

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Agenda

Date: 5 December 2014 **Start time:** 6.30pm (AEDST)

Venue: CPAS Green Couch Seminar Room, Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, The Australian National University

Items for Discussion

1. Confirmation of members attending, apologies
2. Notification of proxies
3. Minutes of 2013 AGM
4. President's report
 - a) Discussion: ASC national conferences
 - b) Discussion: branch management and national support during periods of decreased activity
5. Treasurer's report
 - a) presentation of statement of accounts
 - b) determination of annual membership fee
 - c) determination of capitation to be returned to branches
 - d) determination of honoraria
 - e) appointment of auditor
 - f) appointment of public officer
 - g) discussion of part-time General Manager's position
 - h) preview of 2015 budget
6. Election of 2015 ASC President
7. Motion to amend the Constitution
 - a) 4.3, Membership: "Membership fees will be adjusted annually in line with the Consumer Price Index"
8. Branch matters and annual reporting
9. Announcement of ASC Grants Program recipients
10. Any other business

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Minutes 2014

Date: 5 December 2014 **Start time:** 6.30pm (ADST)

Venue: CPAS Green Couch Seminar Room, Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, The Australian National University

[Meeting opened at 6.34pm]

Meeting chaired by Joan Leach as President.

Items for Discussion

1. Confirmation of members attending, apologies

- 13 members attended with voting rights, 1 member attended as an observer (see attached list)
- 13 members offered apologies

2. Notification of proxies

13 members sent their proxies to member attendees (see attached list)

3. Minutes of 2013 AGM

- Pete Wheeler moved to accept minutes; Toss Gascgoine seconded → motion carried, minutes accepted

4. President's report

- The President noted formal thanks to:
 - The Executive committee members for their support in providing background and information and acting as a great sounding board
 - With a special vote of thanks to Kali Madden for her work and support as Executive Officer
 - Ian McDonald for launching and running the grants program that will be announced at the AGM
 - And to the Centre for the Public Awareness of Science at ANU for hosting the AGM
 - Thanks to CPAS for hosting the AGM
- The year has been a busy and successful one
 - February saw a very successful ASC Conference and thanks are noted for Claire and Kali's work in making this happen
 - There was a good balance of activities and themes
 - The conference brought an increase in member numbers
 - As ASC is an umbrella organisation for a very broad range of members, it was great to see the conference represented value to all the people who attended
- This year has also brought challenges, particularly with uncertainty around federal science policy and funding
 - Cuts, restrictions and loss of work are challenging for members and provides a difficult context for science communication in Australia
- Inspiring Australia looks like it will continue and will be a robust strategy to guide activity and consultation over the next few years

- Articulating the value of science communication will continue to be an essential function for ASC and an area to support members
- ASC has continued its representation in the Science Sector Group (along with other key bodies in science, science engagement and policy)
 - The President of ASC is always invited to this group
 - This is an opportunity to get clarity on what is happening in the science and science communication policy space
- There are new opportunities for science communication in Australia, including the recent launches by the Australian Science Media Centre (SciMax – Eureka Alert for Australia) and RIAus (digital television channel)
- The very diverse range of members within ASC represents both a strength and a challenge, and the Executive and National Council will continue to consider strategic ways to address this challenge, to ensure ASC represents these many different member functions

