



GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF NSW INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Minutes

Tuesday, 29 August 2023 at 6.00pm
Hive Orange, 25-27 McNamara Lane, Orange

President Peter Wilson opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting at 6.06pm.

PRESENT: Abigail Addo-Danso, Sarah Baker, Helen Burns, Michael Duncan, Michael Evans, Nathan Ferguson, Jeff McCormick, Michael McDonald, Warren McDonald, Jonathan McLachlan, Margaret Novak, George Truman, Wal Whalley, Peter Wilson, Tim Wright (6.12pm), Ross Yelland, Adrian Keith, Neil Griffiths, Greg Miller (all via Zoom) and John Coughlan, Lester McCormick, Stuart Tait, Keith Garlick, David Harbison, Frank McRae, Janelle Witschi

APOLOGIES: John Ive, Greg Stuart

Motion: To accept the apologies.

Moved: Nathan Ferguson

Seconded: Frank McRae..... Carried

PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Motion: It was moved to accept the previous minutes as being true and accurate.

Moved: George Truman

Seconded: Mick Duncan..... Carried

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: (report attached)

President Peter Wilson read out his report.

Motion: It was moved that the President's report be accepted.

Moved: Peter Wilson

Seconded: Helen Burns..... Carried

TREASURER'S REPORT:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Westpac cheque account | \$3,313.76 (as at 31 May 2023) |
| Westpac conference cheque account: | \$7,764.58 (as at 31 May 2023) |
| Westpac debit card account: | \$1,158.82 (as at 31 May 2023) |
| Westpac seminar cheque account | \$80,112.98 (as at 31 May 2023) |
| Westpac Term Deposit | <u>\$290,000.00</u> (as at 31 May 2023) |
| Balance | \$382,350.14 (as at 31 May 2023) |

The Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2023 is attached.

Treasurer Frank McRae reported that it was not a great income year - interest of \$5,104.47 and member subscriptions of \$11,150 were main income and total income was \$16,414.47. There was a refund for deposit of the conference bus hire of \$637.50.

Expenditure total was \$20,670.17. The main expenses over \$1,000 were: insurance \$1,042.55; printing & stationery & office supplies \$1,044.25; and secretarial fees \$12,307. Smaller amounts of sponsorship and subscription expenses. A major expenditure for the year was the research project Cadia Community Partnership Program Milestone 3 payment which was \$13,415.60. Total expenditure was \$34,085.77 which gave us a deficit for the year of \$17,033.78.

The Society is in a strong financial position when you look at our assets with money in the bank currently.

Motion: That the Treasurer's report be accepted.

Moved: Frank McRae

Seconded: Stuart Tait..... Carried

Future of the Grassland Society of NSW Incorporated - Vote on Option 1 or Option 2:

- 1. A complete modernisation/overhaul of the organisation be undertaken including but not limited to renaming and restructuring with the view to improving relevance. As a member organisation this will involve Management Committee time and engagement to ensure the long-term viability of GSNSW. The general support of all members is essential. GSNSW has resources available to achieve this and will engage paid staff.*
- 2. Winding-up (dissolution of GSNSW) as per the current Constitution rules. The allocation of the existing resources as per the Constitution and NSW Associations Act.*

President Peter Wilson, before opening up for discussion, asked for confirmation of proxy votes received and any not recorded.

PROXY

VOTES

RECEIVED: Desmond John Green, William Robert Simson, Helen Willett, Peter McAllister, Edwin Charles Wolfe, Brian Gwyn Elliott proxies to Peter Wilson; Kevin Rattigan proxy to Nathan Ferguson; Jennifer Merciaro Elizabeth Anderson, Anthony Wesley Ward, Keith Douglas, Herbert Charles Smith, Benjamin Romeo proxies to Keith Garlick; Suzanne Boschma, John Frederick Ayres; Neil Robert Nelson, Elizabeth Luke, James Murray Scott proxies to Lester McCormick; Lewis Phillip Kahn, Stephen Charles Laver, Peter Doyle, Bernard McRae, Donald Capel proxies to Frank McRae; Brian Fisher proxy to David Harbison; Frank Bell proxy to Mick Duncan

President Pete Wilson importantly feels we have followed our due diligence required of where we are at with the Society and the vote we are about to embark on this evening. After much consultation from a State Executive Committee level, it has come to this with a lack of new members and people wishing to step up to the Society at a State Executive level given the hours that are required and the fact that he has stated in his report, most of us are doing it at the expense of our professional employers or if working for ourselves, so there is a strong commitment to time there and the time has come to look at the overall relevance of the Society.

