
New Zealand Association of Scientists 70th Annual Report*

President's Report for 2010/11

This is my second report as President of the New Zealand Association of Scientists. It has again been my pleasure and privilege to lead the Association for the past year. The Association is in good heart in 2011: membership is up over 10% on mid-2010 (~240 now, was ~210 in late 2010); our new web site is working well; we have developed a good media profile and are regularly approached for comment on science/policy issues; the *New Zealand Science Review* continues to garner plenty of material and keeps to a very high standard; and we are looking forward to two conferences in 2012, co-hosting one¹ and sole host for our own². Lastly, we are in a very good financial position. None of this has happened by accident, but through the hard work and commitment of the Council, all of whom have given their valuable time in the past year. The Council has worked hard again this year to promote science, to provide input to policy processes in Government, and to comment generally on the role of science in society.

We are living through some hard times. The tragic earthquake in Christchurch in February shocked us all, and has contributed to a shift in the mood of the country. Funding is tight, and the global economic picture remains shaky. In the science policy sphere, it continues to be interesting times. In tight economic times, we might argue that it's time to fund science for future prosperity. In that regard, the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science political forum was very interesting, with presentations from representatives of several political parties. The rhetoric around increased funding for science is there, but are the dollars? The recent announcement about boosting IRL is a positive sign, but again we must remember that in the R&D mix, there needs to be plenty of 'R' so that we have something to 'D'. And of course, the election is upon us. Our early efforts to get science policy statements to put up on the NZAS web site resulted in a depressing lack of material from most parties. We will see what transpires in 2012, once the post-election dust has settled.

The Ministry of Science and Innovation's review of the Rutherford Fellowship scheme, and funding for postdoctoral positions in New Zealand, has been brought forward because of submissions to Government by a broad group in the science sector, including NZAS members. NZAS will be involved in meetings with MSI to help set the terms for the review.

We are thinking about the next survey of New Zealand scientists – this will need some development, as Jack Sommer (who has led the previous surveys) is stepping down from leading this effort. We are in discussions over storage of previous survey results, and which New Zealand organisations we might work with to carry out future surveys.

In July, NZAS had a visit from CAST (China Association for Science & Technology), the Chinese equivalent of NZAS (plus RSNZ plus MSI). A rather bigger organisation, which represents 48 million constituents (!) and well linked-in to government agencies. We will look for future opportunities to link up, or exchange ideas with our Chinese colleagues.

Our Journal, *New Zealand Science Review*, continues its high standard and regular publication schedule. The NZSR is published quarterly, and the editorial committee have sufficient material in hand to keep production going well into 2012. The *Review* remains a credible voice in terms of science policy and science practice in New Zealand.

There have been changes on Council again this year. In January, we gained a Vice-President, after a year or so without one. Shaun Hendy stepped in as VP and has been an active member of Council since. David Ackerley is stepping down, and I thank him for the work he's done on promoting NZAS through conference planning and other communications activities. I thank all the members of Council who worked with me over the past year. Their on-going enthusiasm and hard work is much appreciated. Our Secretary, Fiona McDonald (at Otago University in Dunedin) continues to provide unfailing service around Council meetings and Association procedure, despite the fact that she does not attend Council meetings. Peter Buchanan, our other non-Wellington Councillor, is pressing on, despite our often-flaky video and Skype links for Council meetings.

Membership

It's great to see membership increasing, a direct result of our higher public profile, our input to policy development and the political process. This year saw our membership numbers increase to near 250, an improvement on recent years, but still short of our goal to represent at least 10% of all New Zealand-based scientists (which would mean closer to 1000 members). We encourage all of our current members to individually play their role in promoting the Association to their professional colleagues and asking them to consider becoming members.

Awards and medals

The NZAS awards night this month was again very successful and well-attended. With the retirement of our leading lights on the awards process, Neil Curtis and David Penny, the new Council will need to re-invigorate the NZAS awards. They are still held in high regard, even with the advent of the Prime Minister's science prizes and other public acknowledgements of science excellence.

*70th Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 23 November 2011 at The Thistle Hotel, Mulgrave St, Wellington.

¹ *Inaugural Asia Pacific Science Policy Studies Research Conference (see inside back cover)*

² *Emerging scientists theme (mid 2012)*

The Marsden Medal, Shorland Medal, Research Medal and the Communicator Award are presented each year at the NZAS Awards Ceremony. The 2011 Awards Ceremony was held on Thursday 10 November at Turnbull House, Wellington. The Honourable Dr Wayne Mapp, Minister for Science and Innovation, presented the awards on behalf of the Association. The award winners are profiled elsewhere, but they were: Marsden Medal, Professor Geoffrey Jameson; Shorland Medal, Professor Harjinder Singh; Research Medal, Dr Alexei Drummond; and Communicator Award, Dr Mark Quigley.

Council Membership and Affiliates

I thank and acknowledge the following members of Council:

Professor Neil Curtis, our Patron and Chair of the Awards Subcommittee.

Kate McGrath, Immediate Past President.

Shaun Hendy, Vice-President.

Hamish Campbell, Chair of the *Science Review* Subcommittee.

Janet Grieve, *ex-officio* conference organiser. Janet was the chief organiser of the 2010 conference, and is active in helping to organise the SPS2012 conference.

Paul Gandar, Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

Fiona MacDonald, Executive Secretary.

Allen Petrey, Editor of *New Zealand Science Review*.

I acknowledge with thanks the other members of Council: Mike Berridge, Peter Buchanan, John Clare, Chris Sissons, Edward Abraham, Duncan Ackerley, and Justin Hodgkiss, who have all been very active members and have acted on various subcommittees. Their contributions have been vital to the success of NZAS activities during the year.

In addition to the members of Council we have a number of dedicated people that ensure the activities of the Association are fulfilled. In particular I recognise the contributions made by:

David Penny, Massey University, Independent Chair of the Awards Judging Panel and responsible for the Marsden and Shorland Medals; Desmond Darby, GNS, responsible for the Research Medal, and Peter Griffin, Science Media Centre, responsible for the Science Communicator Award.

James Renwick
President