



Australian Institute of Horticulture Inc.

'Promoting Horticulture - the Profession of the 21st Century'

Minutes of Annual General Meeting of the Australian Institute of Horticulture Inc.

Monday 11th November 2019 at 4.08pm AEST
Rydges World Square
389 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Attending the AGM

Michael Casey, Andrew Prowse, Andrew Price, Wayne Van Balen, David Thompson, David Tang, Tempe Macgowan and Matt Mitchley. *Attending the AGM via video link*; Jackie Warburton and Neville Passmore.

Video link of meeting;

https://zoom.us/recording/share/7sa2oVc86oI_PPl3kwLRb8rf8MDyLy7oaNliz6pjcHOwlumekTziMw

Agenda

Welcome by President

Dear Members, National executives and National councilors, thank you for a great year and making my first year in the position of National President a welcoming and exciting one. I would like to thank the hard work put in over the last 12 months by our National executives, councilors and paid contractors.

- Vice President Alan Burnell
- Secretary Matt Mitchley
- Treasurer Andrew Prowse
- Council Neville Passmore, Patrick Regnault, Jackie Warburton and Kris Pearce.
- Website and membership manager David Thompson
- Editor Tempe Macgowan

- Past President and Registered Horticulturist Manager Wayne Van Balen
- Auditors AME Accountants
- Bookkeepers Notch Above

I would also like to personally thank our parting committee members Alan Burnell and Neville Passmore for their committed and hard work over the last 12 months and wish them all the very best with their works outside the AIH council.

This year we have lost two dedicated AIH past councilors and more importantly great friends. Past President Kim Morris served on the council over many years and under many titles and positions and was a fundamental part of the success of AIH. Jeanette Penklis our past Secretary and National councilor also passed away this year and her work and dedication to both AIH and Therapeutic Horticulture was inspiring. I know I speak on behalf of all members when I say that these friends of ours will be deeply missed.

Our membership has over the last 12 – 18 months increased to numbers that were indicating AIH was starting to show strength again but as of recent it has been noted that we have had a drop since the new membership calendar year commenced. We have noted this decline and outside of retirements and students being one of the reasons for non-renewals we as a council are actively looking at new ways to address how to attract new members. Outside of the usual feedback that members were not benefitting from their membership we have taken new steps in engaging a business strategy company to assist us with steering AIH into the future with some new and exciting guidance. Growth Creators, who specialize in the 'Not for Profit' sector, will assist the National Council in identifying new opportunities and directions for the AIH to maneuver through.

On memberships, David Thompson, has proposed a new membership status that could benefit the AIH and prospective members who may find this new system a lot easier to navigate when becoming a member of our organization. I look forward to putting this to the members shortly for further discussions and feedback.

Over the last 12 months the council have engaged two new contractors to assist members with the promotion of both horticulture and their businesses. Tempe McGowan is in charge of the monthly newsletter and the social media pages which has assisted in promoting the great works of AIH and its members.

Wayne Van Balen has taken the role of Registered Horticulturist Manager and his scope of works covers auditing the CPD points of members, assisting state conveners in setting up workshops and the promotion of our Registered Horticulturists and the CPD points system to local and state governments, corporates and suppliers. Wayne and Tempe's work has been fundamental in assisting the council in ensuring we promote our members to the industry.

I want to recognize the work our Treasurer Andrew Prowse has performed managing the finances last year, a job I know takes some time and dedication. His workload budgeting the recent conference and awards has been enormous.

Our recent conference in Perth this year was an outstanding success and I would like to acknowledge the work of Conference convener Neville Passmore who worked tirelessly over a 9 – 12-month period in putting together an extremely professional and informative conference. We had approx. 115 people attend the event and exposed them all to the great work of AIH and our many industry colleagues who presented on the day. Costsa and all involved on the day hosting our delegates are thanked for their hard work.

I also thank the hard work of the council who assisted Neville where possible. You all made the day a success. The awards night that followed up the conference was attended by just over 100 people. This year the AIH recognized the works of international professionals from South East Asia and in other various sectors of the our growing urbanscapes sector.

