

Minutes of the ARSB branch AGM Date 11 September 2021 by Zoom

The AGM was preceded with a presentation by Stefanie Bonat which is available both on the RSB YouTube channel [RSB YouTube channel](#) and by downloading the presentation slides ([PowerPoint - 155 MB](#) or file [PDF - 2MB](#)).

In attendance

Australasian Branch members

Fakhri Athari, Eliot Attridge, Stefanie Bonat, Rob Eley (Secretary), June Freeland, Ross Graham, Harry Greaves, Anne Hamilton-Bruce, Laetitia Gunton (Treasurer), Robert Lawn, David Leece, Paul McMenemy, Martin Pal, Raymond Pittman, Carolyn Reynolds, Nikolay Shirokikh, Harry Tjondro, Ranjit Vijayan, Jack Whelan, Adhityo Wicaksono, Dickon Yau,

Non-Australasian Branch members

Karen Patel (RSB), Paul Thompson

Apologies

Vaile Dawson, Iain Gordon, Chris Proud, Wei Wang, Lloyd Reeve-Johnson

1. Introduction and welcome

The AGM was identified as quorate. In the absence of the Branch Chair the Branch Secretary chaired the meeting. The Chair submitted a written report (see Item 4).

2. Review of committee roles

The mandatory committee roles of Chair, Treasurer and Secretary were identified. These are filled currently by Lloyd Reeve-Johnson, Laetitia Gunton and Rob Eley, respectively. Roles for web and communication were noted as being established for the 2020-2021 year and filled by committee members Eliot Attridge and Stefanie Bonat, respectively. The position of Vice Chair was agreed to be created and filled for 2021-2022.

3. Election of committee members.

Lloyd Reeve-Johnson, Iain Gordon, Rob Eley and Laetitia Gunton nominated for Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, respectively. Eliot Attridge and Stefanie Bonat re-nominated for their current roles. All other existing committee members had re-nominated for general committee membership: Carolyn Reynolds, Anne Hamilton-Bruce, Martin Pal, Adhityo Wicaksono. No further nominations had been received. No objections were raised and all the above were re-elected for the 2021-2022 financial year.

4. Chair's report (supplied by Chair post AGM)

This has been a pivotal year for the Australasian Branch of the Royal Society of Biology.

With a geography as vast as ours and few members in any single location it has been a major achievement, largely due the perseverance of Rob Eley our Secretary who has organised regular telecons that worked out for most of the Committee and other interested members to keep our branch progressing despite the challenges of COVID-19 and the logistics of accommodating many time-zones that include New Zealand, all States and Territories of Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and others besides.

Our innovative online model has become more of a norm with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope we can continue to reach out to many new members over the next year. I appreciate and compliment the enthusiasm of all the Committee members and the innovations they have suggested, and hope others will step up to committee roles.

We have had a number of fascinating online presentations and hopefully are much better positioned to grow our Branch and make RSB membership more attractive to Biologists throughout our region. Our goals as a Branch and Biologists include: continuity, innovation flexibility and development and having spent a decade as Chair as we have restructured and combined with the Australian Institute of Biology to bring us all under a single organisation within a RSB Australasian Branch, I am keen to step down at the end of this year.

I would like to highlight the efforts of other founding members including notably the late Professor Tim Glover as Founding Treasurer and Rob Eley as a very efficient and diligent Secretary, as well as the early support from RSB in helping us establish this Branch and the willingness to collaborate in this goal of the Australian Institute of Biology, of which many of the founding members had dual membership.

I am delighted we have added the position of Vice Chair and have a very capable enthusiastic Committee and hope that many more of our members will step forward to engage with the Committee. We welcome new members from all parts of our large and biologically diverse region to join our branch in the excitement and experience of Biology in a branch that is the largest geographically and the most biologically diverse within the RSB system of regional branches. We also hope that other international branches may interact and share with us in our enthusiasm.

5. Treasurer's report

Laetitia Gunton, Treasurer, presented yearly expenditure of \$115.20 for incorporated association fees, and income of \$173.41 for the ARSB component of new member fees. Total balance to date = \$2227.34

It was noted that these funds were available to support activities and members agreed to use part to invest in a Branch Zoom account.

Laetitia reported that she was gathering information to set up an Incorporated Associations bank account with NAB. It was agreed that the following committee members would be

added as signatories; Lloyd Reeve-Johnson, Iain Gordon, Rob Eley, Laetitia Gunton and Stefanie Bonat.

6. Events

Members were reminded that Laetitia's presentation from last year's AGM <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JndddLVWg2Y> and a later one by Adhit Wicaksono are available on the RSB YouTube channel.

Eliot Attridge noted that Adhit's presentation entitled "*Rafflesia: The Strange and Mysterious Parasitic Plant*" which was posted a month ago had already been viewed more than 100 times <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0E4O0-kgz4>

Preparations to hold face-to-face meetings in Adelaide and Sydney had been underway prior to the latest lockdowns. Laetitia had contacted Sydney-based members via email in early July, and Anne's email requesting interest was distributed by the RSB to all ARSB members, resulting in local, interstate and international responses.

A summary of the received feedback was shared; members expressed interest in virtual meetings to:

- Get to know fellow members and discuss future activities and potential events.
- Network, share and discuss professional opportunities.
- See how to grow this professional group.
- Expand the membership and have active participants and events as in the UK.
- Discuss how we can support biology research and teaching in Australia.

Also raised as part of the feedback and suggested for referral to the RSB was compilation of COVID-19 articles, the RSB to have a more active presence in Australia and whether the RSB might have a role fostering a new 3R approach.

Eliot advised members that there was an opportunity to work with Microsoft to set up a Teams program to enable schools to be involved in presentations. Eliot agreed to follow up and report back on this initiative.

With respect to events, consideration needed to be made to the types, who would organise – individuals and/or working groups, what resources would be needed, timing etc. It was agreed that while face-to-face meetings should be encouraged once restrictions are eased, on-line events are the current way forward.

It was proposed that a monthly program of presentations should be explored. This would start with a presentation by Paul McMenamin - *3D printed replicas of human anatomy*

specimens, pathology specimens and foetal material – in October 2021. The exact date and time to be announced.

Live presentations would be encouraged to enable Q & A sessions, with the talks also either recorded or pre-recorded for posting on the YouTube Channel. Rob agreed to follow up with Paul and Eliot and encouraged all members to consider making a presentation.

In response to a question from Ross Graham it was noted that presentations could be about anything biology-related as were in no means restricted to research. [Subsequent to the meeting Ross offered to present on his work involving the interaction of the bio-metal, iron, on fat metabolism in the liver using fatty liver disease as the disease model.]