Overall, we have handed out correspondence which has been sent to all financial members and most people, hopefully, have had a follow-up. There are a few people that some of us left messages for, did not get back to and vice versa, but we have all had members of the State Committee reach out to as many people as we could, am not saying that we covered everyone but we certainly have tried given our individual time commitments and restraints available. Certainly, there have been some candid discussions from many of the phone calls from our State Committee

The State Management Committee members present summarised that of the members they were able to contact, the consensus was that the Society was a very valuable conduit for information and should exist into the future but unfortunately did not have the time to put in to help us develop it.

Mick Duncan advised when he got the news of an option to vote to kill the Society off, he has given the matter severe thought and spoken to a few people about it. The Society kicked off in 1985 and it has done a tremendous job over that period of time with huge support from the Department of Agriculture and that is a very important point because over the years with people like Malcolm Campbell, Drew Wright and people like that it was invaluable but that is no longer part of the deal and whether we like it or not, the Department of Agriculture is not in a position to provide the same support as it used to. He takes the view that it has been going for a long while and has been very

highly regarded for a long while but unfortunately it no longer has the sort of executive support that it did have and relied heavily upon. He thinks it may be premature and abrupt to end straight away as there would be some merit in suggesting a 12 month period for the committee to come up with innovative ideas to revitalise the Society which he hopes will be what happens. If we fail to get a President, an Editor, a Treasurer and a Secretary then we do not go anywhere. He would like to amend a motion to give the committee 12 months to come up with a revitalisation program.

President Peter Wilson thanked Mick Duncan for his comments and probably Option 1 summarises what Mick has stated in terms of a complete modernisation and overhaul of the Society.

Tim Wright thanked all those past and present for putting all the work in and should know that we are all very grateful. He thinks in similar terms to Mick Duncan that more time is needed because the Society is not in dire financial straits and he thinks there is so much relevance and so much need for that independent advice. How it is disseminated these days is nothing like it was even 10 years ago.

As for young members, he does not think young people want to be members of anything, they just want to get the information and you need to think about how they value facts of getting information that is not MLA. MLA offers stuff from Rockhampton to Geraldton and for people to search through that – no one does. Sure, there are webinars and seminars but that takes a bit of ploughing through too. We do offer precise, and very relevant and very local information in the areas that we operate and he thinks that a 12 month period is very important to consider things.

He is not proposing anything in what he has got to say except he does not what to see Peter Wilson, David Harbison and Janelle feeling you have to form an executive just to go through with this all again. Maybe do we need a working committee or something that does not have that pressure to generate a newsletter but just to generate communications as needed because it is time to rethink how things have to operate and because the Society is not in dire financial straits, maybe a paid executive on part-time basis is needed to take all that pressure off. He has noted that all the feedback – yes stick around but we can't help – people see the Society like they used to see NSW DPI that it is always going to be there, always going to have advice and we don't have to worry about putting a lot of effort in as it will always be there and you have outlined the fact that it won't be unless things change. It reflects as a general interpretation of what is happening behind the scenes of all these organisations that offer honest and independent advice and there is very few of them. The younger generation are important but working out how to dig into that is a tough one.

President Peter Wilson thanked Tim Wright for his words of wisdom from Eugowra.

Michael McDonald raised that he supports the option of looking at modernisation of the Society and he mentioned some of these issues at the last meeting of the committee. To him, this is very critical work for farmers on the ground and he cannot remember who spoke in the boardroom about the future challenges and the need to rework the direction of the Society, but he agrees with those points.

