

# Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting 2015 Agenda

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**Date:** 19 November 2015                      **Start time:** 2.00pm (AEDT)

**Venue:** Centre for Public Awareness of Science, Canberra, ACT

## Items for Discussion

1. Confirmation of members attending, apologies
2. Notification of proxies
3. Minutes of 2014 AGM
4. President's report
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) preview of 2016 budget
6. Election of 2016 ASC President
7. Revised Constitution
8. Branch matters and annual reporting
9. ASC conferences and meetings plan – update
10. Any other business

# Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting Minutes 2015

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**Date:** 19 November 2015      **Start time:** 2.00pm (ADST)

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

*[Meeting opened at 2.04pm]*

Meeting chaired by Joan Leach as President.

## Items for Discussion

### 1. Confirmation of members attending, apologies

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

### 2. Notification of proxies

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

### 3. Minutes of 2014 AGM

- Chris Yardley moved to accept minutes; Joan Leach seconded → motion carried, minutes accepted

### 4. President's report

- 2015 was a challenging year but we are ending with more clarity towards the end of this year
  - Many of the issues flagged at last year's AGM have been addressed through the year and strategic planning
- In 2015, we were aiming to identify and fix weaknesses in ASC across the year
  - We have adopted a Constitution which conforms with legal regulations
  - We have finalised three years' of accounts and had them audited, which has taken 18 months to resolve – Kali and Pete have been pivotal in making this happen
  - We are in a better position to identify our GST responsibilities and liability
  - We also need to look at our membership dues and address this during this meeting
- A highlight in 2015 was the expansion of the professional development grants program to benefit a larger number of members
- We have just finished two days of strategic planning which set a good direction for ASC
  - JL thanked the many people who attended and contributed to the strategic planning session
  - Our new vision is that we are the national, professional forum for science communicators and science journalists
- JL noted her thanks and appreciation to Kali Madden for her dedication and exceptional work
- Pete Wheeler moved to accept President's Report; Phil Dooley seconded → motion carried

### 5. Treasurer's report

- Please see the attached report
- PW thanked Kali Madden for her work on managing ASC's finances and expenditure

- Joan Leach moved to accept the Treasurer's report; Bianca Nogradys seconded → motion carried

**a. presentation of statement of accounts**

- Suzette Searle moved to accept the statement of accounts for the past three financial years; Joan Leach seconded → motion carried

**b. determination of annual membership fee**

- JL noted that it is important to flag that the auditing process revealed that the membership fee has not covered the operating costs of the association for a long time
- Our expenses are currently higher than our annual income; we also have a number of key activities which incur costs
  - The membership fee has been between \$80 and \$90 for the past five years
  - The costs of running an association are increasing – in particular, for the ASC, the costs of financial support, auditing and web-based systems
  - We also need to pay an Executive Officer for the administrative support and member liaison required in ASC – we currently only pay Kali for nine hours a week and receive much of her time gratis
- KM and PW did modelling to evaluate the impact of losing members due to failure to renew and/or due to dissatisfaction with an increased membership fee
  - Whilst numbers may decrease, revenue (even at reduced member numbers) would still make ASC more financially sustainable than it currently is
- There are currently 106 student and associate members and 286 full members, with five corporate members
- WG: What would the strategy be for communicating this to the member base? How do you explain value for the increase?
  - PW: The foundations of a strategic plan have been set with the session in the past two days. This strategy articulates the direction for ASC in the year to come and into the future, and sets out key activities to offer value to members, including national activity, better branch support, a webinar program and improved coordination of the ASC communication channels. This fee increase will cover these activities and meet the costs of running the ASC.
- It is difficult to compare the fees with other similar organisations due to the nature of member activity and number activities, however for comparison:
  - Science Communicators' Association of New Zealand: \$135 a year
  - Australian Writers' Guild: \$185 a year
  - Australasian Medical Writers' Association: \$80 a year
- The option of a 'locked in' membership rate offering a transition period and the opportunity to extend membership at a reduced rate was considered by the meeting
  - The majority of attendees decided against this option
- PD: What is the level of increased expenses and does the new fee cover it?
  - PW: We would still need to undertake other profitable activities such as the conference, whilst being able to offer value to members who cannot attend the conference. Being more selective about ASC-led activities in line with the strategic directions will help ASC committees and working groups focus on events that are attractive to members and have the possibility generate revenue from non-members
- PD: Are we confident that this increase covers our costs and do we have the money to pay for Kali's time?
  - KM has provided an extensive amount of time free of charge to ASC, including much of the time needed to run a conference. The fee increase will only cover the activities and operational support outlined previously – we would still require KM's time free of charge to organise a conference and run it for a small profit
- WG: If we have not been earning enough money to operate in the last five years, then ASC is already in decline and we are relying on volunteers who 'burn out' - if we make this call we can then re-evaluate whether this addresses our issues
- JL: Our list and some of our other channels are unique assets and should not be undervalued – this is important for groups external to ASC to communicate with our members
- BN: It could be a profitable activity to allow members to advertise on the list