Discussion: ASC national conferences

- ASC conferences often receive very positive feedback, but they are expensive, a financial risk and difficult to organise
 - Do we continue to run conferences and what type of model will work?
- There is the possibility of connecting with other organisations to partner for conferences as a sustainable model
 - Joan has spoken with Niall Byrne and there is an opportunity for ASC to partner with the Factual Producers conference in 2017, and in 2019 the World Congress of Science Journalists
- On the possibility of a 2016 ASC standalone conference:
 - There has not been a strong indication of interest from members in running a conference in 2016 in terms of organisation – a conference requires a significant amount of voluntary assistance
 - Any members interested in running a conference in 2016 should let the President know as soon as possible
- Other alternative approaches:
 - If membership fees were higher we would be in a position to pay for conference organisers, but we don't have this financial base at the moment
 - An online conference or other innovative approaches using technology could help avoid the costs of a physical event and still provide value to members
 - We are looking to run member-wide initiatives this year, including special interest groups and science communication 'bootcamps' online – we will test these concepts to see the response and demand
 - A state or territory based conference might be a better model for giving people the perception of value and a chance to connect with members
- A change in time frame (e.g. running the conference every three years instead of every two) does not significantly reduce the financial risk and still creates the same issue of consuming committee time before and after the event
- The value of a face-to-face event is often associated with networking (alongside professional development opportunities) – it is noted that high conference fees may prevent some members from attending
- The ASC conference in 2014 ran as tightly as possible in terms of costs, with subsidies and sponsorship, but there were still concerns from some members about the ticket price being high
 - For many attendees a high ticket price is challenging, as they need to seek the support of their organisation to attend or self-fund their attendance
- It is also noted that the sponsorship secured for previous conferences is unlikely to be possible given budget cuts and restrictions, particularly for state and federal government agencies
- Member connection and discussion is an important part of ASC and it was noted that the LinkedIn groups are working well and provide value

Discussion: branch management and national support during periods of decreased activity

- At the state level, some branches are doing very well, with others either experiencing a period of decreased activity or not currently operating

- This is the primary way that members perceive and access value for membership
- Some of these branches have been very vibrant previously, but there are cycles of activity which see branches slow down
- Discussion: how can branches be supported and continued?
 - Succession planning and retention of corporate knowledge is critical for sustaining branches
 - Everyone gets very busy and this year has been particularly challenging for many branch committee members
 - It should be easier for people to join branch committees
 - There are challenges in identifying what members want and how to deliver it
 - A lack of engagement from members in branch activities and surveys can also be disheartening for committee members and may have an impact
- The ACT branch was discussed as a case study:
 - One year, the branch ran big events for the public and had excellent attendance rates, but did not run any specific member events
 - The following year the branch focussed instead on members and networking, and the professional development events the branch ran were not well attended
 - It is hard to know why people don't attend, but it is likely that many people experience time pressures do to work and non-work commitments
- General branch committee issues:
 - It is challenging as a committee member to run events and can be draining
 - Often ASC events compete with other science events, some of which have a more significant pool of resources (and funding) to draw on
 - Some branches set the goal of one event a month and this is a difficult target to meet
 - On committees, some members want to communicate science via events as this is not part of their daily role, whereas others who perform this work daily are less inclined to run similar events voluntarily
- Some ideas for branches:
 - Offer students/student members a small amount of money to run an event
 - Sponsor other programs (e.g. community radio science program)
 - Get PhD candidates to sign up as members and then offer science communication training
 - Run fewer events during the year, but make these events of a high standard and quality for members
 - Share events regularly and use other branches' material to run events – these can be accessed and share via the National Council Dropbox
 - National Council representatives may want a semi-regular meeting to brainstorm event and member support ideas
- The wider issue of value for members underpins the branch issue, which is connected to:
 - Professionalisation – this discussion is ongoing, however the recent Australian Standards and AQF may be useful in guiding this discussion and direction
 - Recognition – science communication is a distinct area of expertise and our practice is evidence-based
 - Training – in some states there is no formal qualification for science communication, however there are people seeking accreditation and recognition
- One area of value is provided via the ASC email list, which allows members to access business and science communication opportunities
 - It was suggested that members who benefit from this function could be asked to put up an ASC banner at any resulting events
- In summary:
 - The National Council and Executive need to continue the discussion on branch support, including models for branch activity
 - There needs to be a model to support members accessing funds to run events and programs, even if a branch is inactive

• Will Grant moved to accept President's Report; Heather Bray seconded → motion carried

