australia (Vice-President 1913–1915 and President 1915–1916 and 1924–1927); E S Simpson BE, BSc, DSc, FCS, Government Assayer, Geological Survey of Western Australia (Vice-President 1913–1914, 1918–1920, 1936–1938 and President 1920–1921, 1938–1939); A D Ross, MA, DSc, FRSE, FRAS, Professor of Physics and Mathematics at the University of Western Australia (Vice-President 1914–1916, 1939–1940 and President 1916–1917, 1923–1924, 1940–1941); and W B Alexander BA, MA, Keeper of Biology at the Western Australian Museum. The ordinary membership also included the Most Reverend C O L Riley, DD, Archbishop of Perth a keen natural historian, and President of the former West Australian Natural History Society (1906–1907). Among the Honorary Members was the Right Honorable Sir John Forrest GCMG, PC, FRGS, who by then had been elected to the Federal Parliament in Melbourne.

By July 1916 the total membership had increased to 96, including two new categories, Corresponding Members, and the Society's first Student Member, S K Montgomery. From an initial interest in science and involvement with the RSWA, Stephen King Montgomery BA(Hons), BSc(Hons), MB, BS(Lond), MD(Lond), DR (Edin) (1895–1950) went on to achieve scientific eminence. Having graduated from the University of Western Australia with honours degrees (BA and BSc in Zoology), in 1920 he entered University College Hospital, London, as a medical student. In 1930 he branched out into Radiology (Leftwich 1950). As well as a medical practitioner, Montgomery was a carcinologist of international repute. In 1931 his monograph on *Crustacea Brachyura of the Percy Slade Trust Expedition to the Abrolhos Islands*, together with *Crabs of Western Australia*, was published in the Proceedings of the Linnean Society. Montgomery published only one paper in the Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of Western Australia on *Some Hymenosomidae from the Swan River* (Montgomery 1919).

The membership grew steadily through the early part of the 20th Century. By June 1924 the Society had 253 members, and in that year alone it had gained 93 Ordinary and 29 Associate Members. While neither the RSWA nor its forerunner societies ever required that members had special academic qualifications, the membership at that time included many working scientists, the Chief Justice and other members of the judiciary, 4 politicians, 7 university professors, 13 medical practitioners, the Director of Education, the Director of Agriculture, and many prominent businessmen of the day.

By 1965 the membership had stabilised at 246. While remaining buoyant, the Society's membership had grown very little from its peak in 1923–1924. Jenkins (1965) noted that a similar change had occurred in other States' Royal Societies and this was attributed to the impingement of specialist societies on the membership. This remains true to the present day.

During the 1990s the Council of the Society took a number of initiatives, many of which were directed at increasing the membership. During that period, many new members were introduced to the Society, particularly in the category of Student Members. By

August 1997 the membership had risen to 404, and by June 2000 to 408.

Regarding the encouragement of Student Members, one initiative of Council was to hold an annual Postgraduate Symposium. The inaugural Postgraduate Symposium was held on 27th March 1999. As an incentive for postgraduates to present their work at the Symposium, initially a 50% discount on membership of the Society was offered, but it was not compulsory that students became members in order to present papers. Later presenters were given free student membership of the Society for one year. Symposia have been held annually since 1999, and now extended abstracts are published in the JRSWA.

Today, the Society has around 250 members, including Institutional/Corporate Members who subscribe to obtain the Journal. The decline in membership from that in 2000 has been of great concern to the Council of the Society. Council continues to develop strategies to combat the situation and project the Society to the wider community.

ROLE OF THE RSWA

Initially, the Society was established as the peak, multi-disciplinary, scientific body in Western Australia, a role that it continues to play to the present day. Promoting the advancement of all branches of science is its principal role, and this is enshrined in the Society's Constitution. Unlike the Royal Society, which is used by the British Government as its principal source of independent scientific advice, the RSWA has never been regularly consulted by the State Government. Occasionally, individual members (in their own professional capacities and via their own institutions) have been involved in governmental advisory committees, but not as representatives of the RSWA. The Society has, however, made many submissions to Government and Government Agencies concerning scientific issues of the day (Griffin & Semenuik 1998), and currently has a permanent representative on the Council of the National Trust (WA), dealing with issues of preservation and conservation.