- SS: Rather than there being a dramatic increase, people should know that we have been subsidising ASC operations and as a result we are not financially sustainable – this is evident in the ‘market review’ of similar memberships for other organisations
  - The meeting attendees resolved that:
    - A new fee would be effective 1 January 2016
    - JL and PW will speak with corporate members to discuss a possible increase in fees and then work with the National Council to consider a new corporate membership fee
    - The CPI increase should be automatically factored in and the National Council or Executive should alter the relevant by-law to account for this
  - Pete Wheeler moved to set the annual membership fee at \$185 for members and \$85 for student and associate members, effective 1 January 2016; Bianca Nogrady seconded → motion carried
  - Pete Wheeler moved to allow the National Council to consult with the corporate members and determine an appropriate fee, then make the changes to By-Law 1; Phil Dooley 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)
  - PW and KM are working with the branches to develop a simple reporting process to assist capitation and better capture branch financial status
    - The new process is that once the branch treasurer sends an update to the National Treasurer, the branch will receive the capitation payment
  - Pete Wheeler moved that capitation arrangements remain unchanged for the ASC financial year; Bianca Nogrady 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
  - Pete Wheeler moved that honoraria arrangements are continued; Sarah Brooker seconded → motion carried
- e. appointment of auditor**
- JL: We make less than \$150,000 a year, therefore our auditor can be ‘a person of good standing in the community’
    - It is therefore proposed that someone is appointed to provide financial support and guidance
    - Toss Gascoigne should be approached for advice in finding someone to act as our ‘auditor’
  - Therefore the motion to appoint an auditor is deferred
- f. appointment of public officer**
- Joan Leach moved to appoint Suzette Searle as the Public Officer; Phil Dooley seconded → motion carried
- g. preview of 2015-16 budget**
- Following the strategic planning session in the last two days, PW and KM will work together on a 2015-16 operating budget
  - SB: The conference is a way of generating income and this should be in the long term strategy – it should have a separate budget from the other operating costs and membership income
  - Pete Wheeler moved to present the budget at the next National Council meeting; Bianca Nogrady seconded → motion carried
  - JL noted formal thanks to PW for his work and leadership in addressing ASC’s finances and legal and tax status

## 6. Election of 2015 ASC President

- Professor Joan Leach has been nominated for the 2015 President's role
- Joan Leach was nominated by Bianca Nogrady and was seconded by Pete Wheeler; Joan accepted the nomination → there being one nomination, Joan Leach is taken to be elected and returns as ASC President in 2016

## 7. Revised Constitution

- SL: The new Constitution was adopted at the Special General Meeting on 18 November 2015
  - The new structure is based on the model rules but does not change the intent of ASC's operations and ensures we are compliant with the requirements for an association incorporated in the ACT

## 8. Branch matters and annual reporting

- SL: This is a standing item and in the past we have asked our branches for an annual wrap up
  - The proposed Executive committee role of 'branch coordinator' will help take on this responsibility and work with branches
  - The proposed calendar of major events around Australia may assist with returning to this reporting structure

## 9. ASC conferences and meetings plan – update

- JL: The overarching idea is that we need an ongoing plan of the conferences and meetings ASC will be involved with and look to partner with in the future
- Niall Byrne prepared a ten year outlook which was shared with the meeting by Sarah Brooker and is summarised below:

