



The Royal Society of New South Wales

ABN 76 470 896 415

“for the encouragement of studies and investigations in Science Art Literature and Philosophy”

Annual Report of Council for the year ending 31 December 2017



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ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Society is the oldest learned society in the Southern Hemisphere, tracing its origin to the *Philosophical Society of Australasia*, founded in Sydney in 1821. It became *the Royal Society of New South Wales* by Royal Assent in 1866 and was incorporated by an Act of the NSW Parliament in 1881. The Society exists for ...*the encouragement of studies and investigations in Science Art Literature and Philosophy...*, in particular: publishing results of investigations in its *Journal and Proceedings*; conducting monthly meetings; awarding prizes and medals; and by liaison with other learned societies within Australia and internationally.

Membership is open to any person whose application is acceptable to the Society under guidelines that may be modified from time-to-time. The Society welcomes both members and non-members to its activities.

OFFICE-BEARERS

The members of the Council of the Society for 2017 were elected at the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 5 April 2017. They hold office from that date until the next Annual General Meeting. They are:

Patron	His Excellency The Hon General David Hurley AC DSC (ret'd) Governor of New South Wales
President	Em Prof Brynn Hibbert FRSN
Vice-Presidents	Dr Donald Hector AM FRSN Em Prof Ian Sloan AO FRSN Ms Judith Wheeldon AM FRSN
Hon Secretary (Ed)	Em Prof Robert Marks FRSN
Hon Secretary (Gen)	Dr Herma Buttner FRSN
Hon Treasurer	Mr Richard Wilmott MRSN
Hon Librarian	Dr Ragbir Bhathal MRSN
Hon Webmaster	A/Prof Christoph Bertram FRSN
Councillors	Dr Erik Aslaksen FRSN Dr Mohammad Choucair MRSN Em Prof Robert Clancy AM FRSN Dr Desmond Griffin FRSN Mr John Hardie FRSN Em Prof Stephen Hill AM FRSN Em Prof Heinrich Hora FRSN Prof Lt Col Edward James Kehoe FRSN Em Prof Bruce Milthorpe FRSN Hon Prof Ian Wilkinson FRSN
Southern Highland Chair	Ms Anne Wood FRSN
Executive Office	The Association Specialists

The Council met seven times during the reporting period hosted by the Dean's office at the University of Technology Sydney and meetings of Council committees were held at various locations. The Council is most grateful for the use of the UTS facilities for its meetings. Committees for Awards, Events, Fellows, Finance and Risk and Publications were active during the reporting period. Under the guidance of the current committee, the branch in the Southern Highlands continues to thrive.

OFFICE LOCATION AND SERVICES

The Society has premises at 121 Darlington Road, University of Sydney. The Society is grateful to the University of Sydney for making this accommodation available to the Society.

Back-office services are provided under an outsourcing contract by The Association Specialists, 33-35 Atchison Street, Crows Nest NSW.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In my second year of Presidency we have continued to progress the reforms of the 2015 White Paper by increasing the membership of the Society and expanding our activities. I count 93 members and fellows who have membership of 1 year or less. At this rate of increase, the vision of former President Don Hector to emulate the Royal Society of Edinburgh with more than 1000 fellows/members will happen sooner rather than later. On behalf of the Nominations Committee, I have recently written to Fellows of the Society inviting each to nominate a colleague for membership or fellowship. My own pledges, given in 2016, to engage more with 'Art, Literature and Philosophy', and to address the gender/ethnic balance, are progressing well. The remit has been determined to include leaders of the community from the armed services, the law, former politicians and a few builders and architects, in addition to the usual suspects from academia. Professor Michelle Simmons DistFRSN is Australian of the Year, a much deserved honour in which we all can share (a little bit). I thank the Council, and its committees, always active and bringing a diverse and keen intelligence to the work of the Society, for providing intensive support of our plans.

