



THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SINCE 1821

Minutes of the 1294th Ordinary General Meeting of The Royal Society of New South Wales held by ZOOM Webinar on Wednesday 2 June 2021 at 6.30PM.

There were 57 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.

1.1 Minutes of the 1293rd Ordinary General Meeting held on 5 May 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 1293rd Ordinary General Meeting, the election of the following new members took effect from the date of that meeting held on 5 May.

2.1 Fellows

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

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 the following new Fellows and Members will take effect from the date of this meeting.

3.1 Members

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 advised that planning was well underway for the forthcoming exhibition NEXUS at the State Library of NSW to mark the Society's bicentenary. Those members who had made a donation to the current fundraising campaign would be invited to a private tour of the exhibition.

5 QUESTIONS

There were no questions sent to the President prior to the meeting.

6 THE 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.

Professor Kingsford presented his 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.

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

There followed a question and answer session moderated by Angela Moles.

6 VOTE OF THANKS AND CLOSE

The vote of thanks was given by Distinguished Fellow Emeritus Scientia Professor Eugenie Lumbers.

The meeting closed at 7.33pm.