



**THE
ROYAL SOCIETY
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SINCE 1821

1294TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 2 JUNE 2021 AT 6.30PM

By ZOOM Webinar

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82312849679>

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME** – President, Dr Susan Pond AM FRSN
 - 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country**
 - 1.2 Diversity and Inclusion statement**
 - 1.3 Minutes of the 1293rd Ordinary General Meeting held on 5 May 2021**
- 2. CONFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

As no valid objection was lodged within two weeks following the 1293rd Ordinary General Meeting, the election of the following new Fellows and Members took effect from the date of that meeting held on 5 May 2021.

- 2.1** Professor John Willian 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

2.2 Members

Mr Philip Bailey
Mr Jordan Gacutan
Mr Brian Spilsbury

3 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Fellows

The Fellows and Members Assessment Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday 8 June. Recommendations emanating from that meeting will be considered at the July OGM.

3.2 Members

If no valid objection is lodged within two weeks of this Ordinary General Meeting, that is, by 6.30pm on 16 June 2021, the election of new Members will take effect from the date of the meeting.

Professor Shane Timothy Ahyong
Ms Julia Andrews
Professor Debbie Haski-Leventhal
Pastor Donna-Maree Jensen
Dr Jonathan Knott
Mr Antony Seymour

4 REPORT FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

The President will provide a verbal report on matters emanating from the Council meeting held on 19 May 2021.

5 QUESTIONS

Questions can be sent to the President in advance, to president@royalsoc.org.au

6 THIS EVENING'S PRESENTATION

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN TURMOIL: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Richard Kingsford FRSN, Professor of Environmental Science Director, Centre for Ecosystem Science, UNSW (Sydney)

Professor Richard Kingsford is a river ecologist and conservation biologist who has worked extensively across the wetlands and rivers of the Murray-Darling Basin. He has also worked with many different communities and governments across this region. His research has influenced the policy and management of rivers in Australia, including through his involvement on state and federal advisory committees. He also leads a reintroduction or rewilding project, Wild Deserts, in Sturt National Park (NSW). He is the Director for the

Centre for Ecosystem Science UNSW, Sydney. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW in 2018.

The Murray-Darling Basin is Australia's most developed river system, supporting extensive irrigation industries, pastoralists, traditional owner communities, fishers, tourism and ecosystems. More than a century of river development through the building of dams, development of floodplains, and diversion of water has had devastating impacts on ecosystem services and ecosystems. The Millennium Drought was a catalyst for change. The Australian Government took over control of the Basin with the Water Act 2007, implemented by the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Commonwealth Government's external powers, particularly in relation to wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention and migratory shorebirds were the primary driver for this, but States still remained in control of their rivers under the Federal Constitution, through their planning. A principal objective was to restore the health of the Murray-Darling Basin River system.

More than \$13 billion dollars later, there are many challenges and questions about what has been achieved and at what cost. The number of inquiries continues to rise. The NSW Government is planning to build three large dams and smaller weirs on the rivers. Unfortunately, the ecological state of the Murray-Darling Basin continues to decline, albeit potentially at a slower rate than would have occurred otherwise. In this talk, I will present my research on wetlands and waterbirds within the context of these major changes, past and present, as well as identify some of the major challenges for the future.

7 VOTE OF THANKS AND CLOSE