Of great note this year has been the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts (SMSA). Practically, this translated into holding the 2017 Poggendorff lecture at the SMSA (well organised by Councillor Mohammad Choucair), and a very successful series of lectures on the Enlightenment as it relates to Australia. We are looking forward to the climax of the series which will be a Sophistry involving eating, talking and music on the theme of "Is the Enlightenment Dead?". The lectures have been masterminded (and indeed one given) by Councillor Robert Clancy. His connection with the SMSA has been invaluable.

The appointment of Dr John Vallance FRSN as State Librarian has caused a reaching out of the State Library of NSW to its traditional friends in the community of ideas, starting with the RSNSW. Council held its Strategy Day last month at the Library, and we have announced that the Annual Dinner for 2018 (to be held Friday 18 May) will be at the State Library in the Mitchell Galleries. The larger venue will mean that this year no one will be turned away. From June, we will also move our Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) to the State Library, again reflecting a need to accommodate the increasing numbers that come to our meetings in congenial surroundings. Vice President Judith Wheeldon has carried much of the negotiations, and thanks to her we are on the brink of an interesting new chapter in the Society's history.

The Events Committee, chaired by Councillor Ian Wilkinson, put together an excellent programme of events for the year. The OGMs are well attended and an increasing number of other events show the activity of this group. Events encompasses the Society's contri-

tribution to Sydney Science Week. In 2018, we hope to hold the lectures at the SMSA, allowing access by a larger audience. Add to this the wider SMSA collaboration, a number of special lectures (Poggendorff, Pollock, Liversidge, 4 Societies), and the Forum, the RSNSW is providing major intellectual opportunities to the people of NSW.

We are pleased with the quality of awardees of medals and lectureships for 2017. In particular the award of the Society's Bronze Medal to Vice President Don Hector AM gave us all great pleasure to recognise his work in the revitalisation of the RSNSW. The Awards Committee, chaired congenially by Councillor Professor Jim Kehoe, seeks advice from an advisory panel, chaired by the Chief Scientist and Engineer of NSW, and consisting of the Deans of Science and Engineering of the NSW-based universities. The 2017 awards will be presented by His Excellency the Governor of NSW at the Annual Dinner. I pay tribute and offer great thanks to the retiring Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane FRSN, who has been a great friend of the RSNSW. We wish her well in her new role as Chair of the Independent Planning Commission of NSW, and look forward to engaging with her successor at the office of Chief Scientist and Engineer.

The Fellows Committee, chaired by Vice President Professor Ian Sloan, has been working its socks off in 2017 having to consider often more than 20 nominations at each of its meetings. As Ian moves into the Presidential seat, I shall take over the Fellows Committee, with Councillor Erik Aslaksen becoming Secretary to the Committee. Thanks to Councillor Judith Wheeldon for maintaining good order in our records of this important committee. Welcome to our latest Distinguished Fellow, Tom Keneally DistFRSN. Meeting him through our discussions with the SMSA has been a delight and I look forward to hearing him deliver the Distinguished Fellows Address at the Annual Dinner.

While on the subject of Fellows, I thank Robert Whittaker AM FRSN who put together a proposal for the Gazetting of our Fellows and Distinguished Fellows. Appearing in the official publication of the State our Fellows are now rubbing shoulders with recipients of Australian honours and Senior and Queen's Counsellors.

The Honorary Librarian, Dr Ragbir Bhathal, supported by past President and Councillor John Hardie, and volunteers has continued the job of cataloguing and curating our holdings at Darlington Road and elsewhere. In particular we are conserving the Hargrave drawings, and look forward to displaying them, perhaps in the Tom Keneally Library at the SMSA. With discussions with the State Library going well, we are also hoping for a solution for our collections presently held in Minto and at Darlington Road.

Honorary Secretary (Editorial) Professor Bob Marks has now wrestled the Journal and Proceedings into excellent order. The planned two issues were published in 2017. Bob is working on the full papers from the 2017 Forum, solicits papers from our members and speakers and publishes abstracts of PhD theses from NSW universities. I continue to write my monthly column for the Bulletin and have welcomed our new editor Laurel Dyson. Thanks to Councillor Professor Jim Kehoe and his team (Edward Hibbert) for their production of our magazine which is a useful record of our activities.