Again, a big thank you to all national council, past council and friend of AIH who assisted where they could to ensure we delivered a memorable awards night. 2020 will be our 60th Anniversary and will be held in Sydney alongside our conference. Our conference will follow on from the similar theme as this year. All of us on the committee look forward to starting the planning of these two events to follow on from the success of this year's events.

Thank you again for the assistance this year and I look forward to year ahead.

Obituaries

Past President Kim Morris and past Secretary Jeanette Penklis passed away this year. Both were on the National councilor for many years.

Acceptance of Minutes of the AIH AGM held at Mercure Gold Coast Resort – October 2018

Andrew Prowse and Wayne Van Balen

Reports and Presentations

National Treasurer, Andrew Prowse

The Institute remains in a stable and healthy financial position, in that income near on covers expenses and we have a reserve funds. This year saw a deficit of \$6,555 an increase on last year's deficit of \$1,612 (2017 was a deficit of \$13,750). It was anticipated that we would have a better outcome however a \$7,000 sponsorship that was due to arrive in early 2019 arrived in early July and almost \$10,000 of membership renewals did not arrive in until July. Total income for 2018/19 financial year was \$81,639 with cash reserves \$81,715 plus a term deposit of \$80,000.

Our financial position does however reflect a stagnant level of membership, that while we have a stream of new members coming through, we have a subsequent level of attrition of current members due to a number of factors such leaving the industry (economic reasons and/or retirement) and a perceived lack of value of membership. To look at addressing this we have made a decision to address this by employing part time contractors for professional assistance in attracting new members and providing a better level of service to current and future members in the areas of communications including getting industry information out to members and in continuing professional development. These 3 contractors are David Thompson for membership management, Tempe Macgowan for communications (commenced May 2019) and newsletter and former AIH President Wayne van Balen as CPD Manager including sponsorships (commenced June 2019). These positions had been held in previous years but had been vacant for the last few years.

We have also embarked on a review of the current structure, membership and activities by engaging a marketing firm Growth Creators whom will prepare a Growth Directions Report for us within the next few weeks. This will look at our industry position, membership make up, members services and our CPD activities. The 2019 Awards & Conference Weekend held in Perth was a very well attended event and brought in an income of \$36,546. Expenses are still being finalised. Many thanks to Neville Passmore for the bringing that event to a success and David Thompson in the coordinating the bookings for both our event and that of the associated conference held by Therapeutic Horticulture Australia.

The auditor's management report refers to payments not substantiated – these where several travel related receipts such as taxis and charges from airlines for carbon tax offsets. We have now an arrangement with Flight centre Corporate to help save on the complexity of booking travel and tracking and forwarding various airlines and accommodation emails. Other practices introduced include refining procedures regards membership invoicing and payments between our bookkeepers Notch Above and David Thompson and thanks to both companies for their coordination. We have also had a focus on a suite of sponsorships with Wayne van Balen to better coordinate that part of our income, especially looking at what smaller sponsors can come on board either with CPD events or the Awards night.

Our major sponsors remain Botanic Nurseries in NSW and Fitzpatrick's Insurance Brokers in Victoria and their valued assistance is appreciated.

At the AGM I will be passing the Treasures' role over to Andrew Price who has previously served in this position and had overseen the updating and shift of our system to the Xero accounting package with our bookkeepers.

Post Conference Report, Neville Passmore

The decision to go to Perth for conference 2019 was taken in October 2018. The plan was to combine with Therapy Horticulture Australia to run two conferences side by side and save time and effort with venue selection, share speakers and make for economies in terms of bus trips

and marketing. Timing of conferences to coincide with the wildflower season in Perth made additional attractions for visitors. The overarching goal of the AIH conference was expressed in the by-line “Horticulture and Humanity”. It was to demonstrate to horticulturists the vital roles that our profession can bring to the nation and for that matter the world as we stare down climate change, soil degradation, food and water security, as well as the sixth great extinction event.

One of the real triumphs of the day was in securing ABC Gardening Australia’s Gold Logie winning Costa Georgiadis as master of ceremonies. Costa brought enthusiasm, humour, gravitas and a keen horticultural ear to conference. He was a hit with the 25 horticultural students from the South Metropolitan TAFE.

Also, from Gardening Australia, Clarence Slokee was in town to receive an award at the AIH Awards Night. Clarence offered an ‘Acknowledgment to Country’ to conference with a standing “Whoop” to set the day off to a rousing start.

