

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Australasian Mycological Society

25th October 2023

Present (via Zoom): Jonathan Plett (President), Bevan Weir (Vice President), Camille Truong (Councillor), Jordan Bailey (Treasurer), Fionnuala Bulman (New Zealand Student Representative), David Catcheside, Tracey Steinrucken, Tom May, Nicola Day, Sarah Sapsford, Alex Idnurm, Mahajabeen Padamsee, Luke Vaughan, Eric Asare

Apologies: Anna Hopkins (Councillor), Emily McIntyre (Australian Student Representative), Pam Catcheside

12:00 PM

Presentation: Dr Mary Hanson from Edith Cowan University on “Impacts on atmospheric fungal populations”

12:50 PM – 1:00 PM Break

1. 1:00 PM Welcome and Introduction

Jonathan Plett welcomed the audience to the AGM and outlined the Agenda.

2. 1:10 PM 2023 AGM Admin and Minutes of the 2022 AGM

Bevan Weir called for any proposed changes to the minutes of the 2022 AGM. The minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted with no changes.

Tracey Steinrucken moved the acceptance of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM and Bevan Weir seconded this motion.

3. 1:15 PM President’s report and summary of 2023

Jonathan Plett took over as president of the AMS from Tracey Steinrucken in January 2023. Jonathan thanked all meeting attendees for supporting the AMS.

Jonathan Plett presented the president’s report to the meeting.

Coordinating with mycological societies and conferences

The AMS continues to coordinate with international mycological societies and conference organisation. We are involved with:

- Asian Mycological Association
- International Mycological Association
- International Mycological Conference
- International Conference on Mycorrhiza
- ICPP2028

Newsletters

We have continued communicating with members and the public through our presence on social media and our newsletters which are released every two months. The AMS Research Highlights, featuring brief commentaries from AMS members on their recently published papers, have been a successful segment of our newsletters. Our AMS Out and About segment, initiated by Jordan Bailey, features AMS members at events communicating with citizen scientists or other community members. Members are encouraged to share their events for the AMS to feature in our newsletter and on our social media channels.

Virtual Seminar Series

We have been continuing our Virtual Seminar Series over the past year. These seminars have helped researchers connect with each other and initiate collaborations. Recordings of the seminars are uploaded to YouTube. The 2023 seminars are currently only available to AMS members, whereas the public can only access recordings from 2021 and 2022. Seminars are made available to the public one year after they are recorded. The seminars are great way for the AMS to reach out to the public and promote mycological research.

Research and Student Travel Grants

In 2023 we have been able to support a number of researchers through grants. This year, we made our research grants, each valued at AU\$2000, available to ECRs in addition to PhD students. They were awarded to Dr Kylie A Agnew-Francis from the University of Queensland and PhD Nicholas Chong from the University of Melbourne. They will be providing an update on their research to us next year. We were also able to fund a small student travel grant of \$500 for attendance at Biosystematics 2023 in Canberra. This was awarded to Luke Vaughan at the University of Melbourne.

As we gain more members over the years, we hope to expand the grants we provide.

What We Are Reading

What We Are Reading is a series of monthly interviews with scientists about their latest mycorrhizal research. The interview is uploaded to YouTube and made publicly available. This project was initiated and organised by Dr. César Marín and Dr Camille Truong, both of whom have been working with The South American Mycorrhizal Research Network.

César presented a seminar for the AMS Virtual Seminar Series this year. After the seminar, we spoke with him about opportunities for researchers in South America to interact more with those in Australia and New Zealand. One suggestion that came out of this meeting was for AMS members to engage with What We Are Reading. We invite AMS members who are interested in interviewing researchers to contact us. We will put you in touch with César and Camille who will assist in setting up an interview for What We Are Reading.

2024 Australasian Mycological Society Symposium

The 2024 Australasian Mycological Society Symposium will be held during the week of December 9th 2024 in Melbourne, with the exact date to be confirmed. We are in discussions with the Ecological Society of Australia Conference in Melbourne about hosting our Symposium during this conference.

Looking Toward 2024

We will continue with our Virtual Seminars, which have proven very successful, with many members joining the live Virtual Seminars and many more watching the recordings on YouTube. Please contact us if you would like to hear from a particular researcher at a Virtual Seminar, as we still have some slots available for speakers next year.

We will be looking for volunteers for helping to organise our symposium next year.

We are also looking for contributions to our Newsletter, Website, and Merchandise Store.

We receive numerous requests from people seeking specialists in particular areas of mycology. We are working towards creating a database on the speciality areas of AMS members. As you renew your memberships, we are hoping to gather some information from you about your specialities.