In November, the 2017 Forum was held at Government House on the subject of "The Future of Rationality in a Post-Truth World". Thought by many as the best Forum yet, highlights among many fine talks were the contributions of Sir Peter Gluckman and Ross Gittins. As with the previous two years His Excellency the Governor was our host for the Forum and Reception taking a great interest in the topic and discourse.

Again following precedence established in 2017, we organised a private visit by His Excellency to Professor Andrea Morello's quantum computing laboratory in February.

Our administration is working very nicely. Thanks to Erik Aslaksen procedures with our back office providers The Association Specialists (TAS) have been tightened to the satisfaction of

all. We have been pleased to renew our contract with TAS and I record my particular thanks to Thalia Child for her prompt attention to the Society's needs, while keeping an unshakable good humour.

Financially, we are so nearly breaking even, thanks to the expert management of our Hon Treasurer, Richard Willmot, and we now know where our funds are going allowing the luxury of accurate planning that we have not always had in the past. Relying only on our subscriptions gives us an independence, and means we are beholden to no one, but until our number grows more, we are always looking over our shoulder financially. Better times are coming!

Being President of the Royal Society of New South Wales has been a great privilege and honour, made special by working with the grand people on our Council, particularly our diligent Honorary Secretary General Herma Buttner. I pass my very best wishes to Ian Sloan as he starts his Presidency

TREASURER'S REPORT

The 2017 year continued to be a year of financial consolidation. From the 1st January 2017 and with the blessing of our administrators The Association Specialists, we migrated our accounting system from MYOB to Xero. This new system allowed us to be a little more flexible in our financial reporting and is working well.

It is pleasing to report that our net membership continued to grow throughout the year. At 31 December 2017, we had 369 fully paid members on our database. This is up from just over 300 at the same time the year before. However it is of some concern that as of year end, there were another 53 members whose subs remained outstanding. Whilst some of these unfinancial members will eventually pay, there will certainly be some, who for a variety of reasons, will not renew their memberships. The fallout rate is unacceptable and we are attempting to understand why it is so high.

The audited accounts for the 12 months ended 31 December 2017 record a deficit of \$4,819. This is against a budgeted surplus of \$4,721. The major reasons for the variance from budget are:

- . Printing and distribution of the 2016 year journals had fallen behind (a fact not known when preparing the 2017 budget). Expenses outlaid in bringing this matter up-to-date are included along with the current year journal costs.
- . The unacceptably high number of members (approx 35) who did not renew their memberships from the previous year.

The Society's liquid assets at 31 December 2017 (Cash at Bank and Receivables) fell from the previous year by \$8,116 to \$233,300.

EVENTS AND LECTURES

The Society's Events Committee comprised:

Chair	Hon Prof Ian Wilkinson FRSN
	Dr Mohammad Choucair MRSN
	Mr John Hardie FRSN
	Prof Jim Kehoe FRSN
	President (<i>ex officio</i>)
	Honorary Secretary (<i>ex officio</i>)

A number of successful events were held during the year. The Society held a full program of ten monthly open lectures as part of its Ordinary General Meetings (OGM) and Annual General Meetings (AGM) meetings. In addition, there were a number of other events and lectures: the

Annual Dinner; The Four Societies Annual Meeting; the Liversidge Lecture; the Poggendorff lecture; the Dirac Lecture; lunchtime science talks as part of Science Week; the RSNSW and Four Academies Forum; and a new series of lectures began on the subject “Is the enlightenment dead?”