During its early years, the Society focused solely on scholarly research. Society meetings were devoted to sharing knowledge, and its 'flagship', the Journal, was the outlet for communicating such research. Additionally, the activities of the Society were frequently publicised by the local media. However, over the century of its existence the Society has gradually acquired, or assumed, other scientifically related roles, most notably, a greater interactive role with the community at large, and science education. For many years, general meetings of the Society have been open to non-members, and through this the Society has gained closer contact with the general public. Activities of the Society include lectures, small symposia and field excursions: during its early years, it also held exhibitions and screened films.

The Society, as a body, has often commented on government policies concerning science, or issues of the day requiring scientific input. Griffin & Semenuik (1998) listed 13 submissions in the thirty years between 1963 and 1993 concerning issues of land management and administrative procedures where they impinged on flora

and fauna, and on the general quality of science in Western Australia.

Since 1998, the RSWA has made a number of important submissions including: (i) 1998 a submission regarding the Regional Forest Agreement; (ii) 2000 submissions on the terms of reference for the Review of Sustainability Yield in SW Native Forests, and the Chief Scientist's Report – *'The Chance to Change'*; (iii) 2001 a submission to the Inquiry into the Regional Development of Bioprospecting Industries; and (iv) 2002 a submission regarding taxonomic research on Australia's biodiversity as a nomination for the National Research Priorities.

For a number of reasons, in recent years, this advisory role of the Society has gradually diminished. One reason is that many member scientists are employed in the Public Sector and are reluctant to comment on Government policies, even though their views would be presented by the Council of the Society and not as individuals.

In April 1997, the then Deputy Premier, The Hon Hendy Cowan MLA, launched the State Government's first Science and Technology Policy, and a portfolio for Science and Technology was added to the responsibilities of the Deputy Premier. In the previous year, Cowan had spoken to a full meeting of the RSWA, and had also talked to the Council about the Government's initiatives for science and technology.

Following a change of government, The Premier, Hon Geoffrey Gallop MLA, then Minister for Science, addressed the Society about the WA Premier's newly formed Science Council and the Government's vision of science for WA. Later a revised portfolio of Minister for Environment and Science passed to The Hon Judy Edwards MB BS MLA. Taking up a suggestion made by Griffin & Semenuik (1998), in August 2005, the author as President and several Councillors initiated monthly meetings with the Minister for Environment and Science and her advisors.

Meetings focused on science in the State. At the first meeting the Minister was informed of the range of activities undertaken by the RSWA, and its principal role in promoting science and scientists. The Minister outlined the development of science policy for that term of government. In response, RSWA delegates outlined ways in which the Society, as an apolitical, multi-disciplinary scientific group could help the Government. The thrust of science policy then (including the Science Council and Chief Scientist) was aimed at large applied science projects, with big budgets and clear economic benefits. The Society was keen to emphasise the other end of the scientific spectrum and suggested that the investment of relatively small amounts of money, well directed into basic research, would ultimately be beneficial to science in the State.

The Society stressed the importance of recruitment and retention of young scientists graduating from the State's universities into State-funded research institutions, and a number of relatively inexpensive measures were identified that the Government might consider. These included stipends for graduate and postgraduate students to undertake work in State-funded institutions during the summer period, and the establishment of competitive, short-term Junior Doctoral

Fellowships. A much larger issue concerned the non-medical scientific public service, which was recognised by the Society as long overdue for review.

Following Minister Edwards' resignation in January 2006, meetings with her successor, The Hon Francis Logan MLA, were rearranged on a bi-monthly basis for 2006. The new Minister for Science did not have responsibility for the Environment, which was made into a separate ministry. Eventually meetings with the Minister ceased.

RSWA LIBRARY HOLDINGS AND LIBRARY EXCHANGES

Since 1960, through a written agreement with the then Director of the Western Australian Museum, W D L Ride (President 1962–1963), the RSWA Library has been held in trust by the Library of the Western Australian Museum. Moreover, from that time, the Museum's Librarian became *de facto* Honorary Librarian of the RSWA. Originally, the RSWA Library was held in Perth, however in 2004 with the imminent closure of the Museum's Francis Street building, the library was moved to the ground floor of the Administration Building of the Museum's Research and Collections facility at 49 Kew Street, Welshpool. During her tenure as Honorary Librarian (1987–2012), Margaret Triffit brought the RSWA library and Museum's own library into the electronic age.

