

The Queenstown Molecular Biology Meeting Society Incorporated

Minutes of a Special General Meeting December 2022

5 December 2022, 10.30am, Robb Lecture Theatre 501-B09, Grafton Campus, University of Auckland, and via Zoom connection.

Attending (in person): Justin O'Sullivan, Cherie Blenkiron, Andrew Shelling, Nikki Morland, Rachel Purcell, Alan Davidson, Austen Ganley, Martin Kennedy, Kate Lee .

Attending (via Zoom): Julian Eaton-Rye, Dick Bellamy, Dave Gratten, Amy Osborne, Vanessa Morris, Julia Horsfield, Arielle Sulit, Billy Sheppard, Frank Bloomfield, Bjorn Oback, Peter Mace, Greg Cook, Anita Dunbier, Christoph Goebel, Jeanne Jacobs, Fiona McDonald, Shaun Lott (all via Zoom).

Apologies: Peter Shepherd, Jane Allison, Dave Goldstone, John Taylor

1. Introduction:

- Justin O'Sullivan chaired the meeting as Peter was not in attendance, and opened with a karakia
- He then outlined the reasons for the SGM, which included the need for a new QMB Society constitution, the fact that the rules around charities are changing and we need to adapt, and that we needed to develop and maintain a proper membership list, and pay heed to committee process as outlined in the constitution.

2. Chair's Report on QRW 2022

Peter Shepherd provided a brief emailed report on QRW 2022, as follows:

The rescheduled 2021 QRW events were able to proceed in the same general format in 2022. A total of 1065 attendees registered for the various meetings and most were at capacity. The shorter format and the large numbers created a lot of pressure on space as the venue is not ideal for such numbers. Feedback was generally very good and people appreciated the constraints put on us by COVID although one person at the AGM did say the meeting was stale but gave no specific examples. The trades were generally happy but COVID induced constraints on the way we used space meant the trades did not get as much exposure as in normal years and some commented on this.

Finances – One concern had been that we might have large numbers requesting refunds. However, very few people took the option of a refund and where people were unable to attend most took the option of transferring their registration to someone else. Costs were significantly higher than originally predicted due to inflationary pressures but the operating account is on track to break even for the event. However, we were eligible for the government conference support scheme and that brought in \$90K that we hadn't originally anticipated. Thus the societies balance will be in the region of \$250K after current expenses are paid. This is about \$100K more than we would normally have in reserve and puts the society in a good position to withstand the uncertainties and costs escalations that are a feature

3. Proposed update to the Constitution of the QMB Society Inc

- It was pointed out (Justin) that we need to add our financial year as 1 July – 30 June the following year, as not in draft constitution that was circulated.
- Dave Gratten expressed concern at the relatively short terms, and the danger of losing operational knowledge; and also the idea of ensuring overlapping terms for officers. However due to an error it had not been clear that the intention was for up to two terms of two years per term, a period which Dave felt was reasonable. Constitution wording to correct the maximum for the Chair from two years to two terms.
- Frank Bloomfield commented that with two year terms, it would be preferred to have roughly half the committee turnover after two years, to ensure overlap of expertise.
- Dick Bellamy suggested that the constitution should include meeting objectives, including the intent for the meeting to be an international-calibre meeting that allows collaboration with Australian colleagues, rather than just a regional society. Justin pointed out that QMB Society is NOT the meeting. Soc runs QMB and convenes QRW. Austen Ganley pointed out that the constitution does contain purposes, which could be amended by addition of “international” to the first purpose to achieve this.
- Andrew Shelling asked whether the quorum was about right? Justin indicated that one goal is to increase membership and engagement, and starting with a quorum of 10 is one way of doing this. Andrew commented that AGMs and other meeting would need to be signalled well in advance.
- David also asked about definitions of society roles – these could be tightened up or further developed. He also wondered whether the sponsors/trades role might be a role for QRW more widely. Discussion ensued on this point. Rachel Purcell commented that we don't want too much separation of QMB functions, and a move to a more federated society would mean it was a much bigger job and would need some careful thought. It was suggested this would be something to consider over the longer term.
- Dick commented that the incoming committee may need legal advice as to where liability lies in case wheels come off at some stage! With ~\$250K in bank it is now a large operation, and this should be considered.
- Kate asked whether roles for QRW form part of a QMB subcommittee – yes, but needs to report back to QMB Society.
- Dick also asked about lodging statements with Internal Affairs. This has been done by Julian since 2005, but Dick suggested it may be wise to have accountant input.
- Julia Horsfield asked if we wanted to embody the idea of a one-week meeting in the constitution? Decide this was not necessary in a constitution - reduces flexibility.

Vote to accept draft constitution:

- Justin moved, Rachel seconded. Overwhelming majority voted yes.
- A formal thanks was offered from Andrew to those who put the new constitution together, mainly Rachel and Austen.

Election of QMB Society Committee Members:

- Chair QMB: Peter stepped down. Sole nominee was Rachel. Cherie Blenkiron moved, Andrew seconded.
- Secretary: Martin stepping down. Sole nominee was Austen. None from floor. Martin Kennedy moved, Andrew seconded.