The OGM/AGM Open Lectures were held at the Union Universities and Schools Club, which provides an excellent venue. The lectures covered a wide range of topics which are described on the Society’s website. They were generally well received with the numbers up on previous years, varying from 30 to 57, which required us to move from the library to a larger room at the Union Club a number of times. The dinners following the lecture were also well attended. At the December 4th OGM, the Society held its annual Christmas Party, which was preceded by the 2017 Jak Kelly Award lecture, given by Moritz Merklein on the topic “How to store light: an optical memory based on sound waves”.

The Annual Four Societies Lecture was held at the International Convention Centre on February 23. This is held in conjunction with the Nuclear Engineering Panel of the Sydney Branch of Engineers Australia, the Australian Nuclear Association and the Australian Institute of Energy. This year’s lecture was delivered by Rear Admiral, The Honourable Kevin Scarce AC CSC RAN (ret’d.) on the topic “South Australia: a nuclear State in a global solution”.

The Annual Dinner was held at the Union University and Schools Club on May 4th with the guest of honour His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret’d), Governor of New South Wales and Patron of the Royal Society of New South Wales and Mrs Hurley. The Distinguished Fellows Lecture was given by Hon Emeritus Professor Michael Baume AC DistFRSN on the topic “Don’t blame the unemployed”.

As part of Science Week in August, a series of four lunchtime science talks were held at the CBD Campus of The University of Sydney Business School. These were presented by Professor John Murray UNSW on “Smoking and lung Cancer: The latest evidence” (11th August); Dr Kathleen Riley on “Fred Astaire and the Science of Dance” (August 14th); Professor Leslie Burnett on “Personalised Medicine - healthcare in the 21st century” (August 15th); Emeritus Professor Brynn Hibbert UNSW and President of the RSNSW on “Scientific, and not so Scientific Fraud: Crooks, Cranks and Charlatans” (August 17th). These talks were not as well attended as in previous years, which is thought to be in part due to the location of the talks. In 2018, it is planned to hold these talks in cooperation with the Sydney Mechanics’ School of Arts. An additional event on the topic “Everyone needs Science in your Lives” was held on August 16th as part of Science week at the University New England Parramatta Campus.

The 2017 Liversidge Lecture was held at UNSW on 11th May and given by Scientia Professor Justin Gooding, UNSW, on the topic of “Sensing our world: From glucose sensors to counting single molecules and cells”.

The Poggendorff Lecture was held on the 29th August at the Sydney Mechanics’ School of Arts (SMSA). It was given by Associate Professor Andrew Robson, University of New England on the topic “Applied remote sensing applications for Australian agricultural and horticultural industries”.

The Dirac lecture on Theoretical Physics was held at UNSW on November 6th and given by Professor Boris Altshuler, Columbia University on the topic “Is it possible to predict the behaviour of closed physical systems? From the solar systems to a quantum computer”

The annual RSNSW and Four Academies Forum was held on November 29th on the topic of “The future of rationality in a post-truth world”. The event was hosted at Government House by His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret’d), Governor of New South Wales and Patron of the Royal Society of New South Wales. The event was preceded by a reception at Government House on the evening of November 28th. The Forum brought together a number of distinguished scientists and government policy advisors addressing various issues related to this topic. The talks will be the focus of a special issue of the Proceedings of the RSNSW in 2018.

A new series of five lectures began in 2017 co-hosted by the Royal Society of NSW and the SMSA, held at the SMSA. The series is designed to initiate a period of interactive events and activities to the mutual benefit of both societies. The general topic for this initial series of lectures is: "Is the Enlightenment Dead?" The lectures are presented by an outstanding group of experts in the field, with the topics chosen to represent a broad overview of the Enlightenment from its beginnings as the public recognised and discussed the meanings of change from a long period of mythology and dogma, to grasping reality and what that meant to them and their lives, to its impact on our society today. The first lecture, on September 4th, was given by Susannah Fullerton OAM FRSN on the topic "Samuel Pepys, his Library and the Enlightenment". The second, on November 6th was given by Emeritus Professor Robert Clancy AM FRSN on the topic "The Freedom to use your own intelligence: The Enlightenment and the growth of the Australian Nation". The final three lectures will be held in 2018.

