



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Incorporated in the ACT
ABN 37 660 297 848

Minutes of the 34th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 6 July 2000 at the University of Tasmania.

The Meeting was opened at 11:23 am with the President in the Chair and approximately 60 members of all grades in attendance.

1. Apologies

L.R. Allen, J.D. Biggs, J.C. Lattanzio, J.R. Mould, B.P. Schmidt

2. Minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting

Motion that the minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting be accepted as presented.

**Manchester/Burton
Carried**

3. Business arising from the Minutes

None.

4. President's Report

A written report was distributed to members at the meeting. The President, Mike Bessell, outlined the contents of that report.

The Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) was held this year at the Physics Department of the University of Tasmania from 3 to 7 July. The Harley Wood School was held at the Kermadie Lodge near Geeveston immediately before the Scientific Meeting, attended by 44 students. The topic was "The Galactic Landscape - Snapshots from Space".

This meeting marked the retirement of an unusually large number of Council members. The President expressed his gratitude for their service but pointed out that all would continue serving the ASA in other capacities - Michael Burton as an ASA representative on the NOC for IAU2003, Brad Carter as Newsletter editor, Jessica Chapman as a trustee of the Charlene Heisler prize and John Lattanzio on the PASA Editorial Board.

The 2000 Bok Prize (for an undergraduate project completed in 1999) was awarded to Josephine Brown from the Australian National University. The judges also commented on the very high standard of this years other entries from Martin Meyer, Emma Ryan, Tara Murphy and Lachlan Campbell.

A new prize was created during the year, named in memory of Charlene Heisler, who died late in 1999. The inaugural recipient of the Charlene Heisler Prize was Ewan Campbell from the ANU, for his essay on Gamma Ray Bursts. Donations for the prize were handled through the ASA's new Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy (FAA). The President noted the important place of the Foundation in allowing the ASA to accept tax deductible donations for purposes such as the Charlene Heisler Prize and the David Allen Prize.

The President noted that the Harley Wood Lecture was to be presented during the week by Martin George, Director of Launceston Planetarium. He also announced the award of an Honorary

Fellowship to Roger Clay, former President of the Society and a Council member over much of the last 15 years.

The President announced that the 2001 Scientific Meeting was to be organised by Swinburne University, although probably held outside Melbourne. An offer to host the 2002 meeting was sought, but the IAU General Assembly would probably result in no separate ASA Scientific Meeting in 2003. He also noted the continuing debate over the suitability of the July time slot for the Annual Scientific Meeting, which tends to conflict with northern hemisphere summer conference dates. Comments from the meeting illustrated the lack of a clear alternative.

The *Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia* (PASA) continued to be successful, with the Editorial Board pleased with the standard of papers and refereeing. Michelle Storey's position as Editor continued despite the loss of her salary because of the closure of the Special Research Centre for Theoretical Astrophysics at the University of Sydney. Her editorial work was subsequently funded by the ASA, significantly assisted by special grants made to the ASA by the ATNF, AAO, RSAA, UNSW, the University of Sydney and Swinburne University. This was an interim arrangement and a proposal for long term support was presented by the Editor later in the meeting.

The next item in the report described the preparations for the IAU2003 General Assembly in Sydney. The National Organising Committee (NOC) had requested the Society to act as the legally responsible body for the event. The ASA agreed and had three representatives on the NOC to help provide financial and managerial oversight. The NOC has appointed a professional conference organiser (ICMS Australasia) and, after a lengthy process of scrutiny and legal advice, the contract was to be signed between ICMS and the ASA a few days after the meeting. Associated with this process, personal liability insurance had been secured to cover the members of the ASA Council, the NOC, and their sub-committees.

The President moved on to note the continuing activity of the Education sub-committee, with Nick Lomb as Chair. He also noted the ongoing importance of the ASA Newsletter, the Society's Web pages and the email exploder in conveying information to the members.

