



New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists

## 2014 AGM Minutes New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists

The Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists Inc. was held at The Wakatipu Room, Rydges Hotel, Queenstown, at 7:30 am on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

1. Brian Jordan welcomed the 19 members present at the meeting (Philippa Barrell, Andy Allen, Chris Winefield, Zegu Fu, Paula Jameson, Annu Ninan, Matthew van Voorthuizan Nick Albert, Jason Wargent, Rainer Hofmann, Pragathi Dhandapani, Matthew Turnbull, Jessica Roche, Marta Gallart, Qianqian Guo, Briana Nelson, Srishti Joshi, Marian McKenzie and Brian Jordan).

Apologies were presented for Erin O'Donoghue, David Whitehead, Carolyn Lister, Colin Eady, David Lewis, Sheryl Somerfield, Jim Crush, Julian Heyes, Andrew Clarke, Kim Snowden, Lai Fern, John Harris, Nady Harris, David Collings, Nick Gould, Tina Summerfield, Diantha Smith, Rebecca Bloomer, and Julia Raynes.

2. The **minutes** of the 2013 AGM were accepted (**moved**: Nick Albert, **seconded** Chris Winefield, carried).
3. **Matters arising** from 2013 AGM minutes

**Rainer Hofmann** asked if there had been any further action on discussing the use of the PBRF money by universities following the discussion at the last AGM. **Brian Jordan** commented that there had been no direct action and that the PBRF money was probably used differently at the different institutes making unified effort on this difficult. **Jason Wargent** said that at Massey it was allocated at a departmental level was used to fund PhDs, but not Postdocs. **Brian Jordan** commented that the allocation being conducted at departmental level at some universities but not others demonstrates how *ad hoc* the process is. **Paula Jameson** said the University of Canterbury prescribed a socialist-type response to distribution of PBRF funds and that the HoD retained control. **Matthew Turnbull** felt that the Society shouldn't be responsible for lobbying regarding this on behalf of the universities. **Andy Allan** suggested we asked HoDs to co-ordinate a response regarding the use of the PBRF money by Universities, and **Brian Jordan** suggested we consider writing a letter to the universities regarding this.

4. **President's report**

**Brian Jordan** presented the **President's Report**. He summarised his efforts to bring the lack of career development options for young scientists to the attention of policy makers, which finally culminated with the Vice Presidents Committee announcing that the President of the Royal Society, Professor Sir David Skegg, was to drive a review of the NZ system for research in science, technology and humanities. One of the terms of reference for this review is to be "Career development including doctoral training,

postdoctoral, RA and research scientists positions.”

**Brian Jordan** also commented on two further issues he saw as important for continued work by the Society; raising the profile of Plant Biology in New Zealand, and concern about the amount of money secured by science staff that was being used for marketing and administration by the various NZ institutes.

There followed a vigorous discussion on the second topic by members present. **Andy Allen** commented that it is the scientists who secure the money, but that 68% of this is skimmed off for other things. He said that there was much concern about this in the CRIs, and that the ‘engine room’ was suffering. **Rainer Hofmann** agreed with this and also mentioned that we look to the younger generation of scientists to help solve this situation. **Brian Jordan** noted that despite the negative issues, he felt the scientific career was second to none, and that the previous comments and frustrations were more a ‘call to arms’ and certainly not meant to depress the up and coming scientists present. **Jason Wargent** commented that some parts of the government were supportive, for example the Callaghan Institute model providing support for PhD mentorship, and **Andy Allan** agreed saying the AGMARDT application form had a section focusing on career development for incoming Postdocs. **Chris Winefield** mentioned concern regarding the science funding being channelled into, for example, the National Science Challenges, and the problems associated with this. He suggested we lobby government regarding this and commented on this funding situation change happening following the demise of FoRST. **Andy Allen** suggested that research money should be able to be audited to track how much of the money gained for ‘research’ actually reaches the scientist working at the end conducting the science. **Nick Albert** commented he felt the mark had been missed in asking the public to decide on the National Science Challenges. **Matthew Turnbull** said that engaging with the Royal Society around this issue could also help.

## 5. Treasurer’s Report

**Marian McKenzie** presented the **Treasurer’s report** on behalf of **Tina Summerfield** who was unable to attend the conference. She noted the major difference between this financial year and the previous financial year being the receipt of profits from conferences, and that the society would receive a profit share of approximately \$3900.00 from our last conference (Plant Science 2013), but that this would fall in the report for next financial year. Other than that the Society’s finances have stayed relatively stable.

**Paula Jameson** noted the relatively large amount of money now in the Society’s bank accounts and mentioned that one of the main goals of the Society when it was set up was to support students. She would be reluctant to see any money locked into a term saver, as suggested in the report, as this might restrict access to these finances for this purpose.

There was also some discussion about membership numbers which have been static for some years. **Nick Albert** commented that all people attending the current conference should be members and there was discussion about how to spread the word about the Society to especially younger potential members. **Jessica Roche** mentioned the website and how this should be updated, **Pragathi Dhandapani** suggested current careers information could be included on the website and **Jessica Roche** suggested a Facebook page could be started. **Nick Albert** commented this would be good, and is happy to help **Philippa Barrell** with this to promote plant research, advertise jobs and conferences etc.

