



AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF PLANT SCIENTISTS

Annual General Meeting

27 September 2006 in Meeting Room M2, Brisbane Convention Centre

Minutes

Apologies

John Evans, Hans Lambers, Richard Oliver, Peter Ryan

Minutes of 2005 AGM

Steve Tyerman moved that the 2005 AGM minutes be accepted as a true record.
Seconded by David Day

Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising.

Reports

President's Report (for more details, see 2006 President's Report at www.plantsci.org.au). The principal points covered in the report delivered by Steve Tyerman were:

- Major challenge is to boost membership of the Society by reversing the decline in numbers of ordinary members. Initiatives over the past three years have failed to halt the decline.
- Potential causes for membership decline were canvassed together with how these might be addressed such as:
 - general health of plant sciences is in decline. Currently under investigation but unlikely to account for magnitude of membership decline.
 - imperative to be an ASPS member has waned possibly driven by a dilution of service across a broad range of activities.
 - CRC, ARC Centres of Excellence, ARC Networks activities and services duplicating those provided by ASPS. Review the ASPS services against those of the specialised centres in order to re-align ASPS activities so that the needs of the plant science community are better served.
 - Specialist needs of plant scientists not being met by the current broad church approach of ASPS and diverting interest in attending ComBio. ASPS should engage with other plant-based societies to explore opportunities of running satellite meetings under the auspices of ComBio.
- Current benefits of ASPS membership include:
 - recognition of excellence in research (Goldacre for early career researchers) and teaching (ASPS Teaching Award). Both awards facilitate career development and institutional promotion.
 - Functional Plant Biology Best Paper Award and RN Robertson Fellowship are recently established initiatives that target early career researchers.
 - Student members receive travel assistance to ComBio, poster and oral presentation prizes as well as subsidised attendance to the annual ASPS dinner.
 - Recognition of research excellence of senior members by the JG Wood and RN Robertson plenary lectures at ComBio.
 - Future initiatives for recognising excellence might include a focus on mid-career researchers.
 - The healthy status of the ASPS budget, managed by Peter Ryan as Honorary Treasurer, must be used to develop new initiatives to attract plant scientists to join an ASPS that serves them well.
- Steve thanked the Council executive for their enthusiastic efforts and Council members for their support.

Sharon Robinson moved that the President's report be accepted, seconded by Murray Badger.

Meeting protocol was temporarily abandoned to acknowledge the outstanding and bold leadership provided by Steve Tyerman during his tenure as ASPS President. Through his efforts, a number of initiatives had been introduced that substantially added professional value to what ASPS offers its membership. The meeting demonstrated its appreciation by loud and prolonged applause.

Treasurer's Report (for more details, see [2006 Treasurer's Report at www.plantsci.org.au](http://www.plantsci.org.au)). In the absence of Peter Ryan, Steve Tyerman delivered the Treasurer's Report. The main points raised were:

- Over the last financial year, the Society enjoyed a modest increase in its surplus from \$83,430 in 2004/05 to \$85,390 in 2005/06. This is despite a large donation of \$20,000 to the RN Robertson fund and \$20,000 to Plants in Action editors to facilitate organising production of the second edition.

- As membership fees are a principal source of income, there is a concern that the current ASPS surplus will begin to erode driven by a steady decline in membership evident over the last several years.
- Income growth is attributable to distribution of excess funds from previous ComBio meetings, royalties from sales of Plant in Action (down 40% from previous year) and recruiting Sustaining members. Functional Plant Biology was particularly acknowledged as the longest serving Sustaining member and for its continuing support for the Goldacre Award
- Efforts of David Harris are acknowledged in handling the 'Plants in Action'.
- Brian Atwell and his team to be congratulated in securing external sponsorship for the preparation of the second edition amounting to \$5,000.
- Absence of any applications for 'seed' funds to plan and organise scientific meetings and workshops.
- Student support for participation in ComBio remains high commensurate with previous three years with poster and best speaker prizes considered as important ongoing initiatives.

Brent Kaiser moved that the 2005 Treasurer's report be accepted, seconded by Helen Irving.

Functional Plant Biology (for more details, see [2006 Functional Plant Biology Report at www. plantsci.org.au](http://www.plantsci.org.au)).

