



**AGENDA**     **Australasian Evolution Society Annual General Meeting**

**DATE/TIME**   Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2024 – 1pm (AEST)

**VENUE**         <https://adelaide.zoom.us/j/86043275723?pwd=aEQ2bkRZMEk5ODIUWUt6TUdUaGFQQT09>

Meeting ID: 860 4327 5723

Password: 285865

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## Present

Emma Sherratt  
Renee Firman  
Damien Esquerré  
John Whale  
Rowan Lymbery  
Upama Aich  
Putter Tiatragul  
Mike McDonald  
Simone Blomberg  
Lee Ann Rollins  
Iliana Medina  
Katrina McGuigan  
Alistair Senior  
Bruno Buzatto  
Camilla Whittington

## Item 1. Welcome and Apologies

- Meeting recorded for purpose of taking minutes (current Secretary unable to attend)
- Welcome and thank you for attendance from Emma
- Apologies: Megan Head (on fieldwork), Ondi Crino, Jess Hadlow, Venkatesh Nagarajan

## Item 2. Previous Minutes

### 1.1 Approval of the minutes

### 1.2 Update on actionable items from previous minutes

- Note, approval of previous minutes sought between items 5.2 and 5.3.
- No objections raised, approving the minutes proposed by Mike McDonald, seconded by Putter Tiatragul.
- For update, see president's report (below).

### Item 3. Nominations for upcoming positions

3.1 Vice president elect (nominations: Damien Esquerré)

3.2 Treasurer (continuing: John Whale)

3.3 Secretary (nominations: Rowan Lymbery)

3.4 ECR representatives (continuing: Jess Hadlow, Upama Aich; nominations: Venkatesh Nagarajan)

3.5 Website officer (continuing: Putter Tiatragul)

3.6 Social Media representatives (nominations: none received)

- Emma thanked last year's executive for their time and commitment, particularly Megan Head as outgoing President.
- Only one nomination received for each position discussed, with many members of last year's executive continuing. Emma (previously Vice President) moves into President, and Renee Firman moves from Vice Present Elect to Vice President. John Whale continuing as Treasurer, Venkatesh Nagarajan steps down from Secretary and nominated for ECR rep, Rowan Lymbery steps down from ECR rep and nominates for Secretary, Jess Hadlow and Upama Aich continue as ECR reps, Putter Tiatragul continuing as Public Officer. Damien Esquerré has been nominated for Vice President Elect by Megan Head, seconded by Emma Sherratt.
- No other nominations for each position and no objections, so no voting required. New executive are: President – Emma Sherratt (continuing), Vice President – Renee Firman (continuing), VP Elect - Damien Esquerré (proposed Megan Head, seconded Emma Sherratt), Treasurer – John Whale (continuing), Secretary – Rowan Lymbery (self-nomination, seconded Megan Head), ECR reps – Jess Hadlow, Upama Aich (continuing), Venkatesh Nagarajan (self-nomination, seconded Megan Head), Public Officer – Putter Tiatragul. Majority agreement by Zoom poll.
- Emma noted we have had no nominations for Social Media rep, asked for any self-nominations (none received during AGM).
- Simone Blomberg queried the role of the social media rep. Emma's answer: role of Social Media rep is to maintain the social, visible presence of the society, via Twitter/X and other social media outlets – particularly when advertising conference, awards etc.
- Emma apologised for mistake in the reminder email before the AGM, asking for any final nominations, however as pointed out by Mike McDonald no nominations can be received less than 21 days before the AGM. Therefore, any nominations received after the AGM reminder email could not be counted. Emma noted that the original request for nominations was sent on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (post-conference), acknowledged that this is a difficult time of year for people to be checking emails and apologised for any inconvenience.

