

2006 AGM Minutes

New Zealand Society of Plant Physiologists

The Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Society of Plant Physiologists Inc. was held in Meeting Room P2, Brisbane Convention Centre, Brisbane, at 5.35 pm on Wednesday 27 September 2006.

Matthew Turnbull welcomed the 17 members to the meeting (Ludivine Thomas, Sarah Dorling, Julian Eaton-Rye, Sheryl Somerfield, Lyn Watson, Nick Albert, Marian McKenzie, Nick Gould, Jollanda Effendy, Aluh Nikmatullah, Fiona Bentley, Matthew Woods, Mike Clearwater, Matthew Turnbull, Jan Binnie, Anthea Craighead, Marissa Roldan). Apologies were presented for Michelle Williamson, Tony Connor, Jocelyn Eason, Peter Minchin, David Whitehead, Jim Crush, Paula Jameson, Julian Heyes, Ringo Feng, Margaret Barbour, Erin O'Donoghue, Dennis Greer, Roger Dungan, Richard Scott, Matthew Cummings, David Lewis.

1. The **minutes** of the 2005 AGM were accepted (**moved:** Matthew Turnbull, seconded Nick Albert; carried).
2. **Matters arising.** There were no matters arising
3. Matthew Turnbull presented the **President's report** (attached), highlighting the item on the change of Society name. A postal vote by members was held this year, with a clear vote (ca. 80%) in favour of changing the society name. The choice of new name (Plant Scientists or Plant Biologists) was more evenly split between members, with a small majority in favour of Plant Biologists. His desire was that the AGM endorse the results of the postal vote. He then proposed the motion that "that the society changes its name to 'New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists' in accordance with the results of the postal vote". (seconded Sarah Dorling, carried, all in favour. Seven proxy votes were also received on this motion - Kim Snowden, Tony Connor, Peter Minchin, David Whitehead, Jim Crush, Paula Jameson, Julian Heyes, all in favour). Matthew then opened the floor for discussion, in particular asking for ideas for development of the society alongside introduction of the new name.

Julian Eaton-Rye suggested that the society could sponsor small meetings or seminars at regional sites (CRIs and Universities), and canvas for new members at those meetings. Nick Albert and Ludivine Thomas gave the example of the plant biology meetings now being held periodically in Palmerston with the aim of encouraging interaction between the University and the CRIs (currently organised by Toshi Foster, who is also a member of this society). Matthew Turnbull suggested that the society could provide funds for internal travel within New Zealand by international visitors. Members hosting an international visitor could apply for support to allow the visitor to travel to other regions for presentations and interaction with other groups. Several members suggested the production of a brochure or poster to raise the profile of the society, list the benefits of membership, and encourage new members. Those present generally favoured the idea of a poster, rather than a brochure, that advertises society activities and that can be displayed in departments and institutes. Sarah Dorling noted that after arriving in the country to start work as a post-doc several months ago she was not

aware of the society until told by her supervisor. The society could appoint local representatives at each site whose role is to raise the profile of the society and identify potential new members. Nick Gould and Lyn Watson suggested that to encourage membership we could try to arrange some form of joint membership with ASPS. Jan Binnie asked what type of members we were trying to attract, with the response from Matthew that any plant biologist or plant physiologist was welcome, particularly those who were not members of other societies, but also those who may see benefit in membership of more than one society.

In other discussion related to his report, Matthew Turnbull noted the issue of funding for plant science in NZ, particularly the 'feeling' expressed by some that plant science applications to the Marsden Fund appeared to have an unusually low probability of success. This may be related to a low number of plant biologists on the assessment panels, but he stressed the need to gather good information before any action is taken. Matthew has recently requested statistics from the Marsden fund and will continue to work on this. Marian McKenzie commented that because of very low success rates she had noticed a shift in attitude concerning the Marsden fund from 'give it a go' to 'why bother'.

Matthew ended his address, stating that he had enjoyed his two year term as president, and that he hoped the new president could continue development of the society with some of the ideas discussed above. Mike Clearwater moved adoption of Matthew's report, seconded Marian McKenzie (carried).

4. The **Treasurer's report** was presented by Mike Clearwater (attached). Mike highlighted the fact that in the year to March 2006 the society spent \$3670 more than it received, in contrast to most recent years. The main difference this year was that no conference surplus was received. Conference surpluses are unpredictable, and if these are excluded then the society generally spends more (mainly on student awards) than it receives in subscriptions. If we did not receive conference surpluses our student travel awards would be less than half recent levels.