Jennifer Henry presented the 2006 FPB report noting that:

- Temporary vacancy for an Assistant Editor at FPB while Jennifer is on maternity leave commencing November for six to nine months. Amanda Ellery shall take over as Production Editor
- FPB Subscriptions: 77% of subscribers to FPB are from overseas; free access for developing countries through WHO and FAO.
- Special Issues: Two in 2005; Ecophysiology edited by Susanne Schmidt, Ros Gleadow & Sharon Robinson and Legume Genomics and Genetics edited by Peter Gressoff and Christine Beveridge. Two special issues are planned for 2007; Collection of papers delivered at the Vince Franceschi Memorial Conference edited by Jerry Edwards and Mechthild Tegeder; Carbohydrate Metabolism encapsulating papers delivered at the 2006 International Society for Plant Molecular Biology Conference, Adelaide and edited by Alison Smith.
- FPB Best Paper Award. 2006 recipient Nick Gould. Assessed in conjunction with the ASPS Executive. Thus far three to four nominations of perceived high quality papers have been received for the 2006 FPB Best Paper Award.
- Goldacre Award. FPB proud to support this award 2006 recipient Peter Dodds. The 2005 recipient, Yong-Ling Ruan, has submitted a review to FPB as part of the award arrangements.
- New FPB Initiatives.
 - 'Cited by'. New on the FPB website recording sources in which FPB papers have been cited.
 - Rapid Communications. Authors need to make a case for rapid publication. Published examples include papers by Kirshbaum et al and Kelliher et al.
 - Publication of a paper by the recipient of the NZSPP Outstanding Physiologist's Award.
 - Colour figures included on the web papers available for download
- Most Read Papers. Chris Helliwell's 2002 paper continues to be the most highly cited.
- FPB statistics. 2006 Impact Factor at 2.5. Turn-around time for determination of manuscript publication is four weeks
- FPB is keen to continue co-promotion with ASPS at international conferences.

Steve Tyerman thanked Jennifer for her report stressing that ASPS values its association with FPB. This was amplified by a comment from the floor by Tina Offler pointing out an extensive list of initiatives that Jennifer had introduced to forge a very strong and productive relationship between FPB and ASPS. The meeting acknowledged these by loud applause invited by Steve Tyerman.

Plants in Action (for more details, see [Plants in Action Report at www. plantsci.org.au](http://www.plantsci.org.au)). Brian Atwell reported that:

- New editorial team met on several occasions during the second half of 2005 in which decisions were reached on the scope and pitch of the text, nominating editorial advisors, identifying those chapters requiring substantial revision, developing a list of new and existing writers to undertake revision of the first edition, a clear resolution to seek a new publisher and locating potential sponsors for funds to allow inclusion of colour plates.
- MacMillan has agreed not to enforce its contract and discussions with CSIRO Publishing are underway that have progressed to producing a draft contract.
- Contributors. Some 120 contributors have been identified with an increased proportion located in NZ.
- Raised ca \$56,000 for the project, of which \$20,000 has been sourced from ASPS. Major funding bodies yet to be approached. The level of funding sought includes costing for production of colour figures.

Discussion of the report included:

- Christine Beveridge suggested that ARC Centres of Excellence should be approached for funding support. Brian Atwell indicated that such assistance had not been sought at this stage but would undertake to do so; some support had been garnered from plant-based CRCs.
- Jennifer Henry enquired was any data were available for the sale of the first edition overseas. Brian Atwell indicated he did not have data to hand from the publishers on this issue but agreed that it would be valuable

Steve Tyerman thanked Brian for his report observing that Plants in Actions was a major initiative being undertaken by ASPS and called on the membership to provide their full support.

Phytogen. Helen Irving, Phytogen Editor, encouraged the membership to submit contributions to Phytogen that included commentaries on meetings attended by members. She acknowledged the support from the State ASPS Reps in providing excellent summaries of plant science research underway in their constituencies. Andy Netting reported that the ASPS Council had agreed that book reviews could be published in Phytogen on the proviso that the ASPS reserved the right to appoint the reviewer whose name and affiliation would be published along with their review.

Steve Tyerman thanked Helen and Andy for their report acknowledging the valuable service they rendered to ASPS in ensuring continued publication of Phytogen.

Election of Officers (for more details, see [2006-2007 Council Membership at www.plantsci.org.au](http://www.plantsci.org.au))

Steve Tyerman explained that membership of the ASPS Council is declared vacant each year. Those eligible for re-election had been invited to re-nominate and all accepted. Nominations for vacated positions were called for from the ASPS membership. A nomination for each position was received by the due date and these were put to the meeting (see Table below).

Election of ASPS Council for 2005-2006

New officers are highlighted.