### Item 4. Reports

4.1 President's report (report on conference)

- In Megan's absence, Emma provided President's report for 2023.
- Late start for the executive being put together in 2023, which meant the ECR Networking Grants could not be run.
- The main priority for the executive was the annual conference, which was successfully run at University of Adelaide 13-15 December 2023.
- Conference highlights:
  - o 25 institutions represented, including some overseas.
  - o 96 long and 11 flash talks
  - o 2 tag team talks (UWA and UoA)

- Very successful ECR breakout session – will look to continue to run this session into the future.
- Plenary from visiting research Dustin Rubenstein.
- 2 ECR plenaries (Claudia Crowther, Samuel Lymbery)
- Sponsorship from Arludo for talk prizes (total \$1550)
- Free venue hire at UoA
- Low cost, same price as previous year – student/postdoc \$180 early-bird (\$220 late). Faculty/fellows \$300 (\$340)
- 20 travel grants provided (more than last year, total \$5500)
- Conference breakdown – smaller than previous years, 155 attendees (140 in person, 15 online). Still very much a student/ECR conference. Similar faculty representation to previous year (25%), increased rep of postdocs (from 17 to 23%), decrease in PhDs (41 to 34% - likely a large cohort of students moving through to postdocs). Increase in honours/masters rep (7 to 11%).

#### 4.2 Treasurer's report

- John provided report for 2023. Similar final balance (\$37,764.74) to starting balance (\$38,082.87). Total outgoings \$38,076.99, largely on the conference (particularly catering and conference dinner). Total incoming \$36,758.86, largely conference registration. Conference largely paid for itself.
- A couple of unanticipated expenses: One of the travel grants incurred an international bank transfer fee, and the growing email list brought a mail chimp fee.
- Some presentation/award winners have yet to supply their bank details – John has already accounted for those in outgoings.
- Question from Simone Blomberg on more outgoing than incoming, where is the extra coming from. John pointed out the starting balance was slightly more (Simone hadn't seen the starting balance line at the top of screen).
- Treasurer's report moved by Simone Blomberg (proposed) and Mike McDonald (seconded).

### Item 5. Topics for discussion

#### 5.1 2024 conference

- Renee: 2024 conference will be in Perth. Talk at the conference about bringing to early December (first week); Renee is supportive. Asked about potential clashes with other conferences.
- Damien noted there shouldn't be a clash with ASH this year, as it runs every 1.5 years.
- ESA will be 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> December (second week), want to avoid clashing with this conference.
- Simone: keep an eye on Phylomania, endo of year in Tasmania.
- First week of December agreed upon as a good target. Emma suggests the executive checks all potential clashes and sends out a hold the date as soon as possible (action item).
- Venue – would be good to host at UWA to avoid venue hire costs (as per previous conferences). However, Renee noted that UWA is not next to the city, so proximity could be difficult. Will speak to local people in Perth. Fremantle I another potential option but would need to pay for a venue there.
- Mike McDonald raised the possibility of seeking out sponsors to have a stall at the conference, e.g. Oxford Nanopore (Mike would be happy to reach out). Renee happy to take suggestions for reaching out to potential sponsors.
- Emma noted that we will need to have a lot more travel grants available for students and ECRs to get to Perth.

#### 5.2 Voting for bank access for new executive members

- Megan Head as outgoing president to be removed from signatories for bank account. Currently only other signatory is John Whale (Treasurer). Emma not on in 2023 due to ANZ rules for forms in South Australia. Need to add Emma and Renee as President and Vice President for this year.

- Lee Ann Rollins suggests that voting requirements for bank access gets addressed in constitution revisions. Emma agreed.

### 5.3 Constitution amendments

- Putter and Emma have reviewed the constitution and consider that it requires some amendments/updates to ensure it is rigorous, consistent with society practices, and provides clear guidance to incoming executives.
- Lee Ann brought up that there are legal requirements for society constitutions, and these will need to be considered very carefully in any proposed changes and ensuring that society practices match constitutional requirements.
- Emma noted that in light of this, we will not make/vote on changes now, as the executive will need to take time to ensure all changes are consistent with requirements (action item). Main changes being considered:
  - o would prefer to have inclusive, neutral language.
  - o ensuring that membership procedures are clear – conference attendance provides financial membership for the following calendar year (until next conference), and there is an option to sign up as a financial member outside of the conference. The reason for the latter is that financial membership is required to apply for grants/awards.
  - o Ensure that process for nominations to executive is clear.
  - o Ensure that bank account access and voting requirements are clear.
- Other suggestions:
  - o Lee Ann – clarify what constitutes a quorum. Also check the process for changing the constitution – believes there needs to be a special resolution sent to all members. Emma agreed (action item).