FELLOWS

In the year ending April 2017, the Society's Fellows Committee comprised:

Chair	Em Prof Ian Sloan AO FRSN FAA
Secretary	Ms Judith Wheeldon AM FRSN
	Prof Michael Archer AM DistFRSN
	Dr Erik Aslaksen FRSN
	Prof Max Crossley FRSN
	Mr John Hardie FRSN
	Em Prof Heinrich Hora FRSN
	President (<i>ex officio</i>)
	Honorary Secretary (<i>ex officio</i>)

During 2017, Dr Erik Aslaksen joined the Fellows Committee. At the end of the year, Professor Sloan retired as Chair, and Ms Wheeldon retired as Secretary. The new Chair will be Professor Brynn Hibbert FRSN and the new Secretary Dr Aslaksen. Ms Wheeldon will continue as a valued member of the Committee.

With the administrative procedures for the Fellows Committee now working smoothly, the Committee considered many cases for Fellowship during the year. Since most cases were found to be strong or very strong, the Committee made many recommendations for Fellowship to Council, all of them accepted. At the end of the period the number of Fellows had increased to more than 250.

The Fellows Committee also considered possible candidates for Distinguished Fellow, and in particular recommended that an existing Fellow, Mr Thomas Kenneally AO FRSN, be elevated to Distinguished Fellow. Council subsequently so resolved.

AWARDS

The Awards Committee of Council was constituted as follows:

Chair	Prof Lt Col Edward James Kehoe FRSN
	Em Prof Stephen Hill AM FRSN
	Em Prof Heinrich Hora FRSN
	Em Prof Robert Marks FRSN
	President (<i>ex officio</i>)
	Honorary Secretary (<i>ex officio</i>)

The Awards Committee received twenty three nominations for six awards and three scholarships. As in previous years, the Chief Scientist and Engineer of NSW, Professor Mary O'Kane and the Deans of Science and Engineering in NSW universities were invited to form an Advisory Panel to assist the Committee. With Em Prof Brynn Hibbert and Prof Lt Col E. James Kehoe as observers, the Panel ranked the candidates and gave advice on their merits. This advice was communicated to the Awards Committee who made final recommenda-

tions to the Council, which adopted the advice at its November meeting.

The Awards are as follows:

Clarke Medal (Botany):	Professor David Keith	UNSW
History & Philosophy of Science Medal:	Professor Peter Godfrey-Smith	U Sydney
James Cook Medal:	Professor Gordon Barraclough Parker	UNSW
Pollock Lecture:	Professor Andrea Morello	UNSW
Poggendorff Lecture:	Associate Professor Brent Kaiser	U Sydney
Edgeworth David Medal:	Dr Angela Nickerson	UNSW
RSNSW Medal:	Dr Donald Hector AM FRSN	RSNSW

The above awards will be presented at the Annual Dinner, 18 May 2018.

RSNSW Scholarship:	Yu-wei Lin	U Sydney
RSNSW Scholarship	Grace Causer	ANSTO, U Wollongong
RSNSW Scholarship	Cara Van Der Wal	U Sydney

The Scholarships were presented at the OGM, 7 February 2018.

The Jak Kelly award made by the Royal Society of NSW in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Physics was presented to Mr. Moritz Merklein (University of Sydney) at the December 2017 OGM.

NOMINATIONS

The Nominations Committee of Council was constituted as follows:

Chair	Dr Donald Hector AM FRSN
	Prof Graham Bell FRSN
	Dr Desmond Griffin AM FRSN (until April 2017)
	Em Prof Bruce Milthorpe FRSN
	Dr Frederick Osman FRSN
	Ms Judith Wheeldon AM FRSN
	Adj Prof Robert Whittacker FRSN (from April 2017)
	President (<i>ex officio</i>)
	Honorary Secretary (<i>ex officio</i>)

The purpose of the committee is to oversee the nominations process and increase awareness of the Society by encouraging nominations for Fellowship and Membership. The committee met on two occasions in 2017 (March and December). The committee was keen to extend and broaden the diversity of the pool of nominations for Fellows. This was successful with the election of a significant number of prominent Fellows from non-academic arenas and an increasing number of Members. However, gender diversity and age distribution continue to be challenging. As in the previous year, the committee also proposed various matters for consideration by the Fellows Committee regarding interpretation for Fellowship.