Year	Conference and possible links
2016	ASC Conference 'due' Brisbane is hosting the World Science Festival PCST is in Istanbul
2017	World Conference of Science and Factual Producers may be in Sydney in November 2017 – possibility to connect an ASC conference WCSJ is in San Francisco in 2017
2018	PCST in Dunedin, New Zealand Possibility to approach local organisers about ASC involvement
2019	NSW (state government) is interested in hosting the World Conference of Science Journalists, but only if ASC or Australasian Medical Writers Association agrees to bid
2020	A possible full ASC conference
2021	A possible smaller ASC conference
2022	A possible PCST conference in Australia if someone is willing to bid for and run the conference

- This approach is a way of engaging with international networks and you can connect with major international guests and speakers whilst sharing resources with other organisations and reducing the financial and organisational burdens
- JL noted formal thanks to Niall for mapping out this approach

## 10. Any other business

- Discussions from the strategic planning session identified the following positions within a newly formed National Executive:
  - President: Joan Leach
  - Vice President: Bianca Nogrady
  - Vice President: Niall Byrne  
(Nomination proposed in absence – NB later confirmed via written correspondence on 18 December 2015 that he would be stepping down from the Executive)
  - Treasurer: Pete Wheeler

- Secretary: Sarah Lau
- Public Officer: Suzette Searle
- Immediate Past President: Vacant
- Branch Coordinator: Phil Dooley
- Events Coordinator: Tara Roberson
- Joan Leach moved to appoint the National Executive; Michael Mills seconded → motion carried
- JL thanked all strategic planning attendees for their time and efforts
- The branch coordinator will take some guidance from Executive on 'hot topics' relevant to ASC and then work with branches to develop events that can be recorded and/or livestreamed
  - So far, the coordinators are looking at a seven to 10 month calendar
  - We have seven branches so this would equate to one major event for each branch each year
- Many successful and valuable events have been run by branches and it is vital to find these successful models to adopt with other branches whilst ensuring alignment with the new strategic directions
- There was general support for a mixture of professional development events and network development events
- Someone on the Executive should be tasked with focussing on strategy and the future outlook
- At the March one-day conference, a short 'how to Periscope' session will be run to help branches focus on how to Periscope and share everything
- The branch committee structure will stand during 2016 and it is essential that there is a single designated person from each branch as the branch representative for the new strategic plan to work

*Meeting closed at 3.39pm.*

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Attendees

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LAST	FIRST	MEMBER?
Brooker	Sarah	1
Ceccato	Emma	1
Cleghorn	Julia	1
Dooley	Phil	1
Grant	Will	1
Lau	Sarah	1
Leach	Joan	1
Lourie	Paula	1
Madden*	Kali	0
Mills	Michael	1
Neale	Ruth	1
Pinkerton	Tamara	1
Roberson	Tara	1
Searle	Suzette	1
Wheeler	Pete	1
Yardley	Chris	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>15</b>

\*observer – non-voting

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Proxies

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LAST	FIRST	MEMBER?	PROXY TO
Aranda	George	1	Sarah Lau
Bray	Heather	1	Sarah Lau
Byrne	Niall	1	Sarah Brooker
Elliott	Jo	1	Sarah Lau
Ellyard	David	1	Sarah Lau
Harris	Claire	1	Sarah Lau
Hutson	James	1	Sarah Lau
Lamberts	Rod	1	Will Grant
McKinnon	Merryn	1	Will Grant
Nisselle	Amy	1	Sarah Lau
Paxman	Cassie	1	Sarah Lau
Shore	Jesse	1	Sarah Lau
Stevens	Toni	1	Sarah Brooker
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>12</b>	

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# Australian Science Communicators Annual General Meeting President's Report

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## **ASC President report for Annual General Meeting, 19 November 2015**

Prepared by Joan Leach

While 2015 was a challenging year for getting on top of the ASC's current situation, we end the year with much more clarity than we began.

Looking at last year's minutes, you'll see the issues flagged, but I do also want to acknowledge that we set out (with member support) to start a grants scheme for PD and we did this, with great success.