The RSWA Library is an important collection of specialist books, journals and other scientific publications. The great majority of the titles have been obtained by exchange for the JRSWA, and some are unique holdings in the State. The Library also contains more than a hundred monographs published prior to 1900, many acquired by donation. The titles include several rare publications on early voyages to Australia, and the botany of Australia. Overall there are some 350 books and 980 journal titles of which more than 300 are current. In 2000, a combined WA Museum and RSWA Library Catalog was released on CD-Rom including fully searchable records for over 18 000 monographs, 2700 journal titles and 2200 indexed reprints/articles on molluscs, many published more than 50 years ago. Today catalogues of the RSWA publication collection (along with the Museum's own holdings) are available on line through the WA Museum's website (<http://library-srv.museum.wa.gov.au/menu.htm>). Borrowing from the Library is restricted to Museum staff. However, the RSWA Library is available to the public for reference and research, and articles may be photocopied. The Library can be accessed by prior appointment with the Librarian.

MANAGEMENT

The management of the RSWA is vested in an elected Council comprising a President, two Vice-Presidents, the immediate Past President, Treasurer, Librarian, joint Honorary Secretaries, Honorary Editor(s) and eight Council members. Originally, the two secretaries were appointed to represent the physical and natural sciences, respectively. Later the secretaries took on specific roles;

one acting as secretary to Council, and the other as the secretary responsible for the Proceedings and other duties relating to general meetings. Later, an additional secretary was co-opted from Council to deal specifically with membership matters.

From about the 1940s with few exceptions, the line of succession for President of the RSWA was decided by the election of Junior and Senior Vice-Presidents. The President may serve up to a maximum of two years and upon the end of the President's term of office the Senior Vice-President would assume the role of President (provided there was no challenge) at the Annual General Meeting, the Junior Vice-President would be elevated to Senior Vice-President, and a new Junior Vice-President elected from Council. Generally, though not always, this line of succession (accepted by the membership of the Society) served the Society well, ensuring that experienced Councillors and those well versed in the management of the Society became Presidents and other senior officers.

In September 1998, Council decided to elect an Honorary Publicity Officer from the Council membership. The role of the Publicity Officer was to keep the Society, and science in all its aspects, in the public view, and to raise the consciousness of the public, decision makers and politicians, in regard to the Society's activities and intellectual resources.

In 2011, as the result of internal divisions, Council resolved to call an election for all positions on Council, and a ballot of the membership was held. The outcome was that previous informal positions held by Councillors for specific tasks, such as Publicity Officer, Webmaster, and Archivist, ceased to exist.

During the mid-1960s, notably through the work of Duncan Merrilees (Vice-President 1964–1966 and President 1966–1967), changes were made to the Society's Constitution to bring it in line with modern practice. In June 2011, Council resolved to propose five significant changes to the Constitution, and these were put to a ballot of members as part of the election process. The changes were subsequently accepted by the membership. These changes concerned: the standing of Student Members in the Society; subscriptions; the timing of General Meetings; the means by which the Constitution or rules and regulations of the Society may be changed; and the inclusion of definitions under rule 1 of the Constitution. The latter brought the Constitution in line with guidelines (Department of Commerce 2010) of the State's Department of Commerce concerning Incorporated Associations.

On 29 July, 2011, a forum was held to discuss some concerns held by a number of members regarding the AGM and elections to Council. A summary of the forum was later provided by Associate Professor John Bailey and published in the Proceedings of the Society (Bailey 2011). The forum agreed to continue with the election ballot (then underway), and it was proposed to establish a tripartite Review Panel to inquire into matters raised before and at the forum concerning the Society's governance. No agreement could be achieved as to the composition of the Review Panel and, subsequently, the newly elected Council deemed it was unnecessary and the review did not proceed.

MEETINGS VENUES, AND THE QUEST FOR A PERMANENT HOME FOR THE RSWA

Prior to the establishment of the RSWA, forerunner societies held meetings in at a variety of venues. In 1905, the West Australian Natural History Society established its headquarters at the Western Australian Museum, but in 1909 it had to move from that venue and some meetings had to be cancelled for a lack of a meeting room. Later, rooms of the Theosophical Society were made available on the third floor the West Australian Chambers in St George's Terrace at a weekly rent of 10 shillings. It was at this venue that the RSWA was established. The Society's library and herbarium were also housed at the venue and the rent was later raised to 30 shillings.

