

# Royal Society of Queensland Annual Report 2019–2020

## Overview

This report covers the period from 16 November 2019 to 15 November 2020. The nearly 12 months have experienced extraordinary circumstances which we could not have foreseen at the time of the Annual General Meeting in November 2019. However, in 2020 some major achievements were accomplished and milestones reached. Instead of organising events, the office-bearers of the Society have focused their attention on publication of the annual peer-reviewed *Proceedings*, two Special Issues and the Rangelands Policy Dialogue. This has been an impediment to hosting activities that might appeal to the complete range of interests of members.

Just as Council reported last year, the Society remains in excellent intellectual health but precarious financial health.

## Corporate Affairs

During the year, the continued engagement of Mrs Pam Lauder as part-time (2–3 hours per week) Administration Coordinator and Mr John Tennock on a retainer as Webmaster for both the Society’s website and the Queensland Science Network (QSN) website has maintained the Society’s administrative capacity. Mr Tony Van Der Ark has continued as Membership Coordinator and Dr Ann-Marie Smit as Royal Society Newsletter Coordinator. Mr Col Lynam joined the administrative team as founding Editor of the Queensland Science Network Newsletter.

## Royal Society of Queensland Council

The Council elected at the Annual General Meeting comprised Em. Prof. Angela Arthington as Honorary Editor, Dr Paul Bell, Dr Geoff Edwards as Vice-President – Communications and Policy, Mr Andy Grodecki, Mr James Hansen as Secretary, Dr Ross Hynes as President, Assoc. Prof. Trevor Love, Dr Joseph McDowall as Treasurer,

and Ms Revel Pointon. Mr Craig Walton retired as Immediate Past President.

Face-to-face meetings of Council were held on 18 December 2019 and 7 January 2020. One meeting was held by Zoom on 24 July. The vast bulk of issues are debated via email traffic, telephone and Zoom.

## Finances

The Society continues to draw down its accumulated reserves in order to fund its current activities. The officers have been unsuccessful in securing significant general-purpose sponsorship.

The Society opened a new bank account with Bank Australia, as the Commonwealth Bank was unable to provide a satisfactory Internet banking service.

The Society gained public liability insurance coverage as a member of Queensland Water and Land Carers.

## Library

Ms Shannon Robinson, Queensland Museum’s Librarian, continued in her role as the Society’s Honorary Librarian and continued to advise the Society on library matters.

## Membership Roll

At 1 November 2020, the Society has 132 paid-up and honorary members, with about 25 others due for renewal. There are six Honorary Life Members: Dr A. Bailey, Dr J. S. Jell, Dr J. O’Hagan, Ms C. Melzer, Prof. C. Rose and Em. Prof. R. Specht. Former President Mr Craig Walton and long-standing member Prof. Dilwyn Griffiths accepted offers to be invested as Life Members, but the investiture ceremonies have not yet been held.

## Annual General Meeting – 28 November 2019

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Community Meeting Room of the

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Brisbane City Council, Brisbane Square, Adelaide Street.

### Awards

Em. Prof. Ray Specht was awarded an Order of Australia in the January 2020 Australia Day awards.

Early in 2020, Mr Harry Van Der Ark was advised that his application to attend Harvard University's Pre-College Summer Program had been accepted. Fifteen students from around the world were to be living on campus under the supervision of Prof. Cari Cessaroti to study the fundamentals of particle physics. The program was shifted online, and Harry completed the 16-day course.

Em. Prof. Ian Lowe was awarded a Doctor of Science by the University of New South Wales in December 2019.

Prof. Sean Ulm was elected to the Council of the Australian Academy of the Humanities for a two-year term in November 2019.

In October 2020, [a news item on the ABC](#) announced that Dr Geoff Monteith, eminent Queensland entomologist and long-standing member of the Royal Society, had been placed on a list of the world's top 10 most commemorated scientists, which includes Charles Darwin, with more than 200 species named in his honour.

### Members' Interests Page

During the year, a list of members with their fields of particular interest was included on the "Members Only" page of our website. The purpose is to allow members to identify other members with scholarly or curiosity-led interests matching their own. This page is accessible only by financial members of the Society via a password-protected login. Other than at events, which have been held over in 2020, the primary vehicle for networking has been email traffic steered through and coordinated by a small number of office-bearers. The intention of the new Members Only section is to decentralise networking so that all members can be active agents of and beneficiaries of the rich resource that is the knowledge of the membership.

Council resolved to include members in the list on an opt-in basis. However, few members have taken advantage of this opportunity.

### Publications

*Proceedings of The Royal Society of Queensland* History was made on 18 February when for the first time an entire volume of the *Proceedings of The Royal Society of Queensland* was placed online under open access conditions. This was Volume 125, *The Land of Clouds Revisited: The Biodiversity and Ecology of the Eungella Rainforests*, edited by Guest Editor Prof. Roger Kitching of Griffith University. Print-publication of this volume followed through generous sponsorship from the Environmental Futures Research Institute of Griffith University, the Reef Catchments NRM body and an anonymous philanthropist.

