ROYAL SOCIETY NEW SOUTH WALES

1329th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Society of NSW

Minutes

The 1329th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Society of NSW took place at 6:30 pm on Wednesday 5 February 2025 in the Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library of NSW, followed by an open lecture. There were 41 Members, Fellows and visitors in attendance. The meeting was recorded for those who could not attend in person.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The President, Dr Susan Pond AM FRSN presided at the meeting. She welcomed Members and guests.

2. MINUTES OF THE 1328th ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the 1328th Ordinary General Meeting were reviewed and approved. There were no matters arising.

3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

The Council has not met since the last OGM, so there were no candidates announced for Members' consideration at this meeting.

4. CONFIRMATION OF FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP AND PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES

There were no membership certificates for presentation.

5. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

The President reported on the successful establishment of the New England North West Branch. She reminded members that there would soon be an election for Council members to join the Council at the AGM on Wednesday 2 April and encourage them to nominate if they wish to be involved in governance of the Society.

She referred to the success of bookings for the Annual Awards Dinner taking place on Friday 7 March 2025 and encouraged members to book soon to avoid disappointment.

6. OPEN LECTURE

"Inspired by Nature, Designed by Science"
Distinguished Professor Ian Paulsen FRSN FAA FASM
Director, ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology
Macquarie University

Synthetic biology is a rapidly advancing field that treats genes and DNA as "Lego pieces" that can be used to construct novel biological systems. Developing novel synthetic microbes for the sustainable production of biochemical, biofuels and bioplastics is critical for the emergence of a new global bioeconomy. The ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology is a consortium across nine Australian universities and twenty industry partners, that seeks to build synthetic microbes that can convert agricultural biomass or waste streams into high-value chemicals. Prof Paulsen's synthetic biology research program includes fundamental science, such as building the world's first synthetic yeast as part of the Yeast 2.0 consortium. He also leads applied industrial projects, including engineering microbial strains to grow on waste, to recycle plastics and to produce flavour and aroma molecules.

About the speaker

Distinguished Professor Ian Paulsen is a world-leading researcher in microbiology and a pioneer in microbial genomics and synthetic biology. He has developed the infrastructure and capabilities to harness the potential of synthetic biology, positioning Australia as a global leader in this transformative field.

As Founder and Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology, Ian aims to catalyse a bioeconomy based on alternatives to fossil fuel-derived products. The Centre develops microbes that convert agricultural biomass into high-value plastics, chemicals, fertilisers and fuels. In just three years, it has spun out nine companies, raising over $180 million in venture capital and producing innovations such as a methane emission-reducing cattle feed supplement.

Ian co-founded and directs the Australian Genome Foundry, a world-class facility for automated microbe construction and testing. He also co-directs Australia's node of Yeast 2.0, an international consortium building the world's first complex synthetic organism.
His work addresses critical global challenges such as food security, waste management, water quality and decarbonisation, with significant implications for NSW. Ian's research has the potential to create new economic opportunities by leveraging the state's rich biomass resources. His commitment to training future synthetic biology researchers fosters a skilled workforce driving innovation and growth across NSW.

Ian is a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW and the Australian Academy of Science and a former ARC Laureate Fellow. His research has secured over $100 million in funding and he has published over 380 journal articles, attracting over 100,000 citations with an h-index of 132.

7. VOTE OF THANKS

The vote of thanks was given by the Em Prof Christina Slade FRSN.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9. CLOSE

The President closed the meeting at 7:55 pm.

The minutes were recorded by the Secretary, Dr Donald Hector AM FRSN.

Signed as a true record
Dr Susan Pond AM FRSN
President