Early in 1916, the Society had to move from rooms of The Theosophical Society and fortunately accommodation was again provided by the Museum. The Society remained at the Museum until July 1940 when it relocated to the seventh floor of the University of Western Australia (UWA)-owned Gledden Building on

the corner of Hay Street and William Street (Figure 7). The Institute of Engineers leased the top floor of the building and accepted the RSWA as a sub-tenant, initially for a rent of £30 per annum (Jenkins 1965).

The Society occupied the Gledden Building rooms for 17 years by which time the rent had risen to £100 per annum. In 1957, UWA terminated the Institute of Engineers' lease and the Society had to find new accommodation. Serendipitously, the Museum was undergoing an expansion, and the Society was once again able to secure rooms there. This provided the Society with the accommodation and facilities it had long sought. During the period 1957–1971 General Meetings of the Society were held regularly in the Woodward Gallery at the Museum. Other venues at various Universities were used when larger audiences were anticipated, or when joint meetings were held with other societies and associations, such as the WA branch of ANZAAS. From March 1971 until July 1973, the RSWA held regular meetings at Science House, 10 Hooper Street, West Perth, the new home of the Institute of Engineers, where parking was evidently much easier than near the Museum (Jenkins 1965).



Figure 7 The Gledden Building, 731 Hay Street, Perth. Home to the RSWA 1940–1957. (Courtesy of Wikipedia).

In July 1973, the AGM of the Society was held at Mineral House, Adelaide Terrace, the home of the Geological Survey of Western Australia. Until June 1978, Mineral House became the regular venue for General Meetings, with occasional meetings at other venues.

In June 1978, the venue for meetings moved to the Kings Park Board Room. Initially alternating with the Mineral House venue, eventually the Board Room in the Kings Park Administration building became the principal venue and remains so to the present day.

From the outset of the Mueller Botanic Society, representations were made to Government to obtain a grant of land on which a permanent home for that Society could be built. As early as 1897 funds were sought from the State Government to employ a secretary, a professional botanist and a librarian.

This request was not granted. Again in 1916, representatives from the RSWA and other institutions, including the Institute of Engineers, presented a case to Government for a land grant to no avail. In 1927, in light of the Government's decision to undertake a scheme of building to celebrate the State Centenary, the RSWA convened a meeting of interested societies and associations to draw up a petition to Government for the acquisition of land, and the provision of a suitable building to be shared by various scientific workers in the State. The associations included the Chemical Society, the Engineering Standards Society, the West Australian Field Naturalists Club, the Historical Society, the Economic Society of Australia & New Zealand, the League of Nations Union, the West Australian Society of Arts, the British Astronomical Association (WA Branch), and the Town Planning Association. In the 1929 Annual Report of the RSWA the Secretary records "*at present there seems little prospect of securing adequate accommodation for no Government funds are available.*"

In this regard, the Government overlooked an opportunity to create in Perth an approximate equivalent to Burlington House in London, which is home to many learned societies of both arts and sciences. In 1936 while the RSWA entered into negotiations with the Institute of Engineers regarding rooms in the proposed University Gledden Building, negotiations by the Society (through its Honorary Solicitor) to obtain land in Irwin Street failed, but the Society was directed to land on the corner of Beaufort and James Streets, and to blocks opposite Perth Boys' School. All negotiations for these sites failed. In 1957, the Institute of Engineers approached the RSWA regarding the possibility of a joint purchase of a house (later 'Science House') in West Perth. At that time an arrangement with the Museum for accommodation was in train, and the Society declined the offer. Nevertheless, the Society would later use 'Science House' for meetings.

The RSWA still does not have a permanent home, although it currently has an office at Curtin University, and a part-time paid secretary funded by the Society.

ROYAL SOCIETIES OF AUSTRALIA

At various times during its history the RSWA has sought to forge stronger ties with other State Royal Societies. In 1918, the Society was represented by Sir Edgeworth

David and Mr J H Maiden at a conference of Australian Royal Societies convened by the Royal Society of New South Wales at the request of the Royal Society (in London). This conference led to the later formation of the Australian National Research Council and eventually the Australian Academy of Science (Jenkins 1965).

At another conference in 1930 under the auspices of the Royal Society of Victoria, Professor Wilsmore represented the RSWA to consider the formation of a 'Royal Society of Australia', or a federation of State Royal Societies. The proposal was further considered at the meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS). The proposal for a 'Royal Society of Australia' was not favoured because of the possibility it might lead to the State Royal Societies losing their individual identities. A Royal Society was formed in Canberra in 1930 and assumed the name 'Royal Society of Australia'. The State Societies were strongly opposed to this title, and in 1955 it was changed to the Royal Society of Canberra (defunct since 1973).