Executive

President	Professor David Day (University of Sydney)
Hon Secretary	Associate Professor Robyn Overall (University of Sydney)
Hon Treasurer:	Dr Peter Ryan (CSIRO Plant Industry, Canberra)

Discipline Representatives:

Genetics & Molecular Biology	Dr Patrick Finnegan (University of Western Australia)
Cell biology	Dr David McCurdy (University of Newcastle)
Plant-microbe interaction	Dr Peer Schenk (University of Queensland)
Whole plants	Dr Charles Warren (University of Melbourne)
Plant development	Dennis Greer (Charles Sturt University)
Environmental & Ecophysiology; Global Change	Dr Mark Hovenden (University of Tasmania)
Plant Science Education	Dr Chris Ford (University of Adelaide)
Student Representatives	Jo Tregear (La Trobe University)

Appointed, not elected**ASPS Member****Willing to continue**

Public Officer	Dr Marilyn Ball (Australian National University)	yes
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ASPS Sub-Committees**Appointed, not elected****ASPS Member****Willing to continue**

FASTS Representative	Prof Graham Farquhar (Australian National University)	yes
Functional Plant Biology	Dr Jennifer Henry (CSIRO Publishing)	yes
Plants in Action	Assoc Prof Brian Atwell (Macquarie University)	yes
Phylogen Editors	Dr Helen Irving (University of Melbourne) Dr Andy Netting (University of NSW)	yes

Support Services**Appointed, not elected****ASPS Member****Willing to continue**

Membership data base	Jeremy Foster (University of Western Australia)	yes
Webmaster	Michael Deves (Lythrum Press, Adelaide)	yes
Website Manager	Ms Lidia Mischis (Flinders University)	yes

Tim Colmer moved that nominations for the 2006-2007 ASPS Council be accepted on block; seconded by Sharon Robinson.

The meeting unanimously approved the new committee.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Proposed Changes to the ASPS Constitution

Steve Tyerman drew the meeting's attention to an inconsistency between the present composition of the ASPS Council and that dictated by the ASPS Constitution in terms of the number of Discipline Representatives able to serve on Council. A modification to the Constitution (see below) was put forward to provide greater flexibility in populating the ASPS Council so that evolutionary changes in the plant sciences can be accommodated more readily. In order to change the Constitution Steve pointed out that procedures, as outlined in Item 26 of the ASPS Constitution (see below), must be adhered to. The membership had been notified of the intended changes by e-mail three weeks prior to the AGM

26. ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

This Constitution may be altered or amended

- a. by resolution at an Annual General Meeting, provided that all members have the opportunity to vote by post or by proxy and
- b. the resolution is passed by at least a two thirds majority of financial members voting.

Proposed modifications to the current ASPS Constitution were underlined (intended additions) or struck out (intended deletions) as shown below.

“20. OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY”

The officers of the Society shall be a President, a President-Elect, a Secretary, ~~and~~ a Treasurer and a Public Officer (Rule 23). All offices of the Society shall be honorary.

“21. THE COMMITTEE”

- a. the office bearers of the Society who shall be the office bearers of the Committee;
- b. where possible ~~seven~~ other members, each representing a subject discipline or a specific group (e.g. postgraduate students). The ~~seven~~ subject disciplines shall encompass the broad spectrum of the society's scientific and educational interests together with due regard for each State and Territory being represented.
- c. ~~such other members as may be co-opted from time to time provided always that the members so co-opted shall not exceed three at any time.~~

Steve moved the following motion:

That the proposed changes (as outlined above) to the ASPS Constitution to Items 20 and 21 be accepted.

Seconded by Brian Atwell.

There was no discussion and the meeting endorsed the amendments to the Constitution unanimously.

RN Robertson Fund

Steve Tyerman introduced two motions to progress the RN Robertson Fund and its intent. These motions focused on:

1. Fund Raising

Current balance: \$42,000 derived from donations from the ASPS membership, royalties from Plants in Action and a transfer of \$20,000 from the 2004/2005 ASPS budget surplus.

Target: \$100,000

In order to reach the proposed target in a timely manner, Steve Tyerman put the following motion to the meeting: *\$20,000 to be transferred to the Robertson Fund from the ASPS budget surplus in 2005/06 financial year and each year thereafter to transfer a sum as determined by the budget surplus until the funding target is reached.*

Seconded Tim Colmer

Following discussion clarifying that the ASPS budget surplus was derived principally from companies paying rental for exhibition space at ComBio meetings and membership subscription, the meeting unanimously endorsed the motion.

