



Annual Reports 2000

President's Report

It is with pleasure that I present my annual report to the NZSPP, for the year 2000.

This has been a year where modern advances in plant science have certainly been in the public eye. We are approaching the halfway point of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification, and many of our members have already been involved in the process, either in preparing the submission from their respective employers, or in presenting in person. Our society has made an input into the process, through contributions to the submission made by the Royal Society of New Zealand. I want to thank Mike McManus and Andy Allan for coordinating this contribution, at short notice.

One of the missions of the NZSPP is to provide a forum for young scientists studying for higher degrees to present their results in a conference environment. To this end, it is particularly satisfying to see the strong contingent of student presenters at this conference. There is certainly no doubting the quality of the conference here in Wellington, adding to the excitement for those presenting for the first time. I'm especially pleased that the NZSPP has once again been able to support the travel of a number of students to this conference.

I believe the New Zealand plant science community will face a real shortage of young talent over the next few years. The numbers of students in many disciplines is in decline, and we continue to lose more scientists overseas than we bring back to these shores. Furthermore, our salaries are rarely competitive in an international recruitment market.

However, there are solutions to this problem, and each of our members has a role to play here. We should do all we can to encourage young people to seriously consider science as a career. Let them know about the excitement of getting that new result, that paper accepted, and the challenge and satisfaction of contributing to our knowledge. Let them know about the flexibility to plan your own working day. Let them know about the satisfaction of teaching others, the opportunity to travel and build friendships globally. Let them know that with a skill shortage, salaries have just got to increase!

The skill sets for the Plant Physiologist of today have changed. We must make sure that the new areas of *in silico* biology are also brought into University courses, while at the same time the more classical areas are not neglected. Bioinformaticians are in demand everywhere, but the best in this new field are not from a computer science background only; they know biology too!.

The next wave in the era of the 'omic will also see a high demand for biochemists, and they must be trained now. Even here, disciplines are converging. Not only is today's top class biochemist comfortable running an HPLC and determining an enzyme's K_m , but the same

person may also be building gene constructs. They will most certainly be totally familiar with all the latest web-based data portals.

No society runs without a genuine contribution from dedicated individuals. I want to single out two individuals who have contributed a lot of time to the society this year. Jocelyn Eason, as secretary/treasurer has had the biggest administrative role in the society, and always acts with professionalism and efficiency. Under Jocelyn's stewardship, our membership has increased to 170 (from 145 last year), and our financial position has been audited and remains healthy.

Thanks for your help Jocelyn. Another big job for the society each year is providing our Society input into the annual conference. This year, Mike McManus has done this, with the major conference here. Mike has done our society proud, and has helped build a strong programme. Finally, I also want to thank all the members of the NZSPP council. Many of you know that I've been outside of New Zealand quite regularly this year. It's been a privilege (& sometimes a tad embarrassing!!) to return to my emails and find the council has circulated a particular issue and reached a decision without me doing a thing!

In summary, I have enjoyed being President of your society and I hope I have served your interests well. Looking ahead, I have huge respect for Mike McManus, and believe he will move the society ahead strongly. This ends my report.

Gavin Ross
President

Treasurer's Report 2000

This is my first report as Treasurer and I should like to take the opportunity to thank Julian Heyes, who as the immediate past Secretary/Treasurer, has made himself accessible to answer my endless questions relating to NZSPP business/protocol. It has been a steep learning curve and I would like to thank all our members for their patience.

Our membership has risen from around 145 to 170, and our subscription income has, therefore, been considerably higher than in the previous (1998-1999) year. The current ComBio 2000 conference may have proved an incentive to join NZSPP, as our subscription is the cheapest of the four societies represented at the conference and all society members were charged a lower registration (a saving of \$100).

Our invested funds at the PSIS were on 18 month deposit with interest credited at the end of that period, that interest is, therefore, included in the 1999-2000 financial year. The PSIS term deposit matured recently (November 29, 2000) and was automatically reinvested at 7% for a further 18 months.

We participated in an NZIAS conference and received income from that source and were reimbursed for our student presentation prize, the Ravensdown Award. The Annals of Botany paid for one speaker to the annual Conference, and we have income and expenditure for a visiting speaker shown in our accounts. All conference costs associated with the current 2000 annual conference will be in next years statement.

The Royal Society of NZ is billing us annually for our affiliation fees, so you will see RSNZ affiliation fees in the accounts. The International Association of Plant Physiology had called for fees earlier this year, but have not responded to requests for bank account details for payment. So as yet, we have not paid any fees to the International Association.

Our accounts have been audited free of charge by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Palmerston North. This is the first year they have audited our books and they have agreed to act as our auditors in the future. The auditors noted that all monies for student subsidies should be receipted, so in future I will have the student recipients of travel and conference subsidies sign receipts upon receiving their cheques.

Jocelyn Eason