WA’s minister for Transport, Planning, Livable Neighborhoods and Metronet Rita Saffioti officially opened the conference with a detailed plan for extending public transport around Perth in combination with the creation of livable neighborhoods using Metronet stations as hubs for intense urban densification. Costa tellingly observed the fact we had the minister opening conference says that horticulturists are being heard.

The pattern for the rest of the day was set with the first of 5 keynote speakers which was followed up with breakout sessions to further explore the vital topics in greater depth with additional speakers adding flesh to the bone.

Graeme Sait looked at the Anthropocene Era when Man’s hand for the first time is a major driver of earth’s systems. The threats to humanity are many as are the opportunities for horticulturist to make a difference so this was a story with hope.

The 2020Vision project is within a few months of its first target date. Carole Fudge, a decade long member of the Industry Advisory Committee that determines the spending priorities of the Nursery Industry Pot levy funds showed how the 2020vision program had made a massive impact on Local Government in every corner of the country to promote the need for serious tree preservation and replanting.

Professor Peter Newman shared his vision of biophilia, Nature so close that we can smell it, admire it and include its greening influence in our daily lives. How to get a daily dose of biophilia was the title of his address which highlighted the work being done in Singapore and Perth to make our homes suburbs and cities not just livable but places we want to visit.

Professor Lyn Abbott is a soil scientist and her life’s work is now in the spotlight around the world as we turn the DNA microscope on the goings on under the surface of soil.

Bio stimulants are the fastest growing segment of plant nutrition in the world at the moment and we need to absorb and take on this new knowledge.

Food security was the topic of Graeme Sait's second address. Horticulturists play a pivotal role in food production and Australia has been challenged to be the food basket of Asia. We are also challenged to grow more nutritious food for all in a way that doesn't destroy soil carbon which is all about the integrity of all plant growing systems.

Professor Steven Hopper is one of the world's great botanists and his presentation about new insights into revegetation of 'Kaat' landscapes borrows deeply from Aboriginal knowledge of "country". The high country of South West WA is some of the most inhospitable territory not only for humans but even plants, yet it is home to a disproportionately large number of rare and endangered plant varieties. Insights gained from his study have been used to revegetate and rehabilitate ancient landscapes in South America that were previously doomed to fail.

Breakout sessions shed further horticultural light on subjects as diverse as "Practical tree root management in urban environments", "Canopy cover - what's happening in WA's local government areas", "City greening and connections to wildlife - Singapore's example", "Successful rooftop gardens and green walls in WA's climate", "Where is water coming from for green space in the future?", "A new twist on soil carbon - An answer for the Anthropocene", "Shaping the future of sustainable food production in WA - an example for the nation", "Tucker Bush and Bindi Bindi Dreaming - a new partnership linking traditional Aboriginal foods", "Linkages - a vital strategy to overcome biodiversity collapse", "Rescuing rare, recalcitrant and endangered plants for rehabilitating disturbed landscapes including mine sites" and "Horticulture on the Wild Side - Wetland filtering of hydrocarbon pollution project Oman".

These breakout sessions covered an enormous breath of subject matter and well run concurrently. It's fair to say that we managed to squeeze two days of conference into one as a result.

Feedback from conference delegates was overwhelmingly positive a number were complaining of 'brain fag' at the end of the proceedings. I am very grateful for speakers who gave permission to mount their presentations on the AIH website so both delegates and others can get a feel for the guts of the day with no pressure.

Confirmation of Election of Office Bearers

Current members of the National Executive are;

- President Michael Casey
- Vice-President Alan Burnell
- Treasurer Andrew Prowse
- Secretary Matt Mitchley

Current members of the National Council are;

- Patrick Regnault (NSW)
- Jackie Warburton (ACT)
- Neville Passmore (WA)
- Kris Pierce (NSW)

2019 is the election year for the positions of Vice-President and Treasurer and subsequently Alan Burnell and Andrew Prowse retired from these positions.

Nominations were called for the positions of Vice-President and Treasurer.