2. RN Robertson Traveling Fellowship

Steve Tyerman reported that the first RN Robertson Traveling Fellowship had been awarded in 2006 to Joanne Castelli. The Fellowship is intended for Early Career Researchers (Honours, PhD and Postdoctoral Fellows up to two years post PhD) to partially fund travel/subsistence cost for a period of research in another discipline at an institution outside the recipient's state of origin. Given the current balance in the fund, Steve put the motion to: *Offer one RN Robertson Traveling Research Fellowship in 2007 valued at \$4000 with a closing date of November 30, 2006.*

Seconded Ian Newman

Re-naming the ASPS Teaching Award

Steve Tyerman pointed out the current name of the ASPS Teaching Award is rather bland and could be altered to recognise the contributions of an ASPS member who is/was an outstanding educator. If this change were to be adopted the ASPS Council would adopt the following procedure in selecting the most appropriate name:

- The ASPS Executive would invite written submissions from the membership that highlight the strengths, innovations and qualities the proposed person brings/brought to undergraduate teaching in the plant sciences.
- The ASPS Executive or a delegated committee with expertise in undergraduate teaching would select the most appropriate name.
- Permission of the person or family of the person to be sought before using their name.

Steve Tyerman move the motion that: *The AGM approve, in principle, the proposed re-naming of the ASPS Teaching award.*

Seconded by Dennis Greer. There was no discussion and the meeting supported the motion.

Eureka Prize in Plant Science

Steve Tyerman introduced an initiative put forward by David Day that ASPS join a co-operative venture with ARC Centres of Excellence and plant-focused CRCs to create a Eureka prize in plant science with the objective of raising the profile and public awareness of the field. David provided the following background information:

- There is a marked and sustained decline in the number of undergraduate students specialising in the plant sciences.
- The flow on effect will be a decline in the human capital engaged in plant science research, particularly at a fundamental level.
- Therefore there is an urgent need to develop initiatives to reverse this trend.
- The Eureka Prizes offers one opportunity to raise the profile of plant sciences in the community and target the undergraduate cohort in the Life Sciences.
- Only Eureka prize offered with a plant science component is one in biodiversity funded by the Sydney Botanical Gardens and this will be discontinued in 2007.
- Sponsorship of an annual prize is \$26,000 with the ASPS contribution in the range of \$3,000 to \$4,000. Several ARC Centres of Excellence with a focus in the plant sciences have expressed a strong interest in such a venture.

Steve Tyerman moved the following two motions in tandem

- *For ASPS to develop, in collaboration with ARC Centres of Excellence and possibly relevant CRCs, a joint sponsorship for an Eureka Prize in the Plant Sciences open to undergraduates students enrolled in first or second year University degree programs.*
- *The ASPS contribution to the prize would be in the range of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per annum.*

Seconded Ros Gleadow

Brian Atwell enquired as to the contribution that ASPS would make to the judging of the applicants. David Day replied that if the prize was for an undergraduate ASPS would participate but if the prize was for an outstanding researcher, there would be a conflict of interest and the judging panel would be constituted by a cohort of research champions in the field with no affiliation with the prize sponsors.

The motion was adopted by a majority of the meeting without any dissenting voices.

Next ComBio Meeting in Sydney

Steve Tyerman reported that:

- 2007 ComBio will be convened in the Sydney Convention Centre as the Canberra Convention was not available.
- David Day is the ASPS representative on the ComBio Organising Committee
- The scientific program will follow the Brisbane ComBio format with one stream for plant biology.
- Future ComBio meetings will be convened as follows:

2007	Sydney
2008	Canberra
2009	Christchurch
2010	Melbourne

Discussion from the floor included:

- David Day reported that Phillip Hogg (UNSW) is the ComBio Chair with Ian Dawes as Program Chair. David invited input from Discipline Reps in formulating the Symposia and selecting Plenary speakers. He pointed out that there will be every attempt to invite high profile overseas speakers.

- Sharon Robertson enquired whether the Christchurch ComBio would be run in December similar to the Wellington meeting. It was pointed out that this was an aberration caused by the Sydney Olympics and that the meeting would be run in late September.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Common Week

The ASPS Executive will encourage the Academy of Sciences to lobby the Vice Chancellors Committee to re-instate the common week so that scientific meetings can be programmed outside semester times to avoid conflicts with teaching commitments.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.