Among the information distributed using the email exploder were press releases from the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS). FASTS had also organised a "Science meets Parliament" meeting in Canberra to which the ASA sent two representatives, one from Canberra and one from elsewhere in Australia. A similar meeting was planned for later in 2000 and the ASA again offered to support the attendance of one astronomer based outside Canberra.

Other items were briefly mentioned in the report, including the Society's continuing support of student travel to overseas conferences, with five grants made over the previous year. Antarctic Astronomy was mentioned, noting that John Storey was appointed to the Antarctic Science Advisory Committee (ASAC) and was also the Program Leader for Antarctic Astronomy and a member of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic research (SCAR) Working Group.

Lighting engineer Reg Wilson continued as the Society's nominee on the Standards Australia Committee LG10 for Obtrusive Lighting. He has also recently joined the board of the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) as the first non-USA based board member.

Finally, the President noted with regret the death of Charlene Heisler, but was pleased that the ASA could facilitate the establishment of the Charlene Heisler Prize in her memory.

Motion that the President's report be accepted.

5. Treasurer's Report

Bruce Dawson presented a summary of his first written report and balance sheet as Treasurer. Membership of the Society was listed as 369, consisting of 74 Fellows, 218 members, 59 Students, 11 Associate Members, 1 Associate Society and 6 Corporate members. 61 members were unfinancial at the time of the meeting.

The 1999-2000 financial year showed a surplus of \$9,706, largely resulting from the lack of a PASA payment for the year. The Society's investments were changed during the year to increase the return from interest, although this was not reflected in the financial statement because of the dates on which interest was credited.

There were two significant new financial activities for the Society in 1909-2000. The first was the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The Society obtained an Australian Business Number (ABN) and registered for the GST. The latter step was necessary because of the turnover expected with the IAU General Assembly in 2003 and allows the ASA to claim credit for GST paid, rather than meeting that cost from membership fees.

The Treasurer proposed that there be no change to the basic fee structure, but the 10% GST was added for members resident in Australia. As a result, the new annual fees were

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Aust.(include.GST)</u>	<u>Overseas</u>
Honorary Fellows	no cost	no cost
Fellows	\$121	\$110
Full members	\$99	\$90
Student	\$44	\$40
Retired Fellow	\$44	\$40
Retired Member	\$44	\$40
Associate Member	\$44	\$40
Associate Member with PASA	\$82	\$75
Associate Societies	\$88	\$80
Corporate members	\$330	\$300
Discounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$5 if paid by 28/2• ~10% discount off the GST-inclusive fee if also a member of the AIP and paid by 28/2.• No discount for Corporate members	

These changes generated some discussion about the real impact of the whole package of tax changes associated with the introduction of the GST. The Treasurer clarified some of the questions in a subsequent email.

The second new activity was the creation of the Foundation for the Advancement of Astronomy (FAA). The FAA accepted its first tax-deductible donations late in 1999 and membership renewal notices in 2000 offered the option of making a donation. At the end of the Society's financial year, \$19,005 had been received. At the time of the meeting, this had increased to \$34,945. 60% of the donations were earmarked by the donors for the Charlene Heisler Prize, 30% for the David Allen prize, with no preference for the remainder.

Motion that the Fees be increased as described, with discounts maintained at current levels, as recommended by the Treasurer.

Carried

Motion that the Treasurer's Report be accepted.

**Cram/Nicholls
Carried**

6. Election of Auditor

The Treasurer recommended the appointment of Chartered Accountant Mr Graham Combe as Auditor for 2000-2001. He also noted that the Graham Coombe had acted as Auditor for 1999-2000 rather than the Auditor of the South Australian Branch of the Australian Institute of Physics, as had been approved at the previous AGM.

Motion that Mr Graham Combe be appointed as Auditor for 1999-2000 for a fee of \$600.

**Dawson/Webster
Carried**

Motion that Mr Graham Combe be appointed as Auditor for 2000-2001.