5. Treasurer's report

- The Treasurer's report (provided as an attachment in these minutes) was read through for the meeting
- No profit and loss statement was tabled as the statement of accounts and audited accounts are still being finalised and the cycle will be complete by early 2015 – a change in accounting software and taxation status has meant this has been delayed
- ASC's not-for-profit status is still unclear due to the ongoing federal review of not-for-profits
- ASC's income tax requirements and GST liability are still uncertain
- From 2010 we focussed on being more conservative with our funds and being sustainable to avoid making losses – this has been successful, however, our costs are increasing
 - As we move to more voluntary and paid services, we need to evaluate our activities, paid positions, funding and whether our approaches are sustainable
- Merryn McKinnon moved to accept the Treasurer's report; Julie-Anne Popple seconded → motion carried
- Pete Wheeler moved for the AGM to empower the National Council to review and approve the audited accounts; Danielle Stocks seconded → motion carried

a. presentation of statement of accounts

- The name of the accounting firm is Benchmarc Group (Canberra based).
 - The accountants are currently crunching the numbers and we will be in a position to present our statement of the accounts within the next few weeks, prior to an official audit and sign off from them in early 2015.
 - The audited accounts will be submitted via the public officer to the Office of Regulatory Services.
- Our aim is to present the accounts at the first National Council Meeting of 2015.

b. determination of annual membership fee

- As per the decision made at the 2013 AGM this will increase as dictated by the Consume Price Index for the period prior to July 1 2015.
- For this year the membership fee increased by 1.9%, which was based on the CPI in from the previous quarter.
 - As such, the cost of membership from 1st July 2014 was:
 - \$86.69 for an individual membership (incl. GST);
 - \$35.90 for a student membership (incl. GST);
 - \$35.90 for an associate membership (incl. GST); and
 - \$538.14 for a corporate membership (incl. GST).

- Toss Gascgoine moved to approve the annual membership fee; Merryn McKinnon seconded → motion carried

c. determination of capitation to be returned to branches

- 20% of membership fee is held over for capitation – 10% is returned to branches and 10% is held in a pool that branches can request funding from (via the National Council and Executive)
 - Branches need to submit annual snapshots to capture and record activity and a general indication of expenditure
 - At the national level, it will be important in the coming year to work out what to do when branches become inactive?
- *ACTION: The Secretary will include a standing item on the National Council meeting agenda for branch bids for funding, and will check the National Council Dropbox to ensure the guidelines prepared by Jesse Shore for accessing this funding are available*

- Pete Wheeler moved that capitation arrangements remain unchanged for the ASC financial year; Julie-Anne seconded → motion carried

d. determination of honoraria

- Pete Wheeler noted that the following honoraria are payable, in recognition of those who take on these roles:
 - Honoraria of \$1000 each payable to the President, Secretary and Treasurer
 - Honorarium of \$1000 payable to the Webmaster
 - Honorarium of \$1000 payable to the Social Media Manager

- Toss Gascgoine moved that honoraria arrangements are continued; Ian McDonald seconded → motion carried
- e. appointment of auditor**
- Benchmarc has been appointed and Pete Wheeler recommends they are appointed for another year
 - Pete Wheeler moved that the next Executive appoint the auditor on behalf of the AGM; Joan Leach seconded → motion carried
- f. appointment of public officer**
- Pete Wheeler moved to keep Will Grant as the Public Officer; Heather Bray seconded → motion carried
- g. preview of 2015 budget**
- This requires some discussions within the executive to set priorities for 2015, identify additional revenue streams and primary cost items
 - As such, a budget will be drafted, discussed and approved by the ASC Executive early in 2015
- 6. Election of 2015 ASC President**
- Associate Professor Joan Leach has been nominated for the 2015 President's role
 - Joan Leach was nominated by Will Grant and was seconded by Ruth Neale; Joan accepted the nomination; a majority vote was conducted → Joan Leach was formally voted in for an annual term as ASC President
- 7. Motions to amend the Constitution**
- (see attached proposal for details)
 - Toss Gascgoine moved the amendment of the Constitution as proposed, Will Grant seconded → motion carried
- 8. Branch matters and annual reporting**
- Items discussed under the President and Treasurer reports
 - The AGM attendees recommended that the National Council be empowered to decide on how to wrap up branches that are inactive (e.g. if they stop holding meetings with a quorum), noting that guidelines should be flexible and all state or territory members be advised in the case of wrapping up a branch
- 9. Announcement of ASC Grants Program recipients**
- Please see the attached report
 - Ian McDonald noted his thanks to the judging panel for their willingness to be involved
 - The program will continue in 2015 with Ian at the helm
 - The Australian Science Communicators Grant for Professional Development is awarded to: Abbie Thomas and Amanda Niehaus
 - The Peter Pockley Grant for Professional Development in Investigative Journalism is awarded to: Sarah Keenihan
 - Will Grant moved a vote of thanks to Ian McDonald for his leadership of the grants program, Joan Leach seconded → motion carried
- 10. Any other business**
- The Unsung Hero of Science Communication Award formally opens at this AGM and all members are encouraged to submit a nomination
- 11. Any other business**
- Toss Gascgoine noted thanks to the ACT branch committee for hosting the AGM and thanked the Executive, the National Council and the Executive Officer for their work throughout the year

