



New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists

2015 AGM Minutes New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists

The Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Society of Plant Biologists Inc. was held in Room 220 at The Melbourne Convention Centre, Melbourne, at 5:35 pm on Wednesday 30th September 2015.

1. Rainer Hofmann welcomed the 19 members present (Andy Allen, Chris Winefield, Andrew Granger, Revel Drummond, Lynette Brownfield, Richard Macknight, Ranjith Pathirana, Chris Brown, Sebastian Leuzinger, Ben Peters, Will Clayton, Marian McKenzie and Rainer Hofmann), including five members who Skyped in from New Zealand (Paula Jameson, Matthew Turnbull, Jessica Roche, Julian Heyes and Michael Clearwater).

Apologies were presented for David Whitehead, Philippa Barrell, Jim Crush, Brian Jordan and Nick Albert.

2. The **minutes** of the 2014 AGM were accepted (**moved**: Chris Winefield, **seconded** Rainer Hofmann, carried).
3. **Matters arising** from 2014 AGM minutes

Revel Drummond asked if there had been a co-ordinated response to the National science challenges by the NZSPB and NZIAHS. **Rainer Hofmann** agreed there was a co-ordinated response.

4. **President's report**

Rainer Hofmann presented the **President's Report**. He began by acknowledging the loss of **Michael McManus** in July this year, and the tragedy of this by quoting **Paula Jameson's** words 'we have lost a pillar of plant biology, a superb supervisor, a true friend and colleague and a genuinely kind man.' Rainer reported that before Michael's death Michael had been made aware that the society wanted to bestow Life Membership on him at our annual conference, and that he was genuinely thrilled to know this. Despite Michael's death, council has decided it is still appropriate to honour Michael in this way. However, Rainer reported that council would also like to establish a longer lasting memorial to Michael with the establishment of a new award in Michael's name (this was discussed further in item 12).

Rainer Hofmann then congratulated Andrew Allan on receiving the Roger Slack Award and on his conference address. Those present responded with a round of applause. **Andrew Allan** thanked the society for the award, and commented that his previous award from the society (NZSPB Outstanding Plant Biologist, received when he was an emerging researcher), was very meaningful and had helped in securing research funding.

Rainer Hofmann continued his report, making special mention of the Vice President's

Committee, asking members to please forward any issues they wanted raised at this to himself or **Marian McKenzie**. He also thanked **Marian McKenzie** and **Michael Clearwater** for all their efforts in NZSPB. Those present thanked **Marian** and **Michael** with a round of applause.

Rainer also reminded members of the NZSPB technician's award, which was established last year, but which was yet to be awarded as no one has applied yet.

Andrew Allan moved that the President's report be accepted (**seconded Paula Jameson**, carried).

5. Treasurer's Report

Michael Clearwater presented the **Treasurer's report** and commented that the society was going to move towards on-line and credit card payment using the new website. **Richard Macknight** agreed that credit card payments would be an improvement over the current system. **Julian Heyes** asked if the accounts need to be reviewed by an accountant. **Michael** replied that we no longer need to have such a review because we are a registered society and therefore have stringent requirements regarding our accountability to the Charities Commission, he also said that finding an accountant willing to do our accounts was difficult and could in the end be costly. **Paula Jameson** commented that she would rather send more students to conferences than spend money on this. There was general agreement from those present.

Chris Winefield moved that the Treasurer's report be accepted (**seconded Richard Macknight**, carried).

6. Election of officers.

Marian McKenzie declared all positions vacant and nominations opened. She outlined those standing for council in 2015 (President, Rainer Hofmann; Vice-President, Marian McKenzie; Immediate Past President, Brian Jordan; Secretary, Marian McKenzie; Treasurer, Michael Clearwater; Philippa Barrell, Nick Albert, David Burritt and Chris Winefield (Council).

A nomination for council was also received for **Sebastian Leuzinger**.

It was noted that **Cate Macinnis-Ng** had decided to step down from council this year due to other work commitments. Council thanks her for her service to NZSPB.

There were no further nominations. **Marian McKenzie** declared the nominations closed. **Paula Jameson** moved the nominations be accepted. Those standing were elected unopposed. The officers were declared elected.

7. Conference Venues, 2015 and beyond

Rainer Hofmann reported that he had spoken to **Andrew Allan** who is helping organise a Plant Satellite meeting at QMB2016, which NZSPB would be welcome to join with.

Considering the success of the last QMB satellite meeting the society was involved in it was felt this would be a good option to pursue.

