



President's Report 2009

Welcome to COMBIO 2009, our 31st annual meeting as an incorporated society. This combined meeting of nine professional societies from Australia and New Zealand is particularly significant, because it represents only the second time our sister Australian Societies have met with us in NZ, following the successful COMBIO 2000 meeting in Wellington. On behalf of our membership I would like to welcome our Australian colleagues to Christchurch, and thank them for supporting a meeting in New Zealand.

A meeting of this size and breadth provides a valuable opportunity for our members – over 60 have registered to attend, and approximately 50 will be giving oral or poster presentations. Our members are directly involved in the organisation of three of the nine concurrent streams (Plant Biology, Plant Ecophysiology and Global Change Biology, Agricultural and Horticultural Science), made up of 20 symposia and 79 speakers from a range of disciplines. Thanks to the continued generous support of the Annals of Botany, our nomination for the Annals of Botany Speaker, Dr Brent Helliker of the University of Pennsylvania, will be presenting a plenary address, as will the recipient of our Roger Slack Award, Matthew Turnbull.

One of the primary roles of our Society is to support the career development of our members by organising meetings and providing support for students to travel to meetings. This year we are providing assistance for seven students from outside the Canterbury region to attend COMBIO, and one to attend an international meeting.

Roger Slack Award

This year's recipient of our Roger Slack Award in Plant Biology is Professor Matthew Turnbull, of the University of Canterbury. The award recognizes Matthew's outstanding contribution to our understanding of the way plant respiration and photosynthesis acclimate to temperature, a topic of central importance to predictions concerning the way the terrestrial biosphere will respond to and moderate climate change. In addition to recognizing his scientific achievements, we also have Matthew to thank for the effort he has put into leadership of the organising committee for this COMBIO 2009 conference. This year our Roger Slack Award was again included as part of the prestigious Royal Society of New Zealand's Science Honours Dinner, which Matthew attended. Next year's award will be open to early career researchers, nominations are welcome at any time.

Future Meetings

I would like to propose that we hold next year's NZ Plant Biology meeting in Palmerston North in early July. By chance, our choice of meeting partners over the last 9 years means that we have not met in the North Island since COMBIO 2000. The benefit of Palmerston is that we have many members in the region who could attend relatively easily. We could therefore hold a small, focussed meeting with an emphasis on student participation. Our choice of 2011 meeting venues

remains more open – we could seek to meet with our usual partners, including the NZIAHS and the NZSBMB. A more novel option which should interest the physiological ecologists amongst our ranks would be to meet with the New Zealand Ecological Society. While we have not previously met with the NZES, they have expressed an initial interest in NZSPB joining them for their November 2011 meeting in Rotorua. Finally, if we continue with our current pattern of meeting every three years with the Australian societies, our 2012 meeting will most likely be held at COMBIO 2012 in Australia. I would like to hear your opinions on these options for future meetings.

Membership

The COMBIO meeting has led to a small increase in our membership this year, with a current total of 160 members (112 Full/Life, 48 Student). There has, however, been a worrying trend of some members resigning, citing financial constraints as they opt for single instead of multiple society memberships. Our relatively static membership probably also reflects static or declining student enrolments in Plant Biology courses around the country. Despite recognition at the highest levels of government that the country's economy will continue to depend on primary production and our extensive conservation estate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit NZ trained graduates into higher degree or professional Plant Biology positions within our Universities and CRIs. This is a reminder that we must be vigilant in promoting the discipline of plant biology, by raising the profile of the Society's activities, lobbying for research funding, and by supporting the career development of our younger members.

Society Activities

The society council has embarked on a program to improve the way the society promotes itself and the discipline of Plant Biology. The introduction of our new logo, created by one of our long standing student members, Nick Albert, represents a first step in the overhaul of our website and publicity material. The choice of design represents a balance between a fresh new look, and retaining elements of our well established existing logo. We are also seeking to improve the range of benefits we offer our members, and to better promote those that are already available. For example, I would like to encourage members to take up the opportunity of funding to support regional seminars and visiting speakers. Our members could also benefit from enhanced links to the Australian Society of Plant Scientists, for example by becoming actively involved in, and using, the 'Plants in Action' wiki project, a topic which will be discussed at this year's AGM. Additional ideas and support from members for these types of activities will be welcomed by myself and the council.

I would like to thank the Council for their support during my first year as president, particularly Marian McKenzie and Tina Summerfield, who are both also completing their first year as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Mike Clearwater
President, NZSPB



New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists

Treasurer's Report 2009

The statement of receipts and payments for the year ended 31 March 2009 is attached.

As of 31 March 2009 we had 152 members on our books (104 Full Members, 41 Associate Members and 7 Life Members), a similar number to last year.

Total income was \$617.31 less than last year, one reason was the Annals of Botany speaker was paid directly this year and not through the NZSPB with reimbursement from the journal. In addition, there were a large number of members paying for two years subscription this year, resulting in a subscription income increased by \$2321.71 compared to the previous year. Interest payments were \$350.98 less than the previous year.

Student subsidies and prizes decreased by \$600 to a total of \$3,100 this year. Four north island students were awarded \$300 each to attend our annual conference in Dunedin (Sam Gregory, Nick Albert, Phuon Dinh, Aluh Nikmatullah), four south island students received \$200 for the same conference (Thomas Evans, David O'Keefe, Hwei Min Wong, Wouter Ballizany). Jonathan Moore, a Dunedin based student, received \$100 as a registration subsidy. Payal Diwadkar received \$500 to travel to the IV International Conference on Legume Genomics and Genetics in Mexico. Nick Albert won the prize for the Best Student Oral presentation at our annual conference, and Hwei Min Wong and Puon Dinh both received Student Poster Prizes. Each received \$100. Fiona Bentley and Hao Luo were also belatedly paid \$100 each as recipients of the Best Poster and Best Oral Presentation at our 2007 conference.

Total expenses were \$5118.01 less than last year, because previously we hosted an Annals of Botany speaker (Professor Steve Tyerman from the University of Adelaide), and made a payment of \$3000 in seed money to the organisers of the COMBIO 2009 conference. Other expenses were higher: postage costs and council expenses were increased (this included the cost of sending documents to the new Secretary and Treasurer). Costs for the Roger Slack Award were \$455.45, higher than the previous year reflecting reimbursement of the dinner tickets for both 2008 and 2007.

The overall result for this financial year was that income exceeded expenditure by \$1449.58.

Tina Summerfield
Treasurer NZSPB