**Dawson/Webster
Carried**

7. Editor's Report

The Editor, Michelle Storey, had circulated her report and summarised it for the meeting. She reported that all six invited speakers from the 1999 ASM had submitted manuscripts for publication in PASA, and invited speakers for the current meeting had also agreed to do so.

She then thanked outgoing members of the Editorial Board, Craig Smith and Peter McGregor. Dick Manchester had also completed his term but Council decided it would be useful for him to remain, with a reduced workload, since he would be the next President of the Society. Three new Board members were appointed - John Lattanzio, Warwick Couch and Matthew Colless.

As reported by the President, the Special Research Centre for Theoretical Astrophysics at the University of Sydney had ceased to be funded as an ARC Special Research Centre at the end of 1999. As a result they were unable to continue their support of the Editor's position. Funding for 2000 was provided instead by the ASA, with significant assistance from special grants made to the ASA by the ATNF, AAO, RSAA and the astronomy-related groups at UNSW, the University of Sydney and Swinburne University. They requested that the future of PASA be seriously considered. As a result, an email survey of the membership had been used to seek opinion on how best to use the substantial resources that the ASA invested in PASA. The survey indicated strong support for retaining PASA.

The Editor presented a summary of the situation and outlined a range of options:

- continuing with PASA in its current form
- moving to a regular, professionally produced newsletter
- produce a comprehensive Australian astronomy web site
- combine a web site with PASA

The combination of PASA with an Australian web portal was the preferred option, being seen to strengthen both, but the question of funding remained. Again, several options were presented. The preferred option, only conceived shortly before the meeting, involved CSIRO Publishing fully funding the production of an electronic-only version of PASA, together with an astronomy web portal. Institutions would pay to gain full access to the combined web portal/electronic journal.

The proposals generated considerable discussion and led to two motions.

Motion to accept the Editor's report and broadly support the outline plan, proposing that the plan be further explored by the Editor and Editorial Board, resulting in an implementation plan to be presented to the ASA Council.

**Colless/Webster
Carried**

Motion of thanks to Prof. Don Melrose and the Special Research Centre for Theoretical Astrophysics for supporting PASA over the last few years.

**Ekers/Colless
Carried**

8. ASM/AGM and Harley Wood School for 2001

As noted in the President's report, it was announced that the 2001 ASM and Harley Wood School would be held in Melbourne, hosted by Swinburne University. Brad Gibson was expected to chair the LOC.

9. Any other business

John O'Byrne briefly reported on the work of the IAU2003 NOC, notably the preparation of the contract with ICMS and the liability insurance for ASA members involved. Plans were also discussed for promoting the Sydney General Assembly at the upcoming Manchester General Assembly.

The membership was informed of changes to By Law L, describing the David Allen Prize.

The Society was informed of the death of Rodney Marks whilst in Antarctica. Rodney had been a student at UNSW and had moved on to a postdoctoral position in the US. The President was asked to write a letter of condolence.

Margaret Mazzolini raised the question of membership fees for some people, for example those in part-time positions. Marc Duldig responded that special consideration had been offered in the past and any requests would be considered.

10. Election of the Council for 2000-2001

As usual, the outgoing Council had made nominations for each position on the Council for 2000-2001. Further nominations were received, so a postal ballot was necessary. The result was declared at the meeting.

The Council for 2000-2001 consisted of the following members:

President:	Prof. Michael Bessell
Vice President	Dr Richard Manchester
Treasurer	Dr Bruce Dawson
Secretaries	Dr Marc Duldig Dr John O'Byrne
Councillors	Prof. Matthew Bailes Dr James Biggs

Dr Peter Cottrell
Dr Brian Schmidt
Prof. John Storey

Dr Roger Clay was *ex-officio* member as Immediate Past President. Dr Roy Allen remained as Donovan Trust Representative and Dr Michelle Storey continued as Editor. Michelle Buxton was the student representative on the Council.

The meeting was closed at 12:55 pm by the President.