- Treasurer: No nominations, although Julian Eaton-Rye indicated he was willing to continue for a year, provided we look for a replacement after that period. Justin moved, Martin seconded.
- Trades/Sponsors liaison: Sole nominee was Billy Sheppard. Justin moved, Andrew seconded.
- QRW convenor: Justin and Peter were nominated jointly, but unfortunately Peter has withdrawn. Justin's appointment was moved Dick and seconded by Nikki Morland. Justin will take this on. Justin regrets Peter's decision although Peter indicated he will help him out. Greg Cook asked if he needs a deputy for this role? Justin indicated would be happy to work with a deputy or co-chair for this. Greg made the comment satellite convenors also do a lot of the heavy lifting. A call was made for deputy nominations, although there was no response at this time. It was agreed to leave a decision about a deputy to the incumbent convenor. It was felt a Co-chair model may be important going forward.
- Awards Officer: Sole nominee was Amy Osborne. Justin moved, Rachel seconded.
- Three additional committee members: Nominees were Bjorn Oback, Vanessa Morris, Christoph Goebel, and no further nominations from floor. Justin moved to accept all, seconded by Peter Mace.

Kaiārahi for the QMB Society Committee

- Justin spoke to this point. QMB Society has not been seen as a culturally safe organisation, so we have much work to do on this. General assent from those present.
- Greg said QMB Society might be able to work with the MWC, who have an interim Kaiārahi at present, seeking a permanent one and they have done a lot of leg work. May be able to help with the process for the QMB Society.
- Committee needs to attend to this ASAP and Greg would be a good contact person.
- We would expect to pay for this role, and the MWC has quite a bit of paperwork around this which may be helpful.
- Cherie asked if should be in constitution. The answer was thought to be yes, but probably as an amendment later on once the details are sorted out.

2023 Meeting, satellites and convenors

- Hotel is booked for a meetings from August 27th to September 1st, 2023.
- Satellite suggestions:
 - High Value Food Science (with links to Māori businesses)
 - Microbiome
 - Metabolic diseases
 - Lymphatic biology
 - Neuroendocrinology
 - Genomics symposium
- Justin spoke to this. Need at least 50 participants for any satellite in order to break even. He agreed we need a more formal process, in future, to call for meeting suggestions and convenors
- However, the need to plan for 2023 is urgent and these should be decided ASAP. QMB Society can afford to support each to about \$10-15K per meeting. That said, economy international flights are hugely expensive. For time being mostly expect NZ speakers and delegates, with some Australian involvement
- Justin proposed that list above of 6, no objections so accepted these.

- Dave indicated the Australian Neuroendocrinology group to which he belongs is keen to come again (came ~3 years ago). Would be keen to keep in the mix.
- Peter Mace commented that while he understands the need for speed, a longer lead in time for planning satellites should be ensured for future meetings. This is a good idea for the Committee to put in place going forward.
- Cherie urged consideration of supporting virtual format as well as onsite.
- Alan Davidson asked if we need evidence in advance for attendance by 50 people minimum?
- Martin commented that the amount of plant content in the proposed line-up seemed slim. It was pointed out that this could be redressed in the Genomics Satellite and also in the main QMB meeting.
- We also need a Convenor and theme for QMB! Should be topical. Dick suggested mRNA delivery/ vesicles/ etc

Other business:

Proposal to consider role of QMB Society in relation to QRW

- Dave spoke to this. MedSci gave up ability to profit and also absolved of risk by not taking this on, as QMB did. So he wonders if there should be an overarching society that sits above all QMB/QRW meetings? Discussion of such a federated society model needs to be on future agendas.

Merck Sponsorship

- Kelly Woods of Merck is seeking to sponsor the meeting. Martin to pass email on to Billy and Justin.

Reassess/update the criteria for the Illumina and Thermo Fisher Awards

- Rachel Purcell spoke to this. The Awards should not just be based on publications as this often biases against women. A more holistic assessment of impact, including social engagement, teaching etc should be developed and applied. Amy supported this and argued strongly for such an assessment in conjunction with research excellence. Andrew suggested that assessment “relative to opportunity” is also important to be fair.
- Jeanne Jacobs urged caution around including teaching as a criterion, as it will bias against those in CRIs and other non-teaching organisations. But in principle agreed with the general thrust of this view.
- Rachel pointed out that self-nomination has been shown to inhibit diversity in applicants.
- Amy suggested we look back over awardees when considering changing guidelines (Austen and Martin should have records for most years).
- The aim of any changes should be to increase equity, and needs to be less work for everyone, not more!
- Cherie asked if it could be a two-step process with nomination and full invitation? Justin suggested perhaps this could work, but should allow for both self-nomination and nomination by another person.
- Quite a lot more discussion on this point!!! Should there be two awards? Jeanne suggested that members strongly push for nominations as males tend to do this more readily than females. Austen pointed out he has in the past pushed hard to seek nominations each year, emailing all HODs and institutions etc.
- Amy will have a go at modifying Award terms. Will need very active promotion.
- Martin urged Amy to keep sponsors in the loop so they are appropriately informed and valued.

- Kate Lee suggested we do need to keep a record of who was nominated and awarded going forward.

Vote of thanks for Peter Shephard's efforts:

Martin moved a vote of thanks to Peter Shepherd for his huge efforts on behalf of QMB over ~17 years, growing this from a single 3-day meeting, into a well-coordinated energetic suite of meetings that has had a massive impact on creating networks and collegiality across the New Zealand science landscape, and providing young investigators with an exciting and high quality research forum close to home. QRW now gives a home and added vibrancy to the NZ science scene, and has done this over a very long period of time, in the process growing its own international reputation and brand. QMB Society thank Peter for the massive efforts he has had on QMB and QRW over such a prolonged period.

- David and Dick both reiterated this support
- Justin indicated he had asked Peter about a symposium in honour of his efforts, but that Peter had declined this for the meantime.
- Dick suggested QMB Society write to Peter thanking him for contributions.
- Nikki indicated we should endeavour to keep Fashionomics as part of the meeting!

The meeting closed ~12.15 pm.