Next year we will have several conferences and associated awards. Nominations are open for the Daniel McAlpine Medal at IMC, with two awards available. The details for this award have been released, and we encourage early-career researchers to apply. The De Bary Medal and Ainsworth Medal are also open for nominations. If you are interested in being nominated or would like to nominate someone, please contact the president's email and we can forward those nominations on to the IMS.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we began sending out pins to our members annually. Please keep your address up to date to ensure you receive next year's pin. If you have an idea for next year's pin design, please contact Jordan Bailey.

Jonathan expressed his thanks to the AMS Council for their work, especially in supporting the transition from Tracey to himself as president. He extended his gratitude to Tracey for supporting the transition.

Bevan Weir will be stepping down as Vice President this year, as he has served the maximum term of 9 years as stipulated in the AMS constitution. In the November newsletter we will be featuring highlights of Bevan's time at the AMS. If you have memories you would like to share, please contact us so we can include them in the newsletter. Jonathan expressed his gratitude to Bevan for all his work during his time as Vice President.

Nicola Day moved to accept the president's report and Jordan Bailey seconded it.

4. 1:20 PM Financial report

Jordan Bailey presented the financial report to the meeting.

Jordan highlighted the challenge of discussing finances due to the misalignment between our memberships, which follow the calendar year, and the financial report, which adheres to the financial year.

The memberships for 2022-23 is as follows:

- Current members: 124 (94 for 2022)
- 34 are 3 year memberships (41 in 2022)
- 6 lab memberships, covering 26 students (3 lab memberships in 2022)
- 17 concessional (35 in 2022).

The AMS is financially healthy. Memberships brought in \$7,300, with expenses to date totalling \$6,830. The majority of funds have been used to support student research projects, with \$4000 granted in 2023. The travel grants and Jack Warcup prize amounted to \$1,000. Our zoom subscription comprises another large portion of expenses at \$846.89, which allows us to host, record and share our Virtual Seminars. PayPal fees have cost \$197.77 this year. Encouraging people to use credit card rather than PayPal may reduce the fees, however the data produced by PayPal transactions greatly simplifies the management of memberships. Website fees cost \$368.78. We spent \$416.90 on pins, which summed to around \$4-5 per person including postage. Conference related expenses amounted to a few hundred dollars.

The AMS financials are currently being reviewed by Accountant Gabi Buckley MIPA, ASA JP (Qual).

Meeting attendees discussed the misalignment between financial and membership years. Bevan Weir supported the idea of aligning the financial and membership years. Tracey Steinrucken suggested that if members join at the beginning of 2024, their membership could continue until the following financial year in order to align the memberships with financial year. Tom May suggested that instead, members could join at any point of the year, and their membership would last for the following 12 months. We could then report membership on the basis of financial year. Jonathan suggested that were memberships to last for 12 months regardless of what time of the year that the member joined, this may be more complicated for reporting and keeping track of memberships. Tracey mentioned that there were automatic systems for this, but that this would incur an additional cost. Jordan explained that the way she currently management memberships is manageable, and Tracey and Jonathan agreed that the PayPal costs were worth the benefits it provides in managing memberships. Jordan suggested we maintain the current system, but will just need to accept that there will be a misalignment between financial and membership years.

Tracey Steinrucken moved to accept the financial report and Bevan Weir seconded it.

5. 1:30 PM Fungal Education and Fungal Conservation Sub-Committee Reports

Fungal Education Sub-Committee Report

Sarah Sapsford presented the Education Subcommittee report to the meeting.

The education subcommittee was re-established this year. We currently have 13 members. The goal for this year was to update the 'Learning about Fungi and Teaching Tools'. The education subcommittee is currently updating the current university courses that include mycology across Australia and New Zealand and will publish this list on the website by the end of 2023. The education subcommittee also aims to update exercises on mycology, and potentially provide educational videos from mycology in different industries. We are also aiming to connect with local and state mycological groups so individual members can connect within their communities.

Tom May mentioned that he regularly gets emails from undergraduate students enquiring about the pathway to becoming a mycologist. He suggested that we could create some information documenting some pathways to become a mycologist. Sarah supported this idea. Jonathan Plett proposed the idea of producing short videos for the website featuring mycologists explaining their pathway to mycology. Sarah will follow up with these ideas at the council level later.

Jonathan Plett moved to accept the Education Subcommittee report and Nicola Day seconded it.

Fungal Conservation Sub-Committee Report

Tom May presented the Fungal Conservation Subcommittee report to the meeting.

The Fungal Conservation Subcommittee operates through a Google Group. The purpose of the Fungal Conservation Subcommittee is to provide information on threatened species that are formally listed for the region. In the past year, there has been some communication between members within the Fungal Conservation Subcommittee group, but no actions or projects have been undertaken.

