



THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SINCE 1821

Minutes of the 1293rd Ordinary General Meeting of The Royal Society of New South Wales held by ZOOM Webinar on Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 6.30PM.

There were 42 Members, Fellows and guests in attendance.

1. WELCOME

The President, Dr Susan Pond AM FRSN presided at the meeting. She welcomed members and guests and gave an acknowledgement of country. She also referred to the Society's Diversity and Inclusion Policy and asked that members consider nominating female candidates and those from diverse backgrounds for membership of the Society.

Dr Pond also mentioned that the Society's bicentennial year would begin on 25 June 2021 with the opening of an exhibition at the State Library of New South Wales.

1.1 Minutes of the 1292nd Ordinary General Meeting held on 7 April 2021

The Minutes of the previous Ordinary General Meeting, previously circulated, were approved.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP

As no valid objection was lodged within two weeks following the 1292nd Ordinary General Meeting, the election of the following new Members took effect from the date of that meeting held on 7 April.

2.1 Members and Associate Members

Members

Mr Andrew Buttfeld
Mrs Josephine Buttfeld

3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

If no valid objection is lodged within two weeks of this Ordinary General Meeting, that is, by 6.30pm on 19 May 2021, the election of the following new Fellows and Members will take effect from the date of this meeting.

3.1 Fellows

Professor John William Oman Ballard

Ms Frances Bodkin
Dr Jennifer Buckingham
Professor Catharine Siobhan Coleborne
Professor Judith Margaret Dawes
Professor Ofer Gal
Professor Jennifer Mary Gore
Professor Gordon Clifford Grigg
Professor Janet Elizabeth Nelson
Ms Anne Maria Nicholson
Dr Samantha Richelle Oakes
Professor Laura Poole-Warren
Professor Simon Peter Ringer
Dr Jackie Leach Scully
Professor Mark Gerard Stewart
Dr Laurence Patrick George Wakelin
Associate Professor Qilin Wang
Emeritus Professor Ian William Webster

3.2 Members

Mr Philip Bailey
Mr Jordan Gacutan
Mr Brian Spilsbury

4 REPORT FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

The President advised that the meeting of the Society's Committee held on 28 April had discussed the planned establishment of a branch of the Society in Western New South Wales with the support of Charles Sturt University. She said the planned establishment fitted well with the Society's ambition to be outward looking and contribute to intellectual activity in New South Wales.

4.1 Warren Prize

Dr Pond advised that the Warren Prize for 2020 had been awarded to Dr Simon John Devitt, Lecturer at the Centre for Quantum Software and Information (QSI) at the University of Technology Sydney. Dr Pond congratulated Dr Devitt *in absentia*. She noted that the award would be presented with other 2020 awards.

5 QUESTIONS

In answer to the questions asked during the recent Council election process Dr Pond advised as follows.

5.1 How will be deficit be tackled?

The deficit in 2020 (\$26,342) was funded from Reserves and Retained Earnings. In 2021, it is projected there will be a similar operating deficit plus contribution to the Bicentennial Exhibition, with the total to be funded from Retained Earnings (\$109,509 as at 31/12/2020). For the future, it will be essential to grow revenue through operating activities.

5.2 What is the budget for the bicentennial?

The Executive has approved a net contribution of \$18,000 for the Bicentennial Exhibition to be held in the State Library of NSW..

5.3 Why was there no Annual Forum income recorded for 2020?

Forum income of \$16,000 was included with Social Group Income and expenditure of \$15,322 with Social Group Expenditure.

6 THIS EVENING'S PRESENTATION

BIG, BAD FIRES IN NSW

Emerita Professor Mary O'Kane AC FRSN FTSE Hon FIEAust Chair, NSW Independent Planning Commission

Mary O'Kane is Chair of the NSW Independent Planning Commission. She was NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer from 2008-2018; Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide from 1996-2001 and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at Adelaide from 1994-1996.

Professor O'Kane has served on several boards and committees in the public and private sectors, especially related to energy, engineering, ICT and research. She is currently Chair of the boards of Aurora Energy Pty Ltd and Sydney Health Partners. She also carries out reviews in a wide range of fields in many countries. She was recently one of the two leaders of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry.

She is the recipient of the 2020 Royal Society of New South Wales Medal.

As noted in the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, "The 2019-20 bush fire season was extreme, and extremely unusual. It showed us bush fires through forested regions on a scale that we have not seen in Australia in recorded history, and fire behaviour that took even experienced firefighters by surprise. The total tally of fire-generated thunderstorms in south-eastern Australia since the early 1980s increased from 60 at the end of 2018-19 to almost 90 at the end of the 2019-20 bush fire season – an increase of almost 50% in one bush fire season. Fire-generated thunderstorms are extremely dangerous phenomena that produce extreme winds, lightning, tornadoes and black hail.

The season showed us what damage megafires can do, and how dangerous they can be for communities and firefighters. And it is clear that we should expect fire seasons like 2019-20, or potentially worse, to happen again."

Professor O'Kane examined the nature of the 2019-20 bushfires, why they were so extreme, and why they are likely to happen again.

There followed a question and answer session moderated by Dr Elizabeth Deane.

6 VOTE OF THANKS AND CLOSE

The vote of thanks was given by Vice-President Judith Wheeldon.

The meeting closed at 7.49pm.