

Minutes of the 2021 RACI Annual General Meeting

Held at 13.00, 1st December 2021 Via Zoom due to Covid-19 Restrictions

Present – Voting members

Steven Bottle [Chair], Pall Thordarson, Lidia Matesic, Danielle Skropeta, Melanie MacGregor, Sarah Cresswell, Yvonne Mah, Jess Gledhill, John Leeder, Ashraf Ghanem, Nigel Lengkeek, Russell Dempster, Joanne Blanchfield, Tayla Chick, Susan Northfield, Tamsin Collins, James Chapman, Nishar Hameed, Renate Griffith, Maree Stuart, David Springer, Cynthia Cliff, Greg Ewing, Erica Smith, Chuan Zhao, Brian Krieger, Gary Bowman, Louis Rendina, Yun Liu, Sally-Ann Poulsen, Tak W. Kee, Anthony Bell, Alex Cheung, Anita D'Angelo, Alex Duan, Ferdie Ferrante, Mary Fletcher, Becky Fuller, Justin Peters, Rajesh Ramanathan, Elodie Rousset, Binayak Roy, Siegbert Schmid, Bradley Scott, Rizki Syafari, Richard Thwaites, Daniel Turner, Tony Tyler, Angelica Vecchio-Sadus, Roger Stapleford

Apologies

Debra Bernhardt, Killugudi Swaminatha Iyer, Robyn Pillans

1. Welcome

The President acknowledges the traditional owners of the land, welcomed all present and thanked them for attending the RACI 2021 AGM. Acknowledging that the meeting was virtual due to the impact of Covid and noting the medium had the advantage of allowing more people to attend.

2. Quorum

50 full voting members present, meeting quorate.

3. Minutes of past meetings

3.1 Confirmation of Minutes of AGM

Motion

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting

Moved S. Bottle **Seconded** P. Thordarson

Carried without dissent

3.2 Business arising

No business arising

4. Ordinary Business

4.1 Board President's Report

Despite the effect of the Covid19 pandemic 2021 has been a very busy year for the RACI.

On the international scene, we have been involved with Pacificchem particularly around the unhappiness of members with the poor value for money of the virtual pricing of a hybrid conference. The Conference has since moved to a fully virtual event mitigating these concerns.

We have also been involved in the creation and launch of the Federation of Commonwealth Chemical Societies [ComChem] through V. Gardiner and R Stapleford, the past president and CEO of the RACI.

From a national perspective Covid19 prevented the majority of physical events from occurring however, utilising the virtual space, the same number of events had still been presented although with fewer participants and a much lower income. QLD was fortunate enough to run two well attended physical student events one in Townsville and a recent one in the Gold Coast.

It is important that we begin to run physical events as soon as we are able as we need their revenue-generating ability.

On the membership side, we are the largest and oldest scientific professional society but our numbers are still slowly dwindling and we need to turn this around. 50% plus of our members have been with us for 20+ years however, although we are attracting many young members, we are failing to keep many of them. 28% of our members are female and we need to increase this.

As a professional membership organisation, the RACI had to be seen to uphold our professional standards and, to assist members with this, the Code of Conduct had been modernised and all members were advised to avail themselves of the new document on the website.

The President proposed a motion to thank the outgoing Board members, Maree Stuart, Greg Ewing, Renate Griffith, Dave Springer and Cynthia Cliff for their great contribution over the years. This was seconded by P. Thordarson.

The president also proposed a vote of thanks to the RACI staff whose hard work in very trying lock-down conditions helped keep the RACI going and the Branches and Divisions to run events and provide benefits to members.

In closing the President stated that he hoped and believed 2022 would be a better year for the organisation.

4.2 Board Composition

4.2.1 Appointed Board members

Two Appointed Board Members have been retained to cover missing skill sets on the Board.

Jess Gledhill

John Leeder

4.2.2 Newly elected members

The meeting received and recorded the names of the new members of the Board elected for the ensuing term of office

General Secretary

Danielle Skropeta

Board Member

Yvonne Mah

Board Member

Sarah Cresswell

4.2.3 Board for 2021-2

President	Steve Bottle
President Elect	Pall Thordarson
Treasurer	Lidia Matesic
General Secretary	Danielle Skropeta
Board Member	Sarah Cresswell
Board Member	Yvonne Mah
Board Member	Melanie MacGregor
Appointed Board Member	Jess Gledhill
Appointed Board Member	John Leeder

4.2.4 Outgoing Board Members

General Secretary	Renate Griffith
Board Member	Cynthia Cliff
Board Member	David Springer
Appointed Board Member	Maree Stuart
Appointed Board Member	Greg Ewing

The president again thanked the outgoing members for their contributions over the years.

