**2023 President’s Report**

**AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF PLANT SCIENTISTS**

**Prof Martha Ludwig**

The ASPS President and Executive are responsible for managing several activities each year.

Annual Meetings

ComBio2022 – ASPS joined with four other biological societies from Australia and New Zealand to organise ComBio2022, which was held 22 – 27 September 2022 in Melbourne. While some plenary speakers gave online talks, the conference was for the most part an in-person meeting. ASPS has approximately 400 members across all categories and 174 members attended ComBio2022. Our AGM was held during the conference and was followed by the Society’s annual dinner. Members were delighted to meet, catch up, and network in person post pandemic.

Hobart2023 – An in-person meeting with 15 sessions, including student-led, poster, and discussion sessions; more than 150 posters; and multiple social events in which attendees can meet, catch up, and plan collaborations. We are delighted to have Kathleen Soole (Flinders University) delivering the R. N. Robertson Lecture, which will incorporate a discussion session, and Christine Faulkner (John Innes Centre) giving the Annals of Botany Lecture. On behalf of the Society, huge thanks go to Eloise Foo and her team for the fantastic work they have done in putting Hobart2023 together!

ASPS2024 – A combined in-person local and hybrid meeting with plans to include the New Zealand Society of Plant Scientists (NZSPB).

ASPS2025 – Planned to be an in-person meeting with Adelaide as the preferred location.

ASPS Annual Awards

A major function of the Executive each year is to recognise excellence in research, teaching, and/or training. The Society is fortunate in being able to award members for their achievements with the support of corporate and individual donors. Applications for the awards are judged by highly regarded national and international scientists. While the identity of judges traditionally remains confidential, we can reveal that four scientists from Australia and overseas assessed the Goldacre Medal, three judged the Jan Anderson Award, and three ranked the FPB Best Paper Prize. The Hank Greenway Award for Education and Outreach and the R.N. Robertson Travelling Awards were judged by the Executive and associated discipline representatives. I thank all the judges for their input and congratulate the following well-deserving winners:

Tatiana Soares da Costa (UAdel) - Goldacre Medal

Caitlin Byrt (ANU) - Jan Anderson Award

Babar Shahzad (UTas) - FPB Best paper by an ECR

The Western Sydney University Team that has created a learning environment for *Ensuring Food Security Through Innovative Food Production* - Hank Greenway Award for Education and Outreach

Celine Mens (UQ) and Samantha Norman (UWA) - R.N. Robertson Travelling Scholarships (CM to National Center for Genome Resources (NCGR), Santa Fe, USA; SN to Washington State University, Pullman, USA)

Agrisera has agreed to sponsor the Jan Anderson Award in 2024.

Changes to the Jan Anderson Award and the Peter Goldacre Medal Descriptions

Changes to the text of the eligibility guidelines for the Jan Anderson Award and the Goldacre Medal are suggested, with the new text seeking to clarify detected ambiguity and make more equitable the opportunity for ASPS members to be a recipient of our major awards. The new text will be presented to the ASPS Council at its meeting and to the membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for endorsement.

ASPS Website and Phytogen

The Society’s website was audited by Bearded Friend in March 2023, with several updates being made. Many thanks to Janet Wheeler for her managing the ASPS website, overseeing the audit, and for responding to suggested updates and edits throughout the year. Discussions around further improvements to the website are continuing. A big thank you also to Georgia Koerber who will step down as Phytogen editor at the end of 2023. Members interested in taking on the editor role, please contact Kim Johnson and me. This is an important role in keeping the Society visible and its membership up-to-date and engaged with events in the national and international plant science communities.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

ASPS recognises the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our Society and has actively encouraged it. The Hobart2023 Organising Committee made DEI a major focus in the selection of chairs, considering gender, career stage, geographic location, and cultural background. Diversity information was collected at the time of abstract submission and session chairs were encouraged to aim for DEI when choosing speakers for their sessions. Three Carer’s Support Grants were given to assist ASPS members with key family-care responsibilities to attend Hobart2023. An initiative to encourage First Nations members of ASPS to attend meetings by providing travel support was introduced in 2023; however, no applications were received and strategies to make there awards more visible are being considered. Congratulations to Eloise and the rest of the Hobart2023 Organising Committee and the DEI team for their efforts.