Then, for the first time in the Society's history, the annual *Proceedings*, Volume 124, was published online under open access conditions. Further, papers were published online as soon as they were typeset after acceptance, and sent to the printer after the entire compilation was complete. Open access will bring a financial penalty as the Society will no longer receive copyright fees, but Council has considered that the move will improve the profile of the journal and lead to more citations for its authors.

Volume 124 was produced in turn by Dr Paul Bell for a short period, then Mr Diogenes Antille, and when he was unable to continue, completed by the President, Vice-President and Ms Revel Pointon as joint co-Editors. The changeover caused a significant delay in appearance of the volume. Although the first article was published (online) within the usual time frame of December 2019, the final paper was not published until June 2020.

The year marked another milestone in that four Special Issues are published or in preparation: Volume 125 (*The Land of Clouds Revisited*, edited by Em. Prof. Roger Kitching); Volume 126 (*Springs of the Great Artesian Basin*), with Em. Prof. Angela Arthington as lead Editor; and Volume 127 (*A Rangelands Dialogue: Towards a sustainable future*), edited by Dr Paul Sattler with Dr Ross Hynes and Dr Geoff Edwards as contributing editors. A Special Issue on preventative health has been foreshadowed but will be delayed. Volumes 125 and 127 have already been printed, and Volumes 126 (Springs) and 128 (annual *Proceedings*) are on track to be completed and printed by the end of the year.

Contributions of \$9000, \$15,000 and \$2000 have been gratefully received from the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, and Griffith University's Australian Rivers Institute, respectively, to print the Special Issue on springs of the Great Artesian Basin. The Commonwealth grant allowed the Society to host a session at the Australasian Groundwater Conference (AGC 2019), held in Brisbane in November 2019 and facilitated by Em. Prof. Angela Arthington.

An anonymous donation has paid for the cost of printing a small number of copies of Volume 127 to satisfy statutory deposits and to give copies to authors and reviewers.

The Society is grateful for the generosity of those institutions and anonymous individuals who have enabled three volumes to be printed. This is testament to the significance of our long-standing journal and to the value of publishing knowledge in printed form.

The Society engaged a new typesetter, Mr Darryl Nixon of Sunset Publishing Services, who has given meticulous attention to typography beyond commercial expectations.

### Newsletters

Eighteen Members' Newsletters (including intermediate Notifications) were produced during the reporting period, against a target of monthly. With No. 7, a system of numbering each year's Newsletters sequentially was instituted and the distinction between the Newsletters and intermediate Notifications was abandoned. Dr Anne-Marie Smit took leave of absence from her position of Newsletter Editor for a period but anticipated resuming the vital role during the new Council year. These Newsletters are privileged to members. During the year, the Society's Webmaster Mr John Tennock uploaded the archive of previous Newsletters to the Members Only section of the website.

On 1 August the first issue of a Newsletter for the Queensland Science Network was completed, and then another on 15 October. The intention is that the Royal Society Members' Newsletters will be largely focused on the activities of members and external events of particular relevance to Society activities; the QSN Newsletter would be substantially broader

in scope, covering the activities of the 26 member groups and their members in particular, but matters of general science interest as well.

The QSN Newsletter was distributed to leaders of the member groups with an invitation to pass it on to their mailing lists, but was also published on the QSN website (<https://scienceqld.org/category/member-groups/>) with a subscribe button allowing the general public to join a subscription list.

The method of distribution changed during the year. Previously, Newsletters were emailed as PDFs. This is suboptimal from an IT point of view for several technical reasons. Latterly, an email has been sent to members with a link to an unpublished page on the RSQ website from which a PDF can be downloaded. It seems likely (from automated statistics) that this two-step process has caused a decrease in the number of members who have accessed the Newsletter. Feedback from members is required as to the best method of distributing this information.

### Members' Publications

Apart from journal articles, two substantial book-length works by members were published during the AGM–AGM year:

- Dr Philippa England has published a new edition of her landmark book *Planning in Queensland: Law, Policy and Practice*, with Dr Amy McInerney ([The Federation Press](#)).
- Prof. Dilwyn Griffiths published a new work *Tropical Ecosystems in Australia: Responses to a Changing World* ([CRC Press](#)).

Although the Society takes no credit for these works, we hope to strengthen the intellectual environment in which our members feel confident to put their knowledge into print.

### Education Project

No progress was made during the year on development of new materials for the senior Queensland science curriculum as no funding was secured.

### Events and Activities

Apart from the Annual General Meeting in November 2019, the only event held was an online Members' Networking Teleconference on 24 September. The World Science Festival was cancelled.

An event “Is Queensland prepared for a warming climate?”, organised for 6 April jointly with the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland and Griffith University’s Centre for Governance and Public Policy, was cancelled because of the health restrictions on meetings proclaimed by the Queensland Government.