- The President and Executive noted their thanks to the outgoing Executive, National Council and branch committee members

8.23pm meeting closed

DRAFT

Australian Science Communicators
Annual General Meeting
Attendees

LAST	FIRST	MEMBER?
Lau	Sarah	1
Yardley	Chris	1
Madden*	Kali	0
Wheeler	Pete	1
McDonald	Ian	1
Grant	Will	1
McKinnon	Merryn	1
Bray	Heather	1
Popple	Julie-Anne	1
Orthia	Lindy	1
Stocks	Danielle	1
Leach	Joan	1
Green	Jarrold	1
Gascgoine	Toss	1
TOTAL:		13

*observer – non-voting

Australian Science Communicators
Annual General Meeting
Proxies

LAST	FIRST	MEMBER?	PROXY TO
Harris	Claire	1	Sarah Lau
Ridgewell	Jay	1	Sarah Lau
Belcher	Teresa	1	Sarah Lau
Nisselle	Amy	1	Sarah Lau
Shore	Jesse	1	Sarah Lau
Hutson	James	1	Sarah Lau
Barclay	Adam	1	Heather Bray
Shore	Jesse	1	Sarah Lau
Dooley	Philip	1	Merryn McKinnon
Aranda	George	1	Sarah Lau
Harris	Claire	1	Sarah Lau
Legg	Jacinta	1	Sarah Lau
Paxman	Cassie	1	Sarah Lau
TOTAL:		13	

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting President's Report

ASC President report for Annual General Meeting, 5 December 2014

Prepared by Joan Leach

Joan would like to personally thank the ASC Executive for 2014, the Executive Officer Kali Madden, and members of the National Council for their hard work on behalf of ASC members.

The ASC national conference in 2014 in Brisbane was a highlight of the year for the ASC. Thank you also to the conference co-convenors, Claire Harris and Kali Madden for their extraordinary work.

2014 was a difficult year for many ASC members with cuts at CSIRO and other institutions engaged in science communication. Given this context ASC will need to be responsive to members' needs for networking and perhaps even training and professional development in 2015 and perhaps beyond.

In addition to the conference, there were several initiatives that ASC pursued in 2014.

1. Thank you to Ian McDonald for initiating the ASC grant scheme which includes the first Peter Pockley grant for professional development in the area of investigative science journalism. The executive has agreed to continue this scheme into the future.
2. The ASC would like to encourage Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in order to be more responsive to members networking and professional interests. SCREN met in 2014 at the ANU to discuss the research environment and used meeting software to stream this meeting to live to remote members. There is interest from other areas and ASC will be responsive to members wanting to set up SIGs.
3. ASC has found itself in the happy position of being a growing organisation. As with all growing organisations, there are growing pains. ASC is currently looking to confirm its legal status, make sure that its tax status is up to date, and that the constitution of the ASC is as coherent and transparent as possible. This is ongoing, but should be resolved in the first quarter of 2015.

Finally, there are a few strategic areas where ASC is currently heading. First, as an organisation with a strong and diverse membership, it is important to make sure that members see value in the organisation as well as see relevance to the breadth of science communication. ASC will be looking to re-invigorate its connections with science journalism and science writing. Second, as state-based branches enjoy periods of strong member support, they are well-placed to offer value to members. In periods where state branches might struggle to find volunteers, the national ASC will be exploring mechanisms to help the members of that local branch fund activities of interest.

2014 was a strong year for the ASC and Joan would like to recognise the many volunteers that work to make ASC such a great organisation.