This year, we have identified weaknesses in the organisation and fixed them. We now have a legal constitution to be lodged with the Registrar General. We have an official audit of the ASC finances and have identified areas where we may need to change or even eliminate suppliers and to revisit our membership dues. We know where we stand financially.

We quickly realised that we needed strategies going forward for the health of the organisation and so we have ended the year with a strategic planning meeting.

So, we finish 2015 with a renewed sense of purpose for the ASC—our national professional organisation for science communicators and science journalists.

I believe the next year will be easier than this year. We are clear-eyed, focussed, and even have a bit of energy to take forward.

# Australian Science Communicators

## Annual General Meeting

### Treasurer's Report 2015

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#### **Position Summary**

Since the end of 2013, a number of issues with the ASC accounts, our regulatory compliance and the association's not-for-profit status has prevented us from finalising and lodging our annual statements.

Recently, after enlisting the services of a chartered accountant and a professional bookkeeper, we have succeeded in resolving our compliance issues and finalising the accounts for the past couple of years. Also, at the November 18 Special General Meeting we have succeeded in amending the constitution so that we are now 'legal' and our not-for-profit status protected.

Without any legal and financial uncertainties the ASC executive committee can now get on with the task of strategising and planning for the association's future.

In delivering this report, I'd like to highlight that once again Kali Madden should be commended for the time and patience she's had for this process. Her contribution to the ongoing success of the ASC cannot be underestimated.

#### **2014 – 2015 report**

The detailed financial reports for the past 3 years are available for viewing at this AGM. This report summarises the annual accounts for the ASC's last financial year which ended on 31 August 2015.

**Income:** During this period income for the ASC came from three primary sources. These were membership subscriptions, totalling \$31,476, bank interest totalling \$1,359 and \$5,612 received from ticket sales for *Kinda Thinky* events.

**Expenditure.** Major expenditure items relate to the administration of the association, including salary costs for the Executive Officer to assist with achieving regulatory and legal compliance (\$51,336), the cost of delivering events (\$11,788) and the costs of maintaining our online presence and the *YourMembership* software, which underpins our membership management infrastructure (\$8,105).

Also, during this period, legal advice, compliance and insurances cost the ASC \$5,374, and \$1,568 was expended for AGM related costs and Honoraria.

**Balance sheet:** At the end of the 2015 financial year ASC assets across the two bank accounts total just \$8,923. Liabilities included our accumulated GST debt, PAYG and outstanding payments relating to regulatory compliance.

At this point, the following information will serve to put the expenditure for 2015 in perspective against that of previous years.

- 2012: Income = \$284,065. Expenditure = \$208,415. Comment: Conference year.
- 2013: Income = \$78,276. Expenditure = \$96,549. Comment: Grants = \$40k
- 2014: Income = \$71,277. Expenditure = \$89,301. Comment: Conference year.
- 2015: Income = \$38,447. Expenditure = \$94,948. Comment: Resolving regulatory and legal issues, and bringing the accounts up to industry standards.

Given that the grants the ASC received in 2013 were funds committed to delivering specific outcomes that have ultimately cost the ASC more to deliver than the grants awarded, the ASC has only stayed in the black for the past few years because of the income generated at the 2012 conference.

This year, with increased regulatory requirements for the not-for-profit sector, some problems with our legal status and the pressing need to 'sort out' our accounts, it was important to tackle and resolve these issues, before our not-for-profit status and regulatory compliance came under scrutiny.

Fortunately we had some surplus funds to tackle these issues but this process along with our accumulated GST and PAYG debts has depleted the ASC's reserves and meant there has been no time or energy for generating the additional revenue the association needs to maintain the current level of operations.

So, at a time when some volunteer driven organisations like the ASC are shutting up shop due to increased costs and regulatory rigour, I would suggest that it is imperative and urgent that the ASC remove any non-core, non-revenue raising activities, consider an increase to membership fees, and seek out any opportunities that could generate additional income that can be used to better support branches and members.

I commend this report to the November 2015 AGM and ask that the accounts for the past three financial years be approved and adopted.



**Pete Wheeler, ASC Treasurer**