### 5.4 Other activities for 2024 (e.g., increasing international engagement, and out-of-conference workshops)

- Emma: we didn't run the ECR networking grants in 2023, there has been a request to consider re-implementing them in 2024. Also, in minutes from 2023, it was discussed that the society could work on promoting itself more (e.g. through universities).
- Lee Ann asked about travel grants for travel to Perth; Emma confirmed that we will aim to offer more this year. Lee Ann requested that we give students/ECRs the option to apply for travel grants before they pay for conference registration. Emma confirmed that we would organise the travel grants earlier this year.
- Mike asked whether we could arrange for dormitory accommodation at the conference. Renee – if we run the conference at UWA, that will be an option through the colleges.

### 5.5 Propose to draft Letter to Australian Research Council, and include Ecological Society of Australia, regarding Ecology and Evolution representation on college of experts

- Emma: this was brought up at general meeting during 2023 conference, regarding the limited number of ecology and evolutionary biology researchers on ARC college of experts. Asked whether people at the AGM had thoughts on this, and whether there are action items for the AES.
- Mike noted that he had raised this during the conference, and from looking at the list of college of experts, there are only 2 ecologists and 3 evolutionary biologists. Also, uneven distribution among universities, e.g. UQ has heavy representation, UoS, ANU, UWA very low. Noted that people at the conference said they had put their hands up and been declined. Seems that ARC is looking for more diversity, and for representation outside the Group of 8. The way our society could help would be to advocate/back up people who are applying to get support from their department – big unis will contribute funds to cover people's time, but some other unis may be less likely to.

- Lee Ann: we should think about the best way to effect change. Could we ask members who are willing to apply and offer endorsement from the society to put applications forward (e.g. provide letters of support) to DVCRs.
- Katrina: an avenue of influence might be society contacting heads of school at universities, to encourage them to have a conversation with one another about the support they're offering, and whether they can pull more information from the ARC (through the universities) about desired candidates.
- Mike summarised two ideas:
  - o First, asking heads of school what a useful contribution from the society might be, with the initial idea of providing letters of support.
  - o Second, once society support is decided, a call out to members who are willing to nominate.
- Action items: to begin, sending an email to society encouraging members, those who are in positions to have these conversations, to raise the issue with their heads of school. Following these conversations, if it is deemed useful, the society could draft a more formal letter to send to all heads of school (perhaps via a working group). Also, let members know that if they are considering nomination for the COE, contact the society and we can provide endorsement.

## Item 6. Other business

### 6.1 Open discussion to other business

- Simone asked about future meetings – will Damien run the next meeting after Renee? Ilian noted that the VP organising the conference (rather than the President) was accidental, as both the President and VP were based in Melbourne one year. Prior to that, it was the President who organised. Simone is happy to put her name forward for organising the 2025 meeting at UQ (Brisbane) – has already spoken to a few colleagues who are supportive. Damien was happy to do this, and then to organise the conference himself in 2026 when President (restoring usual order). All agreed that this was a good idea – Simone will plan to nominate to be VP elect when next nominations are open.
- Emma noted that it would be good to have a more solid plan for future meeting locations, so we can put future conference locations on the website.

### Summary of action items:

- Executive to check all potential conference clashes and send out save the date as soon as possible.
- Executive to review proposed changes to the constitution and ensure they (and the document as a whole) are all consistent with legal requirements. Then to check the required process for changing constitution (special resolution sent to all members?).
- Send email/s to society encouraging members who are able to speak to heads of school about ecology and evolutionary biology representation on the ARC, and to encourage members who are considering nominations to contact the society for support/endorsement.