**Science and Technology Australia (STA) report for the ASPS council meeting September 2022 – from Plant and Ecological Sciences Cluster Representative Rachel Burton**

*What is STA?*

STA represents STEM organisations in Australia, including ASPS (there is a plant scientist in a greenhouse in an attractive hat on the home page!!), which comprises a total membership of over 90,000 STEM professionals in 2022.

This year STA has cemented its position as a valuable and accurate resource to underpin policy submissions, and has been effective in better connecting scientists with politicians and making the STEM voice heard.

ASPS are represented at STA by a board member for the Plant and Ecological Sciences Cluster. I commenced my second two year term in November 2020. A new Board representative will need to be nominated and elected from the Cluster members to commence from November 2022.

The Cluster currently contains ASPS, Australian Council of Environmental Deans and Directors (ACEDD), Ecological Society of Australia Ltd (ESA) and Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment (HIE) at Western Sydney University.

However, STA are changing their constitution and so the Cluster structure and membership may also alter.

*STA Leadership*

Professor Mark Hutchinson (based in Adelaide) took over as STA President from A/Prof Jeremy Brownlie at the AGM in November 2021 and has brought his signature energy to the role. He works well with CEO Mischa Schubert who continues to raise her own profile.

Mark was recently appointed to the three person ARC Review Panel with QUT Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Sheil AO and La Trobe University Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Susan Dodds https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/sta-president-mark-hutchinson-appointed-to-arc-review-panel/

*STA Events*

STA organises a number of events during the year, of which Science Meets Parliament (SmP) is the key one. Due to COVID, SmP was converted to a virtual event and this template was also followed in 2022 but with a face-to-face celebration dinner, connected via live AV feed, in eight capital cities on June 2nd.

Plans for SmP 2023 have been announced but no dates have been released as yet (depends on the Parliamentary calendar which won’t be available until November for 2023).

Details from the STA website;

* a powerful three-day online program of bespoke training to equip scientists with advanced skills in policy engagement, communications, advocacy and influence; and
* a high-energy ‘Science Meets Parliament 2023: On The Hill” one-day in-person event in Canberra featuring a National Press Club address, National Gala Dinner in the Great Hall of Parliament, scientist meetings with MPs and Senators, an exhibition and advanced training.

STA again launched National Science Week in 2022 and there were many events held around the country, most were f2f as COVID restrictions eased. The launch was supported by release of the 3M State of Science Survey, showing that scientists in Australia are increasingly valued by the public https://www.3m.com.au/3M/en\_AU/state-of-science-index-survey-au/

*Governance and Constitutional reform.*

This was started in 2019, interrupted by COVID, but is now almost complete, overseen by STA Secretary Jas Chambers. Member organisations were requested to provide feedback to the detailed overview by July 21st.

https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/sta-constitutional-reform/

 *STA activities in 2021/2022:*

* The Superstars of STEM program continues to grow and a change of government will make no difference to program funding. The third cohort are finishing their two year program and the next cohort are under selection after applications closed in August (https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/superstars-of-stem/).
* The next round of Ambassadors of STEM is anticipated to open in late 2022. The aims, as stated on the website are to;
	+ forge long-term relationships between Parliamentarians and STEM professionals
	+ deepen scientists’ understanding of, and participation in, policymaking processes
	+ deepen Parliamentarians’ understanding and application of science
	+ create a network of scientists engaged in STEM policy
	+ boost the profile and value of science and technology among decision makers.

The program delivers Parliamentarians direct and regular access to experts in science and technology, and gives STEM researchers the chance to use their work to enhance and inform policy. https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/?s=ambassadors+of+stem

* In 2022 STA have been very busy and have made a large number of submissions which can be found here https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/reports-and-publications/
* STA have also generated a number of media releases on key topics, found here https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/news/
* There has been significant excitement around the renewed engagement shown by politicians following a change of government. Those in key portfolios in both the new and shadow ministries have publically supported events and commented that STEM needs to be front and centre going forward. A review into sector diversity was recently released and greeted by enthusiasm by STA https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/sta-welcomes-review-to-drive-science-and-technology-sector-diversity/