In 2018, the focus will continue to be on building the general membership body so that Membership and Fellowship Numbers grow in parallel, together with a continued emphasis on broadening the diversity of membership.

JOURNAL AND PROCEEDINGS

There were two issues of the Journal & Proceedings in 2017. The June issue contained the papers delivered at the second Four Academies Forum— Society as a Complex System: Implications for Science, Practice and Policy, held at the end of 2016 at Government House. As well as the Governor's introduction, there were nine presented papers. The issue also included a refereed paper, the Distinguished Fellow's Address by Peter Baume, and four doctoral abstracts.

The December issue (mailed out at the end of February) contained the President's address, six refereed papers, three invited papers, and ten doctoral abstracts. (All universities in N.S.W. and the A.C.T. were invited to contribute, but the responses from the larger universities were disappointing.)

The next issue will include the papers from the most recent Four Academies Forum, as well as an address by Professor Michelle Simmons, DistFRSN, Australian of the Year. Discussions are underway for a future special issue associated with the Association of von Humboldt Fellows in Australia.

The numbers of members and fellows who subscribe have more than doubled in a year, despite the free availability of the Journal on-line at the Society's web pages. We continue to rely on the work of several volunteers in the refereeing, production and distribution of the Journal.

LIBRARY

The Library is the most valuable asset of the Society. The collection held at the Society's office (estimated to be approximately 10% of the collection) was valued at over \$200,000 as at 30 December 2016 by the valuers and heritage consultants employed by the Society's Council. Overall, it contains significant material pertaining not only to the history and development of the Society, but also to the development of science in Australia. One of the outcomes of the consultants' report was to identify material that was to be kept, sold or discarded along guidelines to be worked out by a committee of the Society. Following several meetings in 2016, the Committee met twice in 2017, but put making any recommendations of this nature on hold, pending outcomes of discussions with the SMSA and, more recently, the State Library of NSW about locating more suitable accommodation for the collection. The other outcome of the report was the recommendation by the heritage consultants to employ conservation and restoration specialists to conserve and restore the historically significant Lawrence Hargrave material held by the Society. The material has been sent to the premises of Rose Peel and Sophie Brown for carrying out conservation and restoration works. Because of its delicate condition the process is rather slow. It is envisaged that the works will be completed by July 2018.

The Library collection at the Darlington Road Office is located in a building that has a less than ideal environment for archival material. The Council is in the process of exploring other locations which could house the Library's collection in a controlled environment. The Society's collection at the Dixon Library at the University of New England (UNE) is well looked after and is housed in a controlled environment. The Society's journal exchange program with a number of overseas institutions is conducted by the Dixon Library. It maintains and provides full access to this material to scholars and the public. The Society's archive collection in the State Library of NSW is well looked after and is stored in a controlled environment appropriate for archival material. This collection is available for access by scholars and researchers by prior arrangement.

The next major project to be undertaken by the Library in the coming months is to assess and evaluate the Library's collection which is housed in a Minto warehouse. This collection comprises the bulk of the Society's library holdings not located at UNE. This is an urgent project as the material has been stored in cardboard boxes in a warehouse environment for a number of years. Discussions are under way with the State Library to have this material removed from storage and housed appropriately in a controlled environment.

The Society thanks the University of Sydney, the State Library of NSW, UNE and MSC Logistics for their generous contribution of space to house the Society's collections.

