

Minutes of the Australasia branch AGM

16th September 2023 by Zoom 16:00 AEST

In attendance.

Australasian Branch (ARSB) members = 9

Dr Eliot Attridge (EA) FRSB – Committee member, Media and Communications
Dr Stefanie Bonat (SB) MRSB – Committee member, Media and Communications
Dr Robert Eley (RE) FRSB – Committee member, Secretary
Professor Iain Gordon (IG) FRSB – Committee member, Chair
Dr Ross Graham (RG) MRSB
Affiliate Associate Professor Monica Hamilton-Bruce (AH) FRSB – Committee member
Prof Robert Lawn (RL) FRSB
Dr David Leece (DL) FRSB
Mrs Carolyn Reynolds (CR) MRSB – Committee member

Non-Australasian Branch RSB members = 2

Professor Nigel Brown (NB) FRSB – UK, RSB Council
Ms Natalie Lau (NL) BioNet – Hong Kong

Non-members = 1

Maggie McCormick (MM) – New Zealand

Guest Speaker

Ass. Prof Siouxsie Wiles (SW) – Auckland NZ

1. Introduction and welcome

The Chair Professor Gordon opened the AGM at 1605 and presented the Acknowledgement of Country.

2. Apologies

Laetitia Gunton (LG) – Treasurer

3. Minutes from the previous AGM

The minutes from the AGM 2022 were accepted by SB and RL.

3.1 Action Items

- The RSB in response to a query advised that ARSB Twitter posts are retweeted following review by the RSB digital communications manager.
- As requested, EA sent the RSB figures on responses to branch advertising.

4. Chair's report

IG presented the Chair's report.

- Thanked current committee members for their contributions over the past year.
- Reflected on the successes of the year with respect to the online and in-person events, solid finances, social media and membership.
- Noted forward planning of events as evidence of continued success.

5. Treasurer's report

On behalf of the outgoing Treasurer, Laetitia Gunton (LG), the Secretary presented the yearly expenditure and income which had been prepared by LG.

- Balance to date (15/09/23) = \$2,507.20
 - Expenses this year = \$516.05
 - advertising fees for Facebook (\$84.30)
 - exhibition tickets and refreshments for in-person event at the Australian Museum 'Sharks' exhibition, Sydney (\$371.70)
 - 2023 fees for incorporated associations (\$60.05)
- Noted - over the reporting period the Australian Dollar weakened from 1.71. to 1.96 against the UK pound. The current balance is now equivalent to £1,280.
- IG thanked LG for all her work as she steps down as Treasurer to the ARSB.

6. Membership Secretary's report

Rob Eley (RE) reported:

- Latest membership figures provided by the RSB = 159 with 93 additional subscribers.
- 36% of Branch members were Fellows which is double that of general membership.
 - Overseas members are heavily weighted to MRSB and FRSB grades with far fewer Associate, Affiliate and Student members.
- Some members were lost to the new SE Asia branch.
- Closure of the Hong Kong branch did not result in new members as they moved to SE Asia.
- Earlier in the year cost of memberships was raised and the question asked whether they could be made in instalments.
 - We were advised that this question has been circulated to the RSB committee and a response is awaited. (See AOB)

7. Media and Communications Coordinators' reports

SB and EA reported:

- Followers = X / Twitter (101), Instagram (153) and Facebook (211).
- The support of Adhit prior to his move to the Southeast Asia branch was noted.
- News of Branch events had been spread widely thanks to Facebook advertising to promote events.
 - It is believed that the advertising helped with getting more followers on both Facebook and Instagram.
- It was interesting to note that the Yorkshire Branch was following us.
- IG thanked SB for all her work as she steps down from her committee position.

8. Committee Elections

Committee members renominated for the same roles were:

- Chair, Iain Gordon
- Secretary, Rob Eley
- Communications Coordinator, Eliot Attridge
- Committee member Carolyn Reynold had nominated for role of Treasurer.

There were no further nominations for people on the committee, and there were no objections from the floor to those renominating for the roles, however as the meeting was not quorate the election could not be formalised.

- Endorsement was received by email from outgoing Treasurer LG and the new Committee was accepted and approved.

9. Events

RE listed the online seminars over the reporting period.

- Grahame Webb – Saltwater Crocodiles (Sept 22)
- Reza Raihanhany - Ethnobotany of Indonesian Plants (Oct 22)
- Robert Eley - The Enigmatic Hyrax (Mar 23)
- Rajib Deb – Development of new and rapid user-friendly diagnostics against livestock diseases (Aug 23)

One in-person event was held over the period.

- In person tour of Australian Museum (Nov. 22)

Events scheduled for next reporting year are:

- AH: In person event - Alex Gaut rocky intertidal reef walk at Kingston Park Coastal Reserve (29th October)
- IG: Horses and their relatives (11th November 2023)
- AH: Sonya McDowall; Social determinants of human health and animal welfare (Feb 2024)
- CR: Sustainability, food security in remote Indigenous communities through development of hydroponics and aquaculture systems (TBA)
- CR: Learning on Country sustainable fire management through early burning (TBA)

RE noted that all events are recorded and available on the RSB YouTube channel.

10. AOB

Nigel Brown, nigel.brown@ed.ac.uk, member of the RSB Council with oversight of all RSB members addressed the members:

- NB attends as many branch AGMs as possible.
 - Last week he attended the inaugural AGM of the SE Asia Branch.
- The RSB is reviewing branch structure and their requirements.
 - A recent survey of branch committees will be reviewed by a new working group to decide whether any changes to the interactions between the RSB Office and its membership are needed.
- The RSB would also like to see good engagement with local schools and universities; and the recent relaunch the Ambassador scheme should help.
 - There are no international ambassadors in our region and a call is made for volunteers.
 - <https://www.rsb.org.uk/membership/individual-membership/rsb-ambassadors>
- The RSB wishes to increase membership overall and address gender balance at Fellows and Members levels; where there are currently more men than women.
 - NB further noted that branches are crucial in increasing membership and the membership team has been expanded to help in this.

- The RSB is reviewing strategic priorities over the next five years to extend the 3-year Vision Statement and Strategy 2022-2024.
 - This is described as an evolution rather than revolution.
 - https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/RSB_Plan_2022-2024_.pdf
- International accreditation of courses is promoted by the RSB.
 - Accreditation allows the institution to state that the quality of its programme is approved by the RSB.
 - There are several member benefits, including free RSB membership for students, 25% discount on Oxford biology Primers and “Emerging topics in Life Sciences”, and access to training courses.
 - A list of benefits is given on the RSB website.
 - There are 14 non-UK institutions accredited so far, of which the University of Canterbury, New Zealand has the only accredited course in this region.
 - In response to a question from RE NB noted the program relied on person-to-person contact rather than an institutional level by the RSB.
 - Costs were noted by RG to be an issue. Discussions at Curtin were unsuccessful to date when the university weighed costs against the benefits.
 - NB said he would raise this with the RSB
- NB reminded members that benefits to membership could be found on the web site <https://www.rsb.org.uk/membership/individual-membership/membership-benefits>
 - The question raised on the ability to pay membership fees by instalment would be raised in future.
- NB stated that the fact that the Yorkshire Branch is following ARSB on social media (Item 7 refers) illustrated a benefits of the technology we have available to us.

The AGM closed at 1638 and was followed by a talk Siouxsie Wiles: From glowing grubs to superbugs.

Minutes prepared by Rob Eley, Secretary 16th September 2023