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Treasurer's Report 2014

This report summarises the Annual Accounts for the ASC for the year ending 31 August 2014. In the coming months these accounts will be audited as we work through some regulatory issues the association is facing. For now, I ask that the meeting note and consider the statements and other aspects of this report and authorise the National Council to approve and adopt the accounts once the audit is complete.

For clarity, the accounts are divided into "core operations", funded mostly by subscriptions and 'projects", with funding from external sources.

Income: During this period income to the ASC came from four primary sources. These were membership subscriptions, totalling \$39,950; bank interest, totalling \$1,796; conference related income totalling \$41,180; and an Inspiring Australia grant, totalling \$9,900.

Projects include the National Audit and the resulting website "Sciencengage" (ongoing), the distribution of Inspiring Australia (IA) updates and the development of an online presence for the IA community including the website "No Funny Business". The IA grant relates to the adaptation of the concepts developed for the IA community website "No Funny Business", to suit a series of live community events delivered in Canberra.

Expenditure. The major items of expenditure relate to the administration of the association, delivery of the conference in February and IA related projects.

Administration related expenditure included \$26,313 for the employment of the Executive Officer and \$7,141 for the *YourMembership* software, which underpins the ASC membership management infrastructure.

During this period legal advice, compliance and insurances cost the ASC a total of \$3,443, and we incurred \$975 in bank and merchant fees. \$3,468 was paid in the form of honoraria and only \$1,123 was spent on AGM and travel related expenses thanks to ASC Presidents using non ASC work trips to conduct ASC business. Capitation is yet to be issued to branches for this period but this will occur in the coming weeks.

\$32,699 has been spent on the conference leaving a net gain of \$8,481 this year, equating to a small loss overall of around \$3,492 once conference expenditure which occurred in the last financial year is taken into account. A loss was expected in the late stages of the conference due to a tougher economic climate than that of previous years. The conference was deemed a success in other ways and a fitting celebration of the ASC's 20th Anniversary year.

Other project expenditure has occurred as per the conditions of the various IA grants mentioned above.

Balance sheet: Assets held by the ASC across our two bank accounts equates to \$87,551.86 for the end of this financial year. Liabilities included our accumulated GST debt and any payments resulting from current compliance activities.

Overall this indicates a sound financial position for the ASC and I commend this report to the November 2014 AGM.



Pete Wheeler, ASC Treasurer

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Nomination for President – Joan Leach

Associate Professor Joan Leach has been nominated by Will Grant and seconded by Ruth Neale.

Associate Professor Joan Leach

j.leach@uq.edu.au

I am happy to nominate for a second term as ASC President for a very simple reason—unfinished business! Over the past year, ASC has made some real strides, some of them behind the scenes, but crucial for our sustainability and growth as a voluntary professional organisation.

Some 'highlights' from the past year:

- A stellar national conference in Brisbane in February
- Special Interest Groups 'getting off the ground' (SCREN and a new forming group K*)
- A complete review and audit of our financial systems
- A review of our status as a Not-for-profit
- The initiation of a professional development grant scheme

Now, I cannot take credit for these highlights—each of the highlights has a name or a group of names of ASC members (and our stellar Executive Officer, Kali Madden) against it. I will be acknowledging these stellar members at the AGM and in the end of year wrap-up for our newsletter, SCOPE. But, what this reveals is that, despite significant external pressures in our sector, science communicators remain committed to doing what they do best and also contributing to their own professional community. I want to continue to support and develop initiatives like these above over the next year and create a sustainable and vibrant professional community for our members.

Last year when I nominated for President, I identified the following issues as areas I wanted to explore: Benchmarking and 'professionalization' of the field, special interest groups, pursuing ethical guidelines, and raising awareness of the field. I've done that and want to continue those projects as outlined below:

Raising awareness of the field of Science Communication

Given cuts across CSIRO, the unsettled state of Australian Science Policy (what is it?), and funding cuts to the science sector, it is understatement to say that science communicators are working harder than ever to secure their roles. It is also the case that science communicators are needed more than ever to make the case for science, for engagement, and even for social change in the face of scientific evidence. I want to continue to make the

ASC visible as the professional organisation for science communicators on national committees and in the national discussion.