THE BULLETIN

The Bulletin of the Society was published monthly during the year, except for December. The Council thanks the authors of short articles and for information submitted to the Bulletin and to members who assisted in its preparation and distribution, particularly the editor of the Bulletin, Professor Edward James Kehoe and Managing Editor, Mr. Edward Hibbert. The Council also thanks Dr. Laurel Dyson, who assumed the editorship starting in January 2018.

THE WEB

The move from our previous hosting provider, MelbourneIT, to Panthur (as of late-May 2017, with mail moved over on 25 June 2017) has been a great success, particularly from the maintenance point of view. Whereas any attempt to interact with MelbourneIT was made difficult by their outsourcing of level-1 support to a Philippines call centre where the English spoken was often unintelligible, Panthur are by comparison delightfully responsive, and above all local to Australia. The issues which previously caused the website to take time to respond to any mouse click, over which MelbourneIT's unresponsiveness was one of the spurs to cause us to abandon them, no longer exist. For the user of the website, this simply removes an irritation; for the webmaster the difference is profound.

With these operational issues behind us, it has been possible to clear up a number of unresolved matters dating back to the introduction of the new website in September 2016. Essentially, all pages are now populated with the appropriate sidebars. The index to past events provided in the events sidebar now indexes Sydney events right back to 2005, and Southern Highlands events back to 2007, and clicking on any year for Sydney brings up a complete set of reports of events held in that year, along with a calendar of events, except where no such report or calendar exists.

The former website was administered solely by ex-President Don Hector, a situation which was unsustainable in the longer term. The principle of devolved responsibility for sections of the website which started with my appointment as webmaster has now had further time to take hold, and thanks are due to now-retiring President Brynn Hibbert, Events Manager Ian Wilkinson, Secretary Herma Büttner, and Journal Editor Robert Marks, for ably managing sections of the site, in Brynn's case taking charge of areas where the system was not working. Many image links on the event report pages for years prior to 2015 still have not been restored after the website change-over, but will be by Historian John Hardie as time permits. Very recently, the navigation links between journal issue pages which were for a long time inoperative have been resuscitated by Robert Marks.

A number of changes have been made to make it easier to find forthcoming events. A new first entry in the events dropdown menu now takes the website user straight to a page providing the detailed announcements of all coming events for which the Events Manager has issued details. Changes to the rules governing presentation of tables have resolved issues which initially reduced their intelligibility on the new site. The numbers of available slots in the front-page teasers for recent and forthcoming events have been expanded; up to four such slots now exist in each category, so that all recent and upcoming events can be accommodated. The front-page sidebar section Noteworthy offers a parallel opportunity to publicise news of a less ephemeral nature. Two entries added this year relate to the memorandum of understanding signed with the SMSA, and the naming of Prof Michelle Simmons as Australian of the year. Each entry links to appropriate further pages.

The hacking of the website in early-May 2017 which was the other motivation to leave MelbourneIT (where urgently needed updates to our software were being prevented) left in its wake a number of minor issues where the immediate rectification measures by Ezerus had created (e.g.) incompatible colour schemes. These problems, all but invisible to the casual website user, have now been largely dealt with.

The Council-only part of the site uses a different content management system, and interfaces with Dropbox. The synchronisation with Dropbox failed in September 2017 thanks to changes made by Dropbox to how access is achieved (these changes have caused permanent failure of many other Dropbox interoperability softwares). Fortunately, an update to one of the plug-ins involved became available in a timely fashion, and installation of this solved the issue.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

After extensive discussions and evaluations, Council decided to discontinue the role of Executive Officer and to engage The Association Specialists (TAS) to provide the office services required to support the growth of the Society (Minutes of Special Meeting, 21 July 2014). A corresponding contract was entered into with TAS on 4 August 2014, and at the yearly review at the end of 2015 it was agreed to make the start date of the slightly revised contract 1 January 2016 (to coincide with the Society's reporting period).

The contract is nominally for a duration of 2 years, with yearly review, but can be terminated by either party on 3 months' notice, and can be renewed for further two-year periods by mutual agreement.

