



President's Report 2008

This is our 30th annual meeting as an incorporated society. This year we are meeting with the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry (NZIC) and with the New Zealand Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (NZSBMB). While we have met with NZSBMB before at ComBio meetings this year's combined meeting brings together NZSPB, NZIC and NZSBMB at a single meeting for the first time. There is in fact considerable "overlap" of membership between these societies and I hope that this year's meeting will build on these cross discipline linkages and lead to new collaborative ventures between scientists with shared and complementary interests in plant science research.

At the conference this year our society has sessions on: Plant Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; Plant Physiology and Ecology; Functional Plant Biology and Plant Development — amounting to 21 oral presentations with an additional 20-25 poster presentations. We also welcome Dr Peter Nixon, of Imperial College, University of London, as our 2008 Annals of Botany Speaker and we look forward to the plenary address from this year's winner of our Roger Slack Award in Plant Biology. This year we have supported eight students from outside the Otago region and two students from Otago to attend and we are pleased to see the participation of our student members in both speaking and poster slots.

The Roger Slack Award in Plant Biology

This year Dr Tina Summerfield (Otago University) is the recipient of the Roger Slack Award in Plant Biology. Tina obtained her PhD in 2003 from Otago University studying cyanobacterial symbioses in lichens. A very successful three-year postdoctoral appointment followed at Purdue University where Tina applied DNA microarray technology to the study of how cyanobacteria adapt to changing environmental conditions. Tina's current research combines ecological and molecular biological tools to explore the diversity of New Zealand's cyanobacteria and their potential as a source of biofuels. Tina, a FRST postdoctoral fellow, is shortly to take up a lectureship in Botany at Otago University where she will focus on using cyanobacteria for the production of biohydrogen. Tina will receive her Medal in the Roger Slack Session to be held after our AGM.

Our Roger Slack award was again selected by the Royal Society to be included in the New Zealand Science Honours Dinner that was held at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa on the 11 November 2008 and Tina was able to attend. Last year our prize was also selected for the Science Honours Dinner that was held in Dunedin in November 2007. Being included in the New Zealand Science Honours Dinner provides an important opportunity for showcasing plant science research both at the dinner and through the press release put out by the Royal Society regarding the event. Our winner in 2007 was Assoc Prof Kevin Gould.

In 2007, our Roger Slack award was presented at the New Zealand Science Honours Dinner by Professor Peter Bannister. Sadly, as many of you will be aware, Prof Bannister lost his battle with cancer earlier this year. Prof Bannister was a former winner of our Outstanding Plant Physiologist Award and a strong supporter of our society and plant science in New Zealand. He will be missed by our scientific community.

Student attendance at International Meetings

This year we have supported one student member to an overseas conference. This is an important activity of our society and provides an important lift to the careers of our up-and-coming plant biologists. Members are encouraged to have their students apply for support.

NZSPB Annual Meeting 2009

I am pleased to confirm that we will participate in ComBio 2009. This meeting will be held together with the Australian and New Zealand Societies for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the Australian Society of Plant Scientists, the Australian/New Zealand Society of Cellular and Developmental Biology, the New Zealand Medical Science Society, the New Zealand Microbiological Society, the New Zealand Genomics Network and the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural & Horticultural Science. The ComBio 2009 meeting will be held at the Christchurch Convention Centre between Sunday 6 December and Thursday 10 December 2009. Details are available at www.uco.canterbury.ac.nz/conference/combio09/.

Joint Meeting with the American Society of Plant Biologists 2009

In addition to ComBio 2009, we are also a partnering society of the Joint Annual Meetings of the American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB) and the Phycological Society of America. The other partnering societies are the Australian Society of Plant Scientists, the Botanical Society of Korea, the Canadian Society of Plant Physiologists, and the Chinese Society of Plant Physiologists. The meeting is to be held July 18-22 at the Hawaii Convention, Honolulu, Hawaii. Please note that as a partnering society we are eligible to register at ASPB member rates. Further details are available at www.aspb.org/meetings/pb-2009/.

Membership numbers

Our total membership stands at 104 Full Members, 46 Associate Members (chiefly our student cohort but this also includes retired members) and 7 Life Members. Total membership therefore stands at 157. Our numbers have now remained constant over the last 3 or 4 years; however, recruitment needs to remain part of our activity in the year ahead. I would also like to reiterate that the Council has approved the notion that limited support be provided to local meetings of society members. Such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. While the expected level of support is modest it is our intention that supporting local meetings built around visiting speakers or similar activities be used to advertise and recruit new members.