He suggested a few people might be required to maintain and contribute to it.

**Paula Jameson** moved that the President's Report be accepted, seconded **Matt Templeton**, carried.

**Philippa Barrell** moved that the Treasurer's report be accepted, seconded **Paula Jameson**, carried.

- 6. Election of officers.** **Brian Jordan** declared all positions vacant and nominations opened. He outlined those standing for council in 2014 (President, Rainer Hofmann; Vice-President, Marian McKenzie; Immediate Past President, Brian Jordan; Secretary, Marian McKenzie; Philippa Barrell, Cate Macinnis-Ng, Nick Albert, David Burritt and Chris Winefield (Council).

It was noted that **Tina Summerfield** had decided to step down as Treasurer this year and that **Mike Clearwater** had agreed to conduct the Treasurer's role until a new Treasurer could be found. It was also noted that **Marian McKenzie** would be holding both the Secretary and Vice President role this year and that a new Secretary would have to be found before she became President.

There were no further nominations. **Brian Jordan** declared the nominations closed, **Paula Jameson** moved the nominations be accepted, seconded **Andy Allan**, carried. The officers were declared elected.

## **7. Conference Venues, 2015 and beyond**

**Brian Jordan** reported that in 2015 we will hold our annual meeting as part of ComBio2015, which is to be held in Melbourne (27 September – 1 October).

There have also been discussions with NZIAHS and the local branch of the International Association for Plant Biotechnology regarding a joint meeting in 2016, along the lines of our Plant Science 2013 meeting.

## **8. Website update**

**Philippa Barrell** updated the meeting with her progress on the Society website giving a demonstration of it. The current website uses a programme with limited functionality and which can be difficult to upload information onto, and therefore keep current. She has re-designed the website using Word Press which will make the information much easier to access, with drop down menus, and a membership application form online. The Royal Society has agreed to host the website.

Members agreed that the new website would be an improvement and should be pursued. It was suggested that payment of membership subs online would be good. **Philippa Barrell** responded that this would incur a substantial cost for the Society, but an automatic reply could be generated to the person applying for membership including bank account details for payment.

**Srishti Joshi** suggested that it would be good if members could upload their CVs for other members to see, this would be particularly useful for students. **Briana Nelson** suggested including funding and jobs available on the website.

## 9. Society Publicity and Attracting new Members

**Marian McKenzie** overviewed an invitation letter written by **Cate Macinnis-Ng** summarizing the advantages of being a member of the Society. This will be sent to all members, asking them to pass it on to colleagues/contacts who are not currently members. It was agreed that this should be done. **Paula Jameson** suggested copies of the letter be made and placed on each chair in the conference venue, this was done.

## 10. Global Plant Council

**Brian Jordan** summarised that the Society has now become members of the Global Plant Council and that the council is actively driven to address big issues facing the globe from a plant science perspective. Brochures summarising the Global Plant Council's activities and member societies were handed around and **Marian McKenzie** asked that these be circulated around members' institutes and departments. **Andy Allen** asked if the Global Plant Council has a comment on the use of GM considering one of their overarching aims is to 'Feed the World'. **Brian Jordan** felt that considering the other member societies who had joined the council, it would be likely they agreed with the use of this technology and that he would follow this up with them. He suggested if they have a well-written statement regarding GM policies this could be used by our Society.

## 11. Technician's Career Development Award

**Brian Jordan** informed members that this award had been established and is now open for members who are technical staff to apply for. Two awards of \$500 are available each year to support conference attendance, workshop/training courses, or to visit other research institutes.

## 12. Roger Slack Award

**Brian Jordan** congratulated **Nick Albert** on receiving the Roger Slack Award, which was open for members within 10 years of submitting their PhD this year. He thanked **Nick Albert** for an excellent talk, which was given the previous day. The other members present congratulated Nick with a round of applause.

## 13. Annals of Botany Lecture 2014.

**Marian McKenzie** reminded members that the Annals of Botany sponsors an international speaker nominated by the Society to talk at our annual conference in return for the commitment of a review article written by the speaker for their journal. She said that the Society had not taken advantage of this for several years now, and that with our next meeting being ComBio2015, we should be sure to nominate someone who would suit our membership. Traditionally when we meet with the ASPS we (as will be the case in 2015) we have made a joint-nomination. **Matthew Templeton** commented that we

should make a nomination early so that we are more likely to get someone to suit our members specifically. **Rainer Hoffman** agreed to drive this, and to keep in close touch with the rest of the organizing committee of ComBio2015.

#### **14. Any other business**

**Matthew Turnbull** thanked **Brian Jordan** for the three years of his presidency and his efforts on behalf of the Society to address the career path options for particularly young plant science researchers in NZ.

**Brian Jordan** thanked all the members for attending and closed the meeting at 8:45am.

Minutes taken by Marian McKenzie