

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Australasian Mycological Society

Monday 28th September 2015, 2.00pm

Room 471 Biochemistry and Microbiology Building, University of Sydney

Present: John Dearnaley (Chair), Sandra Abell, Leona Campbell, Julie Djordjevic, Jeff Powell, John Pitt, Megan Truong, Oliver Morton, Pearl Dadd-Daigle, Kenya Fernandez

Apologies: Diana Leemon, Elaine Davison, Pam Catcheside, David Catcheside, Bevan Weir, Dee Carter

1. Welcome and introduction by AMS President

John Dearnaley welcomed the audience to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the 2014 AGM

Minutes of the previous AGM were accepted with minor modifications involving changing all references to the “AMS small competitive research grant” to “AMS research grant” and correcting a typographical error. Moved: John Pitt

Seconded: Sandra Abell

3. President’s report

John Dearnaley tabled the president’s report to the meeting. He commented that it had been a busy but enjoyable year and he thanked the council Julie Djordjevic, Leona Campbell, Sandra Abell, Bevan Weir and Jeff Powell for their help and support. The 2015 scientific conference in Canberra had been an excellent meeting in particular the foray to the Li-Sun Mushroom tunnel to day before the conference, thanks to Dee Carter and Leona Campbell for suggesting and organizing the foray. The first joint ASM/AMS conference day started with an exceptional mycology-focussed plenary talk and was followed by some great mycology talks and posters especially those from student members. John gave particular thanks to Julie Djordjevic and Dee Carter for the great job they did in liaising with the ASM to ensure this day went well. Everyone enjoyed the AMS conference dinner at University House. The final day held at the Australian National University saw more high quality mycology talks from the plenary session to the excellent sessions ranging from plant pathogen interactions, fungal ecology and molecular mycology to systematics and applied mycology. The fungal skills workshop held during lunch on the final day and organised by AMS student representative, Susan Nuske was well attended if perhaps running a little overtime. John thanked the organising committee, Julie Djordejevic for all her work as conference chair, Celeste Linde for organising the conference dinner and final day venue at ANU, Ana Traven, Leona Campbell and Dee Carter for their outstanding efforts in ensuring the conference ran smoothly. The new AMS logo was launched at the AMS Canberra conference. The logo depicts a mycelium emanating from a central spore and enveloping the initials of the society. A mycelium was considered to be the unifying structure across our diverse society. John Pitt thanked the committee for recognising this. The AMS council invited Pam and David Catcheside to become joint patrons of the society. In this role they will continue to provide advice and mentorship to society members. 2015’s winner of the AMS Research award was Sarah Sapsford (School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University). Susan Nuske (2014 winner) gave an address at the Canberra conference on her research into ectomycorrhizal spore dispersal by marsupials. The AMS e-mail newsletter was begun in

2015 to provide members with the latest news. John Pitt commented that he has not been receiving the newsletter emails. Leona will confirm the member mailing list against the most current membership list. The AMS website has been run by Dee Carter in 2014-2015 and through her work has been developed into a good register of AMS details and business. Susan Nuske has continued to run the AMS student Facebook page providing interesting and quirky mycological news items. It would be good to see more input to this page from other student and ECR members of the society. The Australasian Mycologist journal was wrapped up with a final issue released on the society's website in September. This was brought about by a number of factors including the lack of an impact index and a decline in the number of submissions in recent times. The 2015-2016 council remains largely unchanged with the exception of Sandra Abell stepping down from the treasurer's position. Sandra has worked tirelessly over the last few years. She successfully organised the Cairns scientific meeting in 2012 and, along with Diana Leemon, initiated the AMS Research Award. Celeste Linde from the ANU will be replacing Sandra as AMS Treasurer in 2015-2016. Jeff Powell moved to officially thank Sandra, this was seconded by Oliver Morton.

4. Nomination and re-nomination of council positions

The following nominations for council positions had been received by the secretary by the 15th of September: President – John Dearnaley (continuing), Vice President – Julie Djordjevic (continuing), Treasurer – Celeste Linde, Secretary – Leona Campbell (continuing), Councillor – Jeff Powell (continuing), Councillor – Bevan Weir (continuing). In the absence of any other nominations, the secretary indicated that the individuals indicated were re-elected/elected to these positions. The meeting congratulated the 2015-2016 council.