A discussion was then held on the possibility of raising society membership dues (currently \$25 for full members, \$10 for associate), and the related idea of encouraging members to pay membership dues in three yearly amounts to reduce the amount of invoicing and paperwork. Matthew Turnbull stated that he believed our subscriptions were too low, and that to increase our activities and raise our profile with the adoption of the new name we will need to spend more money. He also pointed out that \$5000 of current savings has already been committed to the Plants in Action textbook (refer to the 2005 President's report – this project is moving ahead slowly, some members may shortly be asked to contribute). Sarah Dorling and Julian Eaton-Rye noted that NZSBMB dues were twice ours (they offer some form of newsletter, but no website), and dues for other societies are usually even more. Our dues have not changed for a number of years (Note added after the meeting: Dues were last raised in 1999, from \$15 to \$25 for full members, and \$5 to \$10 for associate members). Mike Clearwater explained that in previous years the attitude had been that we should spend money on students, rather than accumulating it – but that if the society wanted to offer a wider range of awards, prizes and travel funds (as the Australian society has started to do), we should really attempt to accumulate an amount that can act both

as a buffer and an income. We cannot, however, arbitrarily raise dues without considering what future spending might be. He therefore proposed the motion that 'the society consider increasing membership dues and offering three yearly membership' (seconded Matthew Turnbull, carried all in favour).

Matthew Turnbull moved adoption of the Treasurer's report, seconded Sarah Dorling, carried)

5. **Election of Officers.** Mike Clearwater explained that all positions are vacant and available for election each year. Julian Eaton-Rye is the current vice-president and is the candidate for the new president. No new candidate for vice-president had yet been identified. John Clemens had indicated that he wished to stand down from the council, and Rainer Hoffmann and Nick Gould were both interested in serving on the council. Margaret Barbour and Marian McKenzie had expressed their willingness to continue as council members. Matthew Turnbull nominated Julian Eaton-Rye as president (seconded Lyn Watson), Julian Eaton-Rye nominated Mike Clearwater as Secretary / Treasurer (seconded Matthew Turnbull). For council Mike Clearwater nominated Margaret Barbour (seconded Sarah Dorling), Matthew Turnbull nominated Rainer Hoffmann (seconded Marian McKenzie), Sheryl Somerfield nominated Marian McKenzie (seconded Nick Gould), and Mike Clearwater nominated Nick Gould (seconded Matthew Turnbull). There were no other nominations. Matthew Turnbull moved that nominations be closed (seconded Sarah Dorling) and that all of the above be declared elected (carried unanimously).
6. **Conference Venues 2007 and beyond**
Matthew Turnbull explained that the NZIAHS had requested that we meet jointly with them and the Australian Society for Horticultural Science next year, probably in Christchurch. NZSBMB were also interested in meeting with us next year, and discussions were continuing. No decisions had yet been made for 2008. In 2009 NZSPP and NZSBMB would be joint hosts for COMBIO 2009 in Christchurch. Planning has already begun for what will probably be a large meeting. More details are given in the president's report.
7. **Update from the Functional Plant Biology Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC).** Mike Clearwater reminded members that the society has a representative on the Functional Plant Biology editorial committee. The journal continues to seek suggestions for review topics, and for special issues, usually focusing on a topic of interest covered at a conference or workshop. Our Outstanding Physiologist is invited each year to submit a review of their work to the journal. Nick Gould, a society member, was also the first author of the paper awarded the journal's 2005 best paper award, and received support from the journal to give a plenary talk at this year's COMBIO meeting. All manuscripts and reviews are peer reviewed to the normal standard. Members with ideas for reviews can contact Mike Clearwater.
8. **Outstanding Plant Physiologists Award.** This year's recipient is Margaret Barbour. Unfortunately Margaret was unable to attend this year's COMBIO meeting. She instead gave a special seminar and was awarded her medal at Landcare Research on August 24, with the Society sponsoring afternoon tea.

Matthew Turnbull pointed out that the name of the award will probably change to the 'NZ Society of Plant Biologists Outstanding Biologist Award'.

Annals of Botany. This years Annals of Botany speaker is Professor Stephen Long from the University of Illinois. Professor Long gave his Annals of Botany Lecture earlier today, entitled 'Mechanisms of plant response to atmospheric change and opportunities for adaptation: with particular reference to findings in free air concentration enrichment (FACE)'. This year the annals of Botany Speaker was 'shared' with ASPS, as usual when we meet jointly. Members should keep an eye out for the call for suggestions for next years speaker, and can put forward potential candidates at any time.

- 9. Other business:** Sarah Dorling thanked the organisers of this years conference and AGM, and Mike Clearwater thanked Matthew Turnbull for his hard work as president, and particularly for leading the process around the society name change.

The meeting was closed by Matthew Turnbull at 6.30 pm.