In 1945, the RSWA put forward the proposal to other State Royal Societies that reciprocal rights be offered to members travelling interstate. This was unanimously accepted giving all members of the six Societies the privilege (without voting rights) of attending meetings in other States.

The matter of a 'Royal Society of Australia', or other form of alliance, lay dormant for another seven decades until in December 2004, under the auspices of the Royal Society of New South Wales and with the President of that Society, Karina Kelly in the Chair, a Convention of Presidents and other delegates of the six State Royal Societies was held in Sydney to discuss how they could co-operate more closely. The RSWA was represented by the author. The formation of a 'Royal Society of Australia' was rejected on similar grounds to the proposal in 1930: however, there was general agreement that a closer alliance would be beneficial to all Societies. An umbrella organisation was proposed with the name 'The Royal Societies of Australia' to emphasise an alliance without further commitment, and without impinging on the individual identities of the six Societies.

Following the Convention, a reception was held at Government House in Sydney hosted by the Governor General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AD MC, and in the presence of Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales and Vice-Patron of the Royal Society of NSW.

In the following year, a second Convention was held in Melbourne under the auspices of the Royal Society of Victoria. Again the author represented the RSWA as its President. At this Convention neither the RSSA nor the RSQ was represented. Discussions followed along much the same lines as the first Convention, and it was agreed that a more formal 'Royal Societies of Australia' alliance could be beneficial with the main purpose of raising the awareness of the work of the Royal Societies in the wider Australian community, and to assist the activities of the State Royal Societies in Australia through organised collaboration.

The Royal Societies of Australia (RSA) was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 3

August 2007 and the first President was W J W McAuley. His Excellency The Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia acts as Patron. The first formal convention of the RSA was held in Canberra on 2 February, 2008 with delegates representing the RSNSW, RSSA, RSV, RSQ and RSWA. The President of the Royal Society of New Zealand attended as an observer.

Today, the RSA representatives comprise the President, John Hardie (RSNSW), Honorary Secretary, Philip O'Brien (RSWA), Honorary Treasurer, Lynne Milne (RSWA) and Councillors, Clive Wilmot (RSNSW) and the author (RSWA).

In November 2008, a Convention of the RSA attended by representatives of the RSV, RSNSW, and RSWA was held at the Weld Club in Perth. The RSWA was represented by the then President, Philip O'Brien, and the author as Immediate Past President. A draft constitution for the alliance was discussed and circulated for comment. Subsequently, however, internal changes in the RSV, RST and RSSA saw them withdraw from any proposed alliance, leaving only the RSNSW and RSWA as interested partners. The membership of the RSQ had dropped to a very low number and the Society was in danger of becoming defunct. In an attempt to rekindle the interest of the RST in the RSA alliance, a Convention was held in Hobart in 2009.

In order to assist the RSQ, an AGM of the RSA was held in Brisbane in November, 2010. The RSWA was represented by the then President, Lynne Milne, and the author by teleconference from Perth. The RSNSW was represented by their President John Hardie (and President of the Royal Societies of Australia) and Clive Wilmot.

TO THE FUTURE

The RSWA has evolved considerably during the 100 years of its establishment and much has been achieved. However, like all societies, the RSWA continues to face the challenges of a fluctuating, but not significantly enlarging membership, and in maintaining its relevance in modern-day society. In essence, the primary role of the Society to promote science has not changed: what has changed significantly is the method of delivery. The Journal, Proceedings and Library Catalogue are now all available in electronic form. It is possible to join the Society, and to gain information about its activities on line through the Society's website (<http://www.rswa.org.au/>). Membership is open to all those interested in science, and electronic access to back issues of the Journal is free.

In this electronic age, there is no doubt that the future lies in faster communications and more easily accessible electronic resources. The Society should continue to engage with politicians, Government, and the wider community regarding the importance of science to society. To this end the Society should develop a "Register of Scientists" for the Society's website (one was first published by the Society in 1995), to be a source of specialised knowledge and commentary.

If the Society is to thrive through this century, then it will be through the endeavours of successive Councils to develop strategies of engagement with its membership

and beyond. The Society should create forums on controversial scientific matters of the day, and to take a more active role as a scientific watchdog in these challenging times.

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