No fungal species from Australasia have been formally assessed for conservation status region since the 2019 Red List Workshop. Many species that are globally listed on the IUCN Red List are not yet listed under Australian state and federal threatened species legislation. In June this year, Fungimap organised a meeting with staff from Victorian agencies to discuss listing more Victorian fungi species on threatened species lists. Tom suggested organising another large workshop in the next year or two to assess Australasian fungal species for the IUCN Red List.

Sally Friar from Flinders University has been involved in moves to form an aquatic fungi specialist group under the IUCN Species Survival Commission. Tom is currently on the IUCN Species Survival Commission Fungal Conservation Committee. He would be happy to pass on his role on this committee and the coordination the AMS Fungal Conservation Subcommittee to someone with more time and resources to foster activity within these groups.

Jonathan suggested that the AMS could advocate more for fungal conservation in the future.

Taxonomy Australia

Tom presented a report about Taxonomy Australia, which is the peak body for taxonomy in Australia. It was created as part the implementation of the decadal plan for taxonomy and biosystematics in Australian and New Zealand. Tom represents the AMS on the Taxonomy Australia steering committee, which meets a few times a year. Taxonomy Australia is sponsoring a symposium at Biosystematics 2023, which will be a joint meeting between AMS, Australian Society of Systematic Biologists (SASB), Australasian Systematic Botany Society (ASBS), and Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS).

Advocacy is a big part of the role of Taxonomy Australia, but this was put on hold at the government level while the external review of the ABRS was being carried out. Although this was not a Taxonomy Australia review, several members of the steering committee including Tom were part of the review panel. The review will not be released to the public.

One of the key positives that has come out of the decadal plan is that the Australian Journal of Taxonomy has been established as a diamond open access journal for taxonomic novelties for Australia. It will be formally launched at the Biosystematics 2023 conference. 38 papers have already been published in this journal, including two papers on fungi.

Sarah Sapsford moved to accept the Fungal Conservation Subcommittee report.

6. 1:40 PM Election of Office Bearers for 2024

Bevan Weir presided over the election of office bearers for 2024.

Bevan reiterated Jonathan's announcement that he will be leaving the council after his maximum tenure of 9 years as Vice-President.

Johanna Wong is on maternity leave and will return in Q1 next year. Until then, Camille is taking over Johanna's duties as Secretary as well as her own role as Councillor.

Mahajabeen Padamsee has been nominated for the open position of Councillor 2.

Council nominations to continue:

- President: Jonathan Plett
- Vice President: Anna Hopkins
- Treasurer: Jordan Bailey
- Secretary: Johanna Wong
- Councillor 1: Camille Truong
- Councillor 2: Mahajabeen Padamsee
- Australian Student Representative: Emily McIntyre
- New Zealand Student Representative: Fionnuala Bulman

The number of nominations is equivalent to the number of open positions, so no election is necessary.

Tom May moved to accept the election of office bearers for 2024 and Bevan Weir seconded it.

7. 1:50 PM Proposed constitutional change

Bevan Weir introduced the proposed constitutional changes.

At a recent council meeting, we discussed that the rules in our constitution require people to become nominated in order to become members of the AMS, and that all membership must be approved by the council. As this is not done in practice, we propose to remove these conditions from the constitution. Bevan has drafted proposed changes.

However, there has recently been changes made to the Associations Incorporation Regulations, which sets out a range of requirements for the operation of associations. Based on these changes, we must now incorporate a disputes and resolution clause into our constitution. The Associations Incorporation Regulations also sets out a document of model rules. In the updated model rules, there is a section that lays out the rules around membership applications, rather than membership nominations. This mirrors the changes Bevan has proposed for our constitution.

As there is a number of changes to be made to the constitution under these changed regulations, Bevan proposed that we adopt the new model rules, and make specific changes to these pertinent to the AMS. The new regulations come in to place on February 1st 2024, but we do not have to update our constitution by this date. It is not required to adopt the model rules, but it helps ensure that the constitution is fully compliant with the Act.

Bevan suggests drafting up constitutional changes, sharing them with members for their comments, and then formally voting on the changes at 2024 AGM. This would be an opportunity to make any other changes, for example changing our membership to running by the financial year, or altering the council term limits.

Bevan moved that the AMS council drafts a new constitution based on the model rules with changes only as required to reflect AMS specific requirements. David Catcheside seconded the motion. A show of hands from members present at the meeting confirmed that the motion passed.

8. 1:55 PM Other business

No other business.

Jonathan Plett thanked everyone for attending and providing their input. Please contact us if you have any ideas for the AMS.

The 2023 AGM concluded at approximately 2:00 PM AEDT.