Professionalization

This is a long-term interest of our association. In the past year, the AQF (Australian Quality Framework) standards have come into play across the Australian TAFE and Tertiary sectors. While as an academic, they've added to my workload, as President of ASC I can see how this framework can provide some guidelines as we go forward thinking about accreditation and the professionalization of our field.

Ethics Codes

Over the last year, I've had conversations across our organisation about ethics codes—nearly all of the people I've spoken to seem to think that we need some codes of professional practice and ethics to which we can point. I agree. The difficulty has been in the range of professional practices a 'science communicator' is engaged. One solution I'd like to explore in 2015 is to look to science journalism for one code of professional practice, to PR/strategic communication for another code and perhaps an 'academic code' for other members. We needn't seek a one code fits all solution; rather, let's have a set of professional guidelines at the ready for the multiple roles we take on. Yes, there will be grey areas—let's make those productive. What, for example, should guide relationships among journalists and PR practitioners? That's an important question to answer and by having codes for both sets of practices we can begin working on the areas of grey.

Special Interest Groups (SIGS)

Over the past year, more members have expressed interest in joining a thematically oriented group of colleagues. So, SCREN (Science Communication Research and Education Network) is one such SIG that has produced results. We plan to kick off a K* (knowledge brokering group) in early 2015. There may be others. We can discuss at the AGM and elsewhere how we might resource such groups to support their work and build professional development out of these special interest.

Professional Development

We've been organising a set of bootcamps for 2015—these will be run for members, by members. We will be supporting these through online portals which will allow us to share some of the excellent work our members do and learn from each other. Building a broad skill set is important to science communicators, so we want to support that.

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Motions to change the ASC Constitution

Motion to change the ASC Constitution – for ASC AGM 2014

Reason for proposed amendments:

At the 2013 ASC AGM, members determined to increase membership fees by a small amount each year, in line with the Consumer Price Index.

Whilst ratified at the 2013 AGM and introduced in 2014 with the membership fee renewal cycle, this motion will formally introduce the wording to the Constitution.

Motion to change the Constitution – motion carried at ASC AGM 2013.

Proposed new wording

An additional entry to the list of definitions:

- 4.0** **Membership**
- 4.3 Membership fees will be adjusted annually in line with the Consumer Price Index.

DRAFT

Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Grants Program Report

To celebrate its 20th year, the Australian Science Communicators (ASC) proudly supported a new Annual Professional Development Grants Program. The program was created to provide all members with an opportunity to gain support to undertake further professional development and enhance their skills. In its foundation year, three grants were on offer worth a total of \$1200, these included:

- The Peter Pockley Grant for Investigative Journalism (one grant \$600)
- The ASC Grant for Professional Development (two grants \$300 each)

The grants program was officially announced on July 1, 2014 and promoted via the ASC website www.asc.asn.au/grants and email distribution lists, and the ASC social media channels. The grant application round was open from July 1-August 1, 2014 and six applications were received (four for ASC PD grants and two for Peter Pockley grant). All six applications were reviewed and rated by our grants review panel made up of Toss Gascoigne, Robyn Williams and Alison Leigh (past Presidents of the ASC and life members) and I thank them for their willingness to be involved in the grants program.

I am pleased to announce this year's recipients are:

The Australian Science Communicators Grant for Professional Development:
Abbie Thomas and Amanda Niehaus

The Peter Pockley Grant for Professional Development in Investigative Journalism:
Sarah Keenihan.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to apply for a grant and it was noted that all applications were worthy recipients but unfortunately only three could be awarded. The executive council now hope to grow this program over coming years so more grants can be on offer, and I welcome sponsored grants from external organisations.

Each grant recipient will write a short summary on what training they undertook with the grant money for our Scope newsletter, so keep an eye out for these articles in the upcoming editions of the newsletter, received to your email inboxes.

I was proud to get this program off the ground in its first year and look forward to continuing to see it grow in future years and welcome more members to apply. I would once again like to thank the executive council for their support of this initiative and for taking a chance on such a wonderful program to help support science communicators develop and enhance their skills.

Ian McDonald, Grants Program Manager, ASC