4.3 Financial Report

A comparison of the income and expenditure figures was shared by the Treasurer to illustrate the effect the Covid epidemic had on the finances over the past 2 years. Income dropped \$470K over the 2 years while expenditure dropped by \$530K. A surplus of \$71K was still achieved in 2021 but this was purely because of government support through the Job Keeper program that contributed \$320K. Without this support, the RACI would have run at a deficit of \$250K.

Membership income and employment expenses were similar over the 2 years however due to the lower-income and expenditure figures in 2021 the pie graphs showed a very large increase in the % of the total income and expenditure. The graphs also showed how the lack of activity in the events and schools outreach sectors had decreased their % contributions to the totals in 2021.

A graphical overview of the operating income performance of the RACI over the last 11 years was presented. The first 5 years had been very poor, but in the last 6 years, the organisation had performed much better with a minor deficit in 1 of the years and a surplus in the other 5.

A similar graphical overview was given for the cost to the RACI of the Chemistry in Australia magazine to illustrate one of the steps taken to improve the overall operational finances. Over this period the cost of the magazine to the RACI dropped from \$160K to 18K. Actions taken such as the reduction in the number of editions and charging for delivery contributed to this movement.

The final information shared was an overview of the membership numbers over the past 11 years. These had fallen dramatically in the first 6 years of this period but had stabilised at around 4100 over the next 5 years but fallen by 200 in 2021 – possibly Covid related.

The treasurer highlighted the main challenges and opportunities facing the RACI in 2022:

- Covid-19 risks
- Member attraction and retention
- Event Income
- Maintaining performance to budget.

Motion

The meeting receives and adopts the 2020-21 financial report.

Moved S Bottle **Seconded** P. Thordarson

Carried without dissent

4.4 2021 - 22 Branch Presidents

ACT	Ashraf Ghanem
NSW	Nigel Lengkeek
NT	Vinuthaa Murthy
Queensland	Joanne Blanchfield
SA	Robyn Pillans
Tasmania	Tayla Chick [Temp]
Victoria	Susan Northfield
WA	Tasmin Collins

4.5 2021 - 22 Division Chairs

Analytical and Environmental	James Chapman
Carbon	Nishar Hameed
Medicinal Chemistry & Chemical Biology	Sally-Ann Poulsen
Chemical Education	Erica Smith
Electrochemistry	Chuan Zhao
Industrial Chemistry	Gary Bowman
Inorganic Chemistry	Lou Rendina
Materials	Yun Liu
Organic Chemistry	David Lupton
Physical Chemistry	Tak Kee
Polymer	Iyer Swaminatha
Radiochemistry	Nigel Lengkeek
HS&E - Health Safety and Environmental	Brian Krieger

4.6 Appointment of 2021-22 Auditors

The Treasurer recommended the RACI retain the services of Stannards and Associates as the auditors for the 2021/2 financial year

Motion

Retain Stannards and Associates Pty Ltd. as Auditor for the financial year ended 30 June 2022.

Moved S Bottle **Seconded** Lidia Matesic

Carried without dissent

5. Other Business

A congress update was given by Joanne Blanchfield.

Registrations

136 registrations (83 members, 49 student members, and 4 non-members), which is great!
72 dinner tickets purchased

Invitations

65 Keynote/Invited invitations sent with 75% accepted, 3% declined and some others are yet to reply and we are chasing them up. Very pleased with the response. Most – not all – invitations have gone to Australians. However, a number of international invitations have been accepted as well. Very pleased with the acceptance rate.

Some more names were received in the last 2 days and invitations are being sent out.

Program

A skeleton program is available on the web, and the webpage is continually being updated. There are also likely to be some additional social events and industry presentations on non-research matters in the exhibition hall.

Finances

Financially we have significant expenses in December however our budget is in a good place and we will be able to cover these.

Sponsorship/Exhibition

Sponsorship is heading in the right direction (\$85,000), with several organisations expecting to make commitments in early 2022.

Contingency for COVID

If the Congress cannot run in July this will be problematic. We would need to postpone as we would be unable to recover costs incurred so far through an online-only conference and in addition the high registration costs could not be justified. A hybrid option has been ruled out as it is too expensive due to excessive AV costs resulting from multiple streams. There will be an option for international keynote speakers to present online if necessary.

6. AGM Close

The meeting closed at 13:40.

Prof Steve Bottle
President