

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

25th Annual Meeting of the ANZSCDB at ComBio2006

27th September, 2006

Brisbane Convention Centre

ANZSCDB remains in a strong position to make a significant impact in pursuit of its stated aim: “to advance research and education in cell and developmental biology”. It is only as I write this that I realise that the society is celebrating its silver anniversary this year.

Society business this year has continued to be managed by Executive consensus. Email has been the major vehicle of society communication. The core Exec has been quite active in decision-making, but there has been a low level of involvement of State reps and one of the opportunities for the future is to take more advantage of State reps to further the society's objectives.

Relocating and revamping and maintaining the society's **web page** in real time has proven an intractable problem, now still not solved despite attempts to do so through favours of the IT departments of 3 institutions. We have purchased the domain name “anzscdb.org”. The new Exec will likely have to consider the option of an outsourced, purchased solution to this important issue.

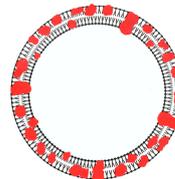
Newsletters were issued in Dec/05, Apr/06 and Sept/06. The electronic format greatly facilitates the editorial process and has allowed increased content. Thanks to all the contributors, and particularly to the former editor, Ben Hogan, and the current editor, Geraldine O'Neill for this value contribution to the society's communication.

The introduction of 3-year membership three years ago had a cumulative benefit on membership numbers in the period 2003-2005. Despite this year for the first time being vulnerable to the risk of losing members who were in the first cohort of 3-year membership, the **membership base** has remained stable; at the time of this AGM we have 235 members; more detailed financial-year based comparative figures are found in the Treasurer's report. We have put out 2 membership renewal reminders this year, tailored to members' status in the 3-year renewal cycle, including a recent formal advice to lapsing members as per Clause 6 of the Constitution. The membership base is maintained by the volunteered effort of Executive members; I would like to point out that each email to the society's membership list, no matter how freshly scrutinised and updated it might be, generates approximately 10% e-mail bounces that trickle in over several days and which have been impossible to individually follow up.

The Society supported the Australian research community meetings:

- first time participation as a Symposium Society of the **Australian Health and Medical Research Congress** (Nov 2006 in Melbourne); for a potentially recoverable outlay of \$2000. Thanks to Robb de Iongh for his effort in co-ordinating the ANZSCDB program.
- support for “2nd Straddie Conference on Cutaneous Biology” under the “Current Topics Symposia” scheme (\$1000 direct support and \$250 student prize)
- through student prizes at:

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- 7th Australia New Zealand Zebrafish Workshop (Queensland)
- Combined Biological Sciences Meeting (Perth)
- The ANZ Developmental Biology workshop has received a higher level of support, with a commitment of \$10,500 over the years 2006-8 (each year, \$2000 direct support and \$1500 for disimbursement as travel grants to ANZSCDB-member participants).
- The **ComBio meeting** is the flagship society-sponsored meeting. ComBio2005 returned a profit of approximately \$68,000, of which ANZSCDB's share will be approximately \$5,000 (based on its fractional participation). Alpha Yap and Helen Cooper have represented ANZSCDB on the Brisbane ComBio2006 Organising Committee.

Ongoing relationships are maintained with the peak government lobby groups ASMR (Australian Society of Medical Research) and FASTS (Federation of Scientific and Technological Societies). We continue to lend affiliation in name, but not financial support, to CAMRA (Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research Australia), and organization that collects data and lobbies on stem cell issues. We supported the participation of a member at the FASTS-organised annual Science Meets Parliament day in March. We are members of the International Society of Developmental Biology (ISDB), the ISDB-initiated Asia-Pacific Network of Developmental Biologists (APNDB, represented by Rob Saint), and the Asia-Pacific Organisation of Cell Biology (APOCB, represented by Cynthia Jensen) which is holding its 4-yearly meeting in Beijing next month.

It will be my pleasure at this ComBio meeting to present the **5th President's Medal** to Professor David Vaux, in recognition of his contributions to understanding the genetic and molecular mechanisms of cell survival and death. Prof Vaux is currently a Federation Fellow in the Department of Biochemistry and Latrobe University, Melbourne. The recent Newsletter includes a summary of his contributions to this field. His medalist's lecture "Pathways to Cell Death; an apoptotic Odyssey" will be presented on Wednesday 27th September. We are again very grateful to Sigma Aldrich for their generous sponsorship of this award for the 5 years since its inception; the current arrangement ends with this award. Of the original striking, two medals remain, and so a second striking will now be necessary.

The Society is in a very healthy **financial position** as outlined in the Treasurer's report, with cash assets of approximately \$110,000. A significant profit disimbursement was received from the 2005 Sydney ISDB meeting (approx. \$27,000); congratulations to Richard Harvey and his colleagues for this excellent administrative outcome. These funds have been nominally "earmarked" for developmental biology discipline support.

A real challenge for the society will be to deploy these financial resources in pursuance of the society's aim. A duty of the President is to propose policies that further the society's aim. In this spirit, I table **discussion papers** prepared to form the basis for formulation of policies governing ANZSCDB's **financial support of meetings**, and proposing the parameters that might govern a **new society medal**. A feature of both these policies is the notion that access to ANZSCDB's resources should generally be accessed through membership, rather than simply available to all. It is not my expectation that they will be adopted unaltered, but rather that as

discussion papers they will lead to the formulation of policy that will enable transparent and equitable decisions to be made in two areas of society expenditure. They also embrace the premise that the society makes a particularly valuable contribution using its resources to leverage new achievements rather than simply supporting ongoing successful activities.

I have been honoured to have had the opportunity to lead this worthwhile Australian scientific society. **Thanks** to the 2006 State Reps and to the Executive members for their commitment to and engagement with ANZSCDB. I particularly thank Jason White (secretary) and Heather Verkade (treasurer) for their constant attention to society matters. Finally, I wish Alpha Yap, the new President, and his new Exec every success for the next biennium.

Graham J. Lieschke

President

Australia and New Zealand Society for Cell and Developmental Biology
September 22nd, 2006.