The review at the end of 2017 found that the initial settling-in and personnel instability problems had been overcome, and the Society expressed general satisfaction with the service now being provided. Consequently, after minor revisions, the contract was renewed for a further two-year period. The TAS Client Service Manager is Thalia Child.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS BRANCH

The Southern Highlands Branch Committee for 2017/2018 was:

Chair	Mr Hubert Regtop
Vice Chair	Dr John Wright AM FRSN
Honorary Treasurer	Dr Mike Jones
Honorary Secretary	Ms Anne Wood AM FRSN
Committee	Mr Peter Eustace
	Mr Ted Smith
	Ms Andrea Talbot

Royal Society Southern Highlands (RSSH) has had another very successful year. Lectures have attracted large audiences as in previous years. Interestingly, we have noted that although we consistently see large audiences, the audience representation from lecture to lecture varies greatly, depending on the promoted topic.

It is necessary in the Southern Highlands to promote Royal Society lectures in an area-specific way. The nearest Universities are at Wollongong, Canberra and Sydney, institutions from which we invite many of our speakers. Our invitation offer to selected speakers includes pleasant overnight accommodation close to the lecture venue for the speaker and his/her partner. After the lecture, the speaker enjoys dinner with interested members of the audience and some of the committee. Speakers generally settle in at their accommodation before the lecture, and some extend their stay to enjoy a long weekend in the Highlands after they have delivered the Thursday evening lecture.

In order to promote our lectures, we send out flyers to the media which includes ABC radio Illawarra, local newspapers and bouquet publications such as HighLife. Fliers are also sent to our extensive database of contacts drawn from previous lecture attendees. At each lecture during the year, email addresses are supplied by new arrivals, so that the database is as up to date as possible. Occasionally, special promotions of the lectures take place as occurred recently when Anne Wood FRSN was invited to a wide-ranging one hour interview on High-

lands fm 107.1.

ABC radio Illawarra often responds to notification of an upcoming lecture by interviewing our speaker several days before the lecture. The coverage of this outlet includes the Illawarra coastal area, reaching as far as the southern areas of Sydney and the northern parts of Canberra. The Goulburn visitors who attend our lectures report hearing these radio interviews.

A problem which has faced our Branch this year has concerned the lecture venue. For many years, we have enjoyed the generous support of Chevalier College management who offer excellent facilities and promotion of our lectures through their college newsletters to parents. Unfortunately for Royal Society Southern Highlands, the Performing Arts Centre is currently undergoing refurbishment, a process which will last for the whole of 2018. We have negotiated the use of a comfortable and well equipped lecture room at the Mittagong RSL for the whole of 2018. At our first lecture for the year in the new venue, we were very pleased to attract an audience of 60 persons to hear Professor Madeleine Beekman speak on the subject "Are we more intelligent than the slime mould?"

Our goal for the coming year is to continue to present to the people of the Southern Highlands a high quality and varied selection of speakers and topics as we promote the goals of the Royal Society of New South Wales. The Royal Society of New South Wales has made a huge effort this year to encourage suitable candidates to apply for the honour of Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW, FRSN. Already at least two of our members have applied successfully for this honour which allows the use of the recently gazetted post-nominal FRSN. We would hope there will be more such honours earned by members of the Southern Highlands Branch to acknowledge and further promote widely all endeavours in the fields of the Arts, Sciences, Literature and Philosophy.

One particular characteristic that must be pointed out here in the Southern Highlands Royal Society Branch is that there are very few members, but many visitors, attending our lectures. This is yet another reflection on the unique nature of the demography in this part of New South Wales, where much of the population is professional, highly educated and retired. These residents travel widely around the world, often visit families in the Sydney area, are well read and well informed. They embrace intellectual endeavours such as ours, but we have to compete strongly with the many such endeavours that are open to them here and in Sydney.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual general meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday 4 April 2018 at 6pm at the Union University and Schools Club, 25 Bent Street, Sydney.



D. Brynn Hibbert
PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Council of the Royal Society of NSW