Closer Ties with the New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists

Reciprocal registration arrangements now exist for members of the New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists (NZSPB) and ASPS for the annual meetings of the societies. The Presidents of the two societies are also on both society email lists and jobs can be advertised on both society sites by members. NZSBP to be involved in ASPS2024 (see above).

Global Plant Council

The membership of the Global Plant Council (GPC) represents organisations involved in plant biology, agriculture, and environmental sciences around the globe. Its aim is to support those involved in scientific research, teaching, and training; increase awareness of plant science in academia and society; and encourage international collaboration. Peter Ryan (Past President ASPS) is the current ASPS representative on the GPC Board. Expressions of interest from ASPS members to sit on the GPC Board are now open to ensure continuity in our participation when Peter’s tenure is over. Please contact Kim Johnson or me with expressions of interest. Many thanks to Peter for engaging with GPC and representing the ASPS.

Science and Technology Australia / Science Meets Parliament

Science and Technology Australia (STA) is Australia’s peak body for science and technology professionals from more than 130 member organisations. Its purpose is to conduct education and outreach programs, “bringing together scientists, scientific societies, governments, industry and the broader community” and it campaigns to influence public policy in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)-related areas (<https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au>). During the year I participated in the online AGM for 2022 and, while I could not attend the 2023 AGM due to conflicts with Hobart2023, I voted in the STA Board elections.

Each year STA organises their hallmark event “Science Meets Parliament” (SMP). ASPS sponsored two early career scientists, Jennifer Mortimer and Neeta Lohani, to attend SMP in March 2023. Activities included professional development opportunities, small group meetings with members of the Australian Parliament, attendance at a parliamentary session, a National Press Club Address, and the National Gala dinner. Those interested in participating in Science Meets Parliament 20 – 21 March 2024 should contact Kim Johnson and me.

CSIRO Publishing/Functional Plant Biology

Discussions continue with Sergey Shabala (Editor of FPB) and Patrick Hannah (CSIRO Publishing) to negotiate closer ties between ASPS and FPB that will benefit the Society and its membership and the journal.

Other Meetings

The International Congress on Plant Molecular Biology (IPMB) will take place in Cairns, 24 – 28 June 2024 ([https://www.ipmb2024.org/](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fprotect-au.mimecast.com%2Fs%2FnMqCCr81nytryqPO0c4xcX8%3Fdomain%3Dipmb2024.org%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cmartha.ludwig%40uwa.edu.au%7Cf763bd2a07a84c4519a408dbe626d045%7C05894af0cb2846d8871674cdb46e2226%7C0%7C0%7C638356826626949037%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ISZk1lX5MpMlLjaWoVI7UFfmWp4Quz0pnpxXU2hySfo%3D&reserved=0)). Members of ASPS are on the Local Organising and Australian Scientific Advisory Committees for the Congress. ASPS will sponsor student travel awards to the meeting.

Biomolecular Horizons 2024, which will incorporate the 26th International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB) / 7th Federation of Asian and Oceanian Biochemists and Molecular Biologists (FAOBMB) Congress, will be in Melbourne, 22 – 26 September 2024 (<https://faobmb.com/event/26th-iubmb-17th-faobmb-congress-melbourne-australia-22-26-september-2024/>).

ComBio2026 will be in Sydney, 29 September – 1 October 2026, at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Two ASPS members will be part of the local organising committee (LOC). If you are interested in sitting on the LOC, please contact me.

It has been a pleasure to be President of the Society this year. The enthusiasm of the membership, as evidenced by the engagement of ASPS discipline representatives and committees and the number of registrants across all career stages for Hobart2023, indicates a strong Society. I look forward to the coming year and building on these strengths. I welcome suggestions on how to make the Society more engaging, inclusive, and visible. Please let me know your ideas!

I would like to thank my Executive. Honorary Secretary Kim Johnson brought welcomed historical knowledge to the Exec and Mark Waters rapidly got up to speed as Honorary Treasurer after his election in 2022. Thank you both for your strong support of the Society, the open discussions, and your can-do attitudes.

I commend the Report to the meeting.

Prof Martha Ludwig (President ASPS)