This year also saw the implementation of our new membership rates. Full membership is now \$50 per year or \$80 for two years. Student members may join for \$30 (two years) or \$60 (four

years). The implementation of the new rates was achieved smoothly with virtually all members appreciating the importance for streamlining our operations, increasing revenue and stabilising our membership by removing the need to chase up subscriptions on a yearly basis.

Current and Future make up of the Council

Currently our council is made up of the following members:

President: Julian Eaton-Rye (Otago)
Vice President: Vacant
Secretary and Treasurer: Mike Clearwater (HortResearch))
Immediate Past President: Matthew Turnbull (Canterbury)
Additional members: Marian McKenzie (Crop & Food), Nick Gould (HortResearch), Rainer Hofmann (Lincoln) and Margaret Barbour (LandCare)

As discussed at our AGM last year we will split the roles of Secretary and Treasurer in the new council and I am pleased to confirm that we have excellent candidates standing for both positions as well as a candidate for the Vice President Slot. As noted last year Mike Clearwater is standing for President. In addition, we might also consider a Council member be selected for chairing an Awards Committee drawn from Council (or other co-opted members) to oversee the judging of student talks and posters at our annual meetings and coordinating the Roger Slack Award deliberations. This was also discussed last year at the AGM and I hope a decision will be reached on this point at our meeting this year.

Finally, on behalf of all our members, I would like to acknowledge the support and input of the Council throughout the year.

Julian Eaton-Rye
President, NZSPB



Treasurer's Report 2008

The statement of receipts and payments for the year ended 31 March 2008 is attached.

As of 31 March 2006 we had 151 members on our books (106 Full Members, 38 Associate Members and 7 Life Members), a similar number to last year.

Total income was \$2123.74 more than last year, primarily because we hosted an Annals of Botany speaker and received reimbursement from the journal. Subscription income decreased by \$1,162.04 as fewer members needed to pay overdue subs in the current year, and interest payments were \$4.21 less than the previous year.

Total expenses were also \$4,029.77 higher than last year, both because we hosted an Annals of Botany speaker (Professor Steve Tyerman from the University of Adelaide), and because we made a payment of \$3000 in seed money to the organisers of the COMBIO 2009 conference. Other expenses were lower: postage costs were reduced (a postal ballot was held in the previous year), less was awarded in student travel awards and prizes, as fewer students applied for subsidies and our conference was held in Lincoln rather than Australia. Costs for the Roger Slack Award were \$355.52 lower than the previous year as the 2007 recipient Kevin Gould was able to cover most of his own travel and conference costs.

Student subsidies and prizes decreased by \$1,350 to a total of \$3,700 this year. Two students (Marissa Roldan and Aluh Nikmatullah) requested travel support to attend our annual conference in Lincoln, and each received \$250. Hao Luo and Fiona Bentley were awarded \$800 each to present at the 14th International Conference on Photosynthesis in Glasgow, as well as at our annual conference. Nick Albert and Ludivine Thomas were awarded \$600 each to support presentation at the 9th World Petunia meeting in Amsterdam, and the International Plant Phosphorylation Meeting / 24th Annual Missouri Plant Biology Symposium in Missouri, respectively. Marc Thomas was awarded \$400 to present at the ASPS Ecofizz meeting in Sydney. Fiona Bentley and Hao Luo won the Best Poster and Best Oral Presentation awards at our Annual Conference, respectively, but have not yet received their \$100 prizes as the Treasurer failed to track them down after the meeting.

The overall result for this financial year was that expenses exceeded income by \$3,001.12, very close to the amount we paid in seed money for COMBIO 2009. If that conference makes a surplus we can at least expect a similar amount to be returned to the Society. However, this is the third year in a row that expenses have exceeded income, and for this reason an increase in subscription rates was implemented in the 2008-2009 year – fortunately our rates remain modest compared to many other societies that perform a similar role. The Society has also committed to providing \$5000 in funding to support preparation of the second 'Plants In Action' text-book, an initiative lead by ASPS, but we have not yet been asked to make that payment.

Our accounts have again been reviewed free of charge by Tania Delahunty, a chartered accountant and manager for the Tauranga City Council.

Mike Clearwater
Secretary / Treasurer NZSPB