### **Rangelands Policy Dialogue**

Following the July 2019 Rangelands Policy Dialogue meeting in Brisbane, the Society established a Rangelands Discussion Group on behalf of the three-way collaboration with AgForce and NRM Regions Queensland: <https://groups.io/g/rangelands-dialogue>. By early November, some 750 messages had been posted to the group, covering a range of subjects including some with highly original and thoughtful insights. An Issues Paper itemising some 35 significant issues was distributed to the participants. A pause was called on the discussion forum to allow participants to respond to the Issues Paper and to allow the Society to consider the most appropriate process to carry the Dialogue forward.

During the year, NRM Regions Queensland allocated funds to host two regional workshops to bring the Dialogue to the attention of pastoralists not otherwise engaged and to seek their views about the significant issues identified. A sum of \$6000 was paid to the Society to fund the preparation of three background research briefs that would summarise the scholarly literature in the fields of economics, regional development and challenges on the horizon. Four substantial papers were delivered by the due date, 27 October, and two others are at an advanced stage of preparation.

On 2 October, the Committee on Agriculture of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations network endorsed a proposal by the Government of Mongolia to designate an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. The Royal Society of Queensland had given its support along with the Australian Rangelands Society, the only other Australian NGO to do so, and the Australian Government.

### **Restore Australia Initiative**

During the year, a submission was crafted for funding under the Restore Australia program to allow the Society to lead a significant program of

policy analysis related to the central and southern Queensland rangelands and a large tract of the slopes and western rangelands of New South Wales. The initiative is proposed to be funded by international philanthropists. Advice is awaited.

### **Commentary**

*Queensland Country Life* extended its invitation to submit a regular column under its “View from the Paddock” series of opinion pieces. Columns were published on 7 February, 2 April, 5 June, 20 August and 29 October 2020. The Society is grateful to the Editor for allowing this opportunity to present opinions on behalf of Queensland’s scientists. All articles were printed without significant editorial amendment.

### **RSQ and QSN Websites**

As a general policy, the Society’s website is reserved for activities and publications by the Society and its members. The QSN website presents a wider range of general science activities and materials, largely (but not rigidly) confined to the activities of its member groups. The QSN website includes links to some other sites of general science interest such as the Events Calendar of Inspiring Australia – Queensland.

Five members took advantage during the year of the opportunity to open a page for their field of interest. This opportunity is available free of charge to all members:

- Dr Philippa England and Dr Nelson Quinn – conservation covenants
- Mr Colin Lynam – earthquakes and tsunamis
- Dr Elwyn Hegarty – Mr F. A. Perkins
- Mr Steve Hutcheon – Spanish exploration of northern Australia

The Society’s website, along with the QSN website, is soon to be migrated from the server of its *pro bono* developer to the Society’s own host, HostPapa.com. It is likely that access to the archive of *Proceedings* will be slower in future because the full-text search facility requires large server capacity. We place on record our sincere thanks to Mr Joseph Listo of ClearMedia and his principals for developing our site, adding an automated membership facility and maintaining the site for the past four years.

### **Research Fund**

Consistent with the commitment in 2018 to fund grants in three successive years, a third round of grants to a value of \$5000 was announced, to close on 28 November. This year the Funding Policy was amended to encourage applications from citizen science practitioners. The capital reserve of \$40,000 remains intact.

### **Royal Societies of Australia**

The Royal Societies of Australia has commenced preparation for a significant event on “Stewardship of Country”. Plans to hold the event in October 2020 were disrupted by virus-based restrictions. The steering committee, which includes representatives of the Society, has obtained commitments from a most attractive set of speakers and is scheduling the event (whether face-to-face or online) for early in the New Year.

### **Final Words**

Whereas 2020 has been an extraordinary year, we offer warm thanks to all members who have contributed positively to ensuring it has been a very productive one. We commend to members the valiant and ongoing efforts of our voluntary

honorary office-bearers, our current Councillors and Editors, who have worked tirelessly to keep the ball rolling and on track in these difficult times. Their assistance, valuable perspectives and ideas to secure the Society’s immediate and longer-term future of publication of scientific works, online and in print, have been greatly appreciated.

We would like to re-emphasise that, remarkably, by year’s end five volumes of the *Proceedings* will have been published. We offer special thanks to our Honorary Editor, Em. Prof. Angela Arthington, for facilitating this success. These volumes are now available in digital form for the first time. They include two annual editions, viz. Volumes 124 and 128, and three Special Issues (Volumes 125, 126, 127). We have used video conferencing where practicable and have published a monthly web-based Newsletter.

On behalf of all RSQ members, we extend our thanks to all who have been involved and hope that the future will bring opportunities to restore and introduce more activities for our vibrant Society.

Geoff Edwards and James Hansen

Date: 15 November 2020