Only one nomination was received for either position thereby an election by member voting is not required and the following persons will be confirmed as Office Bearers:

- Vice President Andrew Prowse
- Treasurer Andrew Price

The position of President was called from the floor at the 2018 AGM and Michael Casey's acceptance of this position will be confirmed at the 2019 AGM along with the acceptance of Matt Mitchley as Secretary after the death of Kim Morris. 2020 will be the election year for President and Secretary.

National Councilors are a yearly appointment and three nominations were received:

- Patrick Regnault (NSW)
- Jackie Warburton (ACT)
- Kris Pierce (NSW)

These persons will be confirmed as Councilors.

Thank you to retiring members of the Council Alan Burnell and Neville Passmore.

Membership structure

Web and Membership Management Report 2018-2019 by David Thomson

Black Stripe provides digital and member engagement services for the Australian Institute of Horticulture. This encompasses web content management, customer records management and member services from prospecting through the member life cycle to retirement.

Black Stripe works with the National Council and Regional Convenors, the Registered Horticulturist manager, the Communications Manager and Notch Above to deliver a complete member experience that aims to make membership valuable and worthwhile. The AIH website www.aih.org.au is the Institute's primary real estate for showcasing the member experience. Rebuilt in 2018, the website has proven its worth in providing the connection between the face of the Institute and member management. Black Stripe manage loading of events and booking systems, media stories, member profile records across multiple systems, email newsletter distribution and the membership renewal process.

Black Stripe has produced new brochure designs, new certificate designs and redesigned the systems used to manage member records with much higher accuracy now in place as to the numbers and status of current versus lapsed members.

Memberships Report 2018-2019

Overall, AIH is bringing in new memberships and the level of interest in memberships has been sound. The level of renewal of paid memberships is around 85-90% which reflects the level of loyalty of goodwill for the Institute. However most of the growth is either free students (who have high turnover rates) or lower-priced memberships (Graduate and Associate) with some transition to retired members.

Highlights Of 2018-2019

- Members and guests have enjoyed amazing events, with unique showcase events held in Sydney, Northern NSW, WA, Queensland and the ACT. Topping it all off was the incredible WA conference experience.
- The membership experience has been strengthened at all levels and this is reflected in the ongoing loyalty of members to renew and participate in the life of the AIH.
- The Registered Horticulturist program is well-established and has been demonstrated to add value to the businesses of RH members with some excellent examples of advocacy with the MAIH RH post-nominals.
- The website has performed really well with an excellent ability to manage memberships, member content and showcase AIH content with style and connect with social media and the newsletters.
- The membership management has gone well interacting with Notch Above and the new process to invoice members.

Growing the membership levels has been a significant challenge with the following issues identified:

- High pricing points relative to other horticultural associations
- Significant entry barriers through joining fees, documentation required and the question of pro-rating memberships outside of the 1st July to 30th June renewal.
- Lack of clear value narrative around being a member, differentiation between membership levels and role of AIH in industry.

- Low level of differentiation between member and non-member offerings (eg event pricing, information availability, etc) and too many undifferentiated membership levels (currently 10 options).
- Inconsistent event coordination and cancellations with little benefit to members in pricing.
- Aging membership base and transition to retirement or other industry paths.
- Lack of clarity around CPD system and significant additional cost of reaching CPD targets.

Top 10 Recommendations*

1. Remove joining fee
2. Streamline membership levels to 3 options plus Corporate Membership
3. Provide pay-by-month direct debit option and list prices by month
4. Focus communications on professional horticulturist identity and horticulture as the future solution
5. Run fewer but more industry-targeted events for members first
6. Replace Instagram with LinkedIn
7. Establish members-only digital group
8. Establish paid benefits campaign with marketing
9. Establish formal mentoring initiative
10. Only list AIH events and news or charge for listing external content eg events, news or jobs.

*Recommendations are prior to strategy by Growth Creators which may influence future priorities.

Special Resolutions

No special resolutions were lodged with the Secretary prior to the AGM.

Closure

The 2019 Annual General Meeting closed at 4:48pm AEST.




Matt Mitchley MAIH - AIH Secretary
Registered Horticulturist RH: 0026

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P: (02) 8001 6198 Direct: 0404 975 235
PO Box 2238 Toowong QLD 4066 secretary@aih.org.au www.aih.org.au

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