

Australasian Mycological Society President's Report

John Dearnaley

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My second year as AMS President has kept me busy. The AMS conference in Queenstown, New Zealand, was a highlight for the society in 2016 and so too was the establishment of two new subcommittees in Fungal Education and Fungal Conservation. Over the past year I have been capably assisted by the AMS council in Julie Djordjevic, Leona Campbell, Celeste Linde, Bevan Weir and Jeff Powell. Dee Carter (webmaster) and Susan Nuske (AMS student representative and Facebook page co-ordinator) also provided strong backing to the council. The following is an overview on the activities of the society since the AGM of September 2015.

Finance and membership

The society's financial health is good with the only major expenditure in the 2015-2016 period, allocation of the 2016 Research Award and the costs associated with running the Queenstown conference. There are currently 88 financial members of the society which is an increase on the numbers this time in 2015 (74). It is great to see increased representation of New Zealand members within the society which is probably a result of the conference being held in their country this year. A full outline of the society's finances has been prepared by Treasurer, Celeste Linde.

2016 scientific meeting

This year's scientific meeting was held jointly with the Fungal Network of New Zealand (FUNNZ) in Queenstown, New Zealand from the 4-5th May. Around 70 delegates attended the conference with many journeying from outside Australasia for the event. There were two excellent plenary sessions from Brian Monk and Ian Dickie and the symposial sessions and poster presentations were diverse, of a high standard and most enjoyable. Best student talk went to Kenya Fernandez while Hyun Lee won the best student poster prize. Queenstown put on a wonderful show with its autumn colours and Rydges Hotel looked after us well with their great facilities and catering. Many thanks must go to the conference committee of Bevan Weir (Chair), Peter Buchanan, Leona Campbell, John Dearnaley, Celeste Linde, David Orlovich and Jeff Powell for running an excellent meeting. Thanks also to Peter Buchanan, Tom May and Sapphire McMullan-Fisher for co-ordinating the pre-conference workshop on Red-Listing of Fungi in Oceania and Sapphire McMullan-Fisher for the workshop in Tertiary Mycology Teaching. It is hoped that some important new initiatives come out of both of these workshops (see below). Teresa Lebel and Sapphire raised over \$1000 with their silent auction at the conference dinner at the Skyline Restaurant. The money was split between the Ross Beaver Memorial Mycological Award and the Jack Warcup Memorial Prize. The fungal foray at Glenorchy (6-9th May) run by FUNNZ, was also very successful with a bewildering array of *Cortinarius*, *Russula*, *Laccaria*, *Amanita* and truffle species etc. on show. Looking forward to the next scientific meeting in 2018 which is likely to be held in conjunction with the Australian Society for Microbiology in Brisbane.

AMS Research Awards

This year's winner of the AMS Research Award was Cecilia Li from the Fungal Pathogenesis Laboratory at the The Westmead Institute for Medical Research. Cecilia will use the funding to support an investigation of the role of the inositol polyphosphate kinase pathway in cellular metabolism and energy production in the fungal pathogen, *Cryptococcus neoformans*. It is hoped that this research will lead to the identification

of potential antifungal drug targets against the pathogen. The 2015 winner of the AMS Research Award, Sarah Sapsford of the School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University gave a presentation on her research at the conference in Queenstown. Her project had investigated the biotic and abiotic factors predisposing marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) to canker disease (*Quambalaria coyrecup*).

AMS monthly newsletter, website and student Facebook page

A monthly newsletter continued to be e-mailed to members throughout 2016. The newsletter highlighted mycological jobs, student positions, new mycological publications, mycological media occurrences and upcoming conferences (including the AMS Queenstown meeting), reminded about paying memberships and featured a popular “fungus of the month” photograph. The AMS website continues to be run well by Dee Carter and is a permanent repository of AMS information including details of the current council, previous society conferences (including student prize winners), membership information, the AMS research grant and recent mycological publications. The AMS student Facebook page has been very capably run by Susan Nuske for two years (we are looking for a replacement for her now that she has almost finished her studies). It has continued to feature wonderful fungal photographs, mycological meetings and news items and trivia on the fascinating world of fungi. It has been great to see the page being accessed regularly by students and ECRs.

AMS subcommittee in Fungal Education

A new AMS subcommittee in Fungal Education was formed this year with members including Sapphire McMullan-Fisher (Chair), Jeff Powell, Dee Carter, Susan Nuske and John Dearnaley. The group met by teleconference to discuss issues regarding the teaching of mycology in Australasian Universities. A pre-conference workshop in Queenstown was also organised and run by the subcommittee and which ended with a number of key recommendations. The first was to survey the extent of mycological teaching around Australasian campuses (this has been recently completed). The second was to try and adapt Peter McGee’s excellent on-line resource, “The Biology of Fungi” into a condensed form for the AMS website (An alternative shorter, “Introduction to the Biology of Fungi” was recently written by John Dearnaley and Sapphire McMullan-Fisher). The third was to examine the possibility of the AMS developing a MOOC in Fungal Biology over the next few years. A new page for Fungal Education will now be added to the AMS website which will summarise the courses available in mycology at Australasian Universities as well, the “Introduction to the Biology of Fungi” file will be added to the site. This latter composition will be regularly updated by AMS council as fungal taxonomic and biological research developments warrant it.

AMS subcommittee in Fungal Conservation

A key recommendation of the workshop in New Zealand on “Red Listing of Fungi in Oceania”, run by Tom May, Peter Buchanan and Sapphire McMullan-Fisher, was to establish an AMS subcommittee in Fungal Conservation. The formation of this group was approved at the AMS council meeting held on the 1st of August. The group has had no meetings yet but will also develop their own page on the AMS website to keep the membership apprised of conservation issues such as identifying red listing targets and acquiring basic ecological knowledge of and developing protection strategies for threatened fungal taxa.

In summary, it has been another busy year for the society and I would like to once again thank the AMS council, Dee Carter, Susan Nuske, Sapphire McMullan Fisher and Tom May and many other AMS members for their support.

J.D.W.R.

John Dearnaley, 19th October, 2016