5. Financial Report from Treasurer, Sandra Abell

Sandra indicated that the AMS presently had 90 financial members. This is a drop from last year, however, it is in line with membership numbers from other previous years. There was currently 1 sustaining member, 5 lab groups (with 25 members), 40 full members, 24 concessional members and 22 new or returning members. The total cash assets of the society were \$32,313.38, as at June 30th 2015. Income had been \$17,958.35 over the past financial year while expenses had totaled \$9,347.55. The surplus from 2014-2015 was \$8,610.80. The 2015 conference was held in Canberra in conjunction with the ASM in July with a total income of \$15,910.00. The total expenses including payment to ASM, catering, plenary airfares and prizes was \$11,675.62. There was a surplus of \$4234.38. The financial agreement between the ASM and AMS with regards to the 2015 joint scientific meeting worked very well and Julie Djordjevic and Dee Carter will work to clearly document that agreement for reference for future joint meetings. Sandra will wrap up outstanding 2014-2015 financial year businesses before handing over the Treasurer responsibilities to Celeste. The audit of the society's finances has been recently completed by Jim Alexander. John Dearnaley and Sandra will need to sign off on the documents after the AGM today. The AMS is currently in a very good financial position. Sandra thanked the Society for giving her the opportunity to serve on the council for the past 5 years as both a councilor and as Treasurer. She commented that it had been a very good experience, providing career opportunities and she had enjoyed working with society members.

As there were no questions on the Treasurer's report it was moved that the report be accepted by the meeting.

Moved: John Pitt

Seconded: Julie Djordjevic

6. Next AMS scientific meeting – Queenstown, NZ May 4-9, 2016 in conjunction with FUNNZ

Committee includes Bevan Weir, John Dearnaley, Leona Campbell, David Orlovich, Jeff Powell, Peter Buchanan. Have arranged keynote speakers Ian Dickie and Brian Monk.

7. Fungal teaching initiative

John Dearnaley raised the idea of setting up a database of the fungal cultures held in various collections, both academic and teaching, to potentially make them available to AMS members.

John Dearnaley and Sandra Abell proposed an AMS workshop to address the question of mycology teaching in Australasia. It was generally agreed that mycology is being lost from the teaching environment. Sandra suggested the development of a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), an online freely available open access course in mycology. Suggested organising a working group of AMS members (supported by society funds) to develop an online certificate in mycology, including virtual lab exercises and assessments via quizzes etc. This would not be an accredited course, however, there is evidence that MOOCs are looked on favourably by Universities as pathway courses/education. The course would be free to users. Could start the development process by surveying the AMS membership for people interested in being involved in discussing course focus and content, and/or making available teaching material they have developed for other courses. A basic course should emphasise the economic and ecological importance of fungi and could give a strong general grounding in mycology from taxonomy to molecular concepts. John Pitt suggested, and the meeting agreed, that the next scientific meeting in New Zealand would be a good time to organise a workshop look into developing an AMS MOOC in mycology.

8. AMS research grant

The meeting addressed the question of increasing the amount of the research grant. John Pitt re-iterated that the grant award amount must be sustainable within the finances of the society. The meeting agreed that \$3000 is a more useful amount for funding a wider range of experimental work. This was carried by a unanimous vote of the meeting attendees.

Moved: John Pitt

Seconded: Jeff Powell

It was also noted that while AMS membership is listed as a selection criteria for the research grant, this year only 2 of the 6 applicants were eligible members. It was suggested that a checklist could be included in the application information for next year's research grant. The following will be stated clearly as checklist items;

“I am an AMS member” and

“I have confirmed with my lab head that they have an AMS lab group membership in which I am included”

9. Other business

Sandra Abell suggested that the AMS new membership/membership renewal process could be streamlined if it were converted into an entirely online system. Question for Dee Carter (Webmaster), is there some way to do this via the AMS website? Jeff Powell suggested it could be done using a Google form system. Dee Carter and Leona Campbell will look into this.

The meeting concluded at approximately 4:10pm.