Julian Heyes confirmed that the next joint NZIAHS and the local branch of the International Association for Plant Biotechnology (IAPB) meeting was planned for 2017 and we would be welcome to join them for that, as we did for Plant Science 2013.

8. Website update

Michael Clearwater mentioned the new website was much more interactive than the previous one, and our new membership list could be used by anyone on that list to send emails to members, rather than relying on the secretary to do this. He also said that he would like to pay a student to keep the website up to date. It was mentioned that a Facebook Page could be considered, especially to inform student members of society activities. However, there was some concern that it should be kept regularly up to date. **Sebastian Leuzinger** commented that he had a student who could do this, **Revel Drummond**, **Jessica Roche** and **Ben Peters** also offered assistance.

9. Global Plant Council

Rainer Hofmann said that he and **Marian McKenzie** had attended a Skype meeting with Ruth Bastow (Executive Director) and Bill Davies, who outlined the GPC projects that NZSPB could be involved in, including DivSeek, Plantae and the Global Report. They expressed interest in knowing from members what they think they can contribute to the GPC and also what they think the GPC can provide for them. **Marian McKenzie** said that the GPC was genuinely interesting in linking with our society. She encouraged members to think about what they would like the GPC to do on our behalf and to investigate their website. **Andy Allan** suggested that clickable links to their projects e.g. SciNet should be included on our webpage, and **Revel Drummond** suggested our Facebook page could also be linked to theirs.

10. Roger Slack Award

Marian McKenzie reminded members that the Roger Slack Award would be open next year to emerging researchers, who are within 10 years of gaining their PhD, and encouraged members to consider members would could be nominated.

11. Life Time Membership Award

The awarding of Life Time Membership to Michael McManus had already been discussed in the President's Report.

12. New Award

Marian McKenzie described the desire of council to set up a new NZSPB award in Michael McManus' name. She said that NZSPB had only one other award in someone's name, the Roger Slack Award. The suggestion was that because Michael was such a dedicated student mentor and supervisor that the new award would be for a Best Student Paper or Best Student Thesis. There was some discussion which favored the Best Student Paper idea. **Matthew Turnbull** suggested this should be the best paper within a 12 month period, and **Revel Drummond** indicated the student should be the first author on the paper.

Richard Macknight thought it was more important to consider what the student's contribution to the paper was, for example second author on a paper published in Nature might be acceptable. **Julian Heyes** agreed and said that a draft of the rules for the new award should be circulated for discussion. **Andrew Allan** suggested that the award could include travel to our annual meeting and that they be invited to speak at our annual meeting.

Julian Heyes asked if we should approach Michael's wife about accepting his lifetime membership award at, for example, the monthly Palmerston North Plant Biology meeting, which Michael ran for several years. **Marian McKenzie** said she would also ask Bronwyn's opinion about our new award in Michael's name.

13. Annals of Botany Lecture 2016

Marian McKenzie gave an overview of the Annals of Botany Lecture, which gives NZSPB the chance to nominate an international invited speaker to speak at our annual meeting. If in agreement the Annals of Botany provides the travel funds to allow this to take place. **Michael Clearwater** reminded members that the successful awardee had to provide a review article to the Annals of Botany, and that this is an expectation in return for the travel funds. Members were encouraged to consider appropriate speakers for our next annual meeting.

14. Any other business

Michael Clearwater mentioned that there is a facility on our website to post local events and encouraged members include any such items, to make the website a useful tool for members. He suggested identifying a member at each center to inform the person running the website of such items. **Jessica Roche** said these could also be put on our Facebook page. **Revel Drummond** mentioned the Mt Albert seminar series at Plant and Food Research, which could be included, plus any international speakers who were presenting. **Marian McKenzie** reminded members that NZSPB has funds to support the domestic travel of international visitors in order to meet other potential collaborators and/or give talks. Members who were interested in this should approach the council.

Richard Macknight mentioned that the Auckland council was wanting to declare itself GE Free. He had made a submission on this and wondered what role The Society could make in the debate. **Andrew Allan** said that in the past The Society had provided evidence for the Royal Commission enquiry into GE. He also suggested that the Global Plant Council could be asked to contribute a statement. **Revel Drummond** mentioned the Science Media Centre and asked if we were on their list of expert people to contact for comment on matters of Plant Biology. **Rainer Hofmann** said he would look into that. He also mentioned that the Vice President's Committee was a vehicle that could be used to lobby government about such matters. **Andrew Allan** said that the restructuring/redundancy situation at AgResearch should be brought up with the Vice President's Committee as an area of concern.

Rainer Hofmann thanked all the members for attending and closed the meeting at 6:50 pm.

Minutes taken by Marian McKenzie