He agrees with what Mick Duncan has proposed and his view would be that modernisation really would require at least a small group out of tonight being able to put up their hand and say we will work at this, we do have some money in the kitty and we need to utilise that for advancing the interests of the Society currently and in that modernisation process and thinks maybe 12 months is a bit short to see whether the work and that process can actually deliver a rejuvenated Society with a whole range of ways of communicating with members but also members being actively engaged but certainly in a period of 2 to 3 years, if that energy was directed through looking at the structure of the Society and the strategic plan, how we communicate with members, what vehicles of connecting members with important information and there are ways in which we could open the door for interest by other people.

He thinks it is fantastic that Abigail and Jonathan are here tonight and people have an interest in pastures as he spent time in his pasture today and thought we have gone from sloshing around in gumboots to having dry hard ground in a period of 6 months and how as a farmer can he continue to generate the sort of pastures he wants to be able to earn money from his farm and he needs

somewhere that is really practical and on the ground and give good advice and not an organisation who has other interests.

Certainly happy to put up his hand to put in some energy and time into the future and his interest would be whether there are others here tonight who would be similarly interested in doing that and, if so, it would be helpful to know because if he is the last person standing and nobody else is wanting to put up their hand, we are no further ahead.

David Harbison advised that he has nominated for committee member and if Option 1 gets a green light, he will continue contributing as best he can. However, he spent a few years in the Chair trying to encourage younger folk into the Society and spent 8 years and can see Sarah Baker and Stuart Tait and that was his success in getting the younger generation into the Society. He feels and he can accept the 12 months and whoever wishes to, should Option 1 get up, that we are delaying the inevitable and that we will be here again in 12 months' time. That is his personal thoughts because we are looking for volunteers, we are looking for contributions even at a committee level and whether we can get a committee to run with Option 1, if it gets up. It is very disappointing to one who has contributed a lot and on the screen are fellows who have committed far more than him to the Society and the pasture industry. We are seeing the signs of time and it is important to recognise that whilst he is thoroughly encouraged that Abigail and Jonathan are there (youngest faces we have seen in a long while), it is, unfortunately, going to rely on a lot more than a couple of young faces to keep the Society alive.

Lester McCormick advised he has also put his hand up to stay on the committee.

President Peter Wilson thanked all for their comments.

The voting opened and 49 votes in total were cast (including the proxies received):

Option 1: The following 37 members voted for Option 1: Michael Evans; Michael McDonald; George Truman; Abigail Addo-Danso; Wal Whalley; Marg Novak; Jonathan McLachlan; Mick Duncan; Neil Griffiths; Warren McDonald; Sarah Baker; Lester McCormick; John Coughlan; Adrian Keith; Greg Miller; Tim Wright; Desmond John Green (proxy); William Robert Simson (proxy); Helen Willett (proxy); Peter McAllister (proxy); Edwin Charles Wolfe (Ted) (proxy); Brian Gwyn Elliott (proxy); Kevin Rattigan (proxy); Jennifer Merciera Elizabeth Anderson (proxy); Anthony Wesley Ward (proxy); Keith Douglas (proxy); Herbert Charles Smith (proxy); Benjamin Romeo (proxy); Suzanne Boschma (proxy); John Frederick Ayres (proxy); Neil Robert Nelson (proxy); Elizabeth Luke (proxy); James Murray Scott (proxy); Lewis Phillip Kahn (proxy); Stephen Charles Laver (proxy); Peter Doyle (proxy); Frank Bell (proxy).

Option 2: The following 12 members voted for Option 2: Helen Burns; Jeff McCormick; Nathan Ferguson; Keith Garlick; Frank McRae; Stuart Tait; David Harbison; Peter Wilson; Ross Yelland; Brian Fisher (proxy); Bernard McRae (proxy); Donald Capel (proxy).

President Peter Wilson reported that option 1 has the majority and as such, we now elect the committee.

Election of Committee:

All positions were declared vacant and Secretary Janelle Witschi, as Public Officer, was asked to chair the elections for 2023/2024.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| President: | No nomination was received in writing Lester McCormick was nominated from the floor to fill the position of President Moved: Frank McRae Seconded: Mick Duncan |
| Vice President: | No nomination was received in writing Michael McDonald was nominated from the floor to fill the position of Vice President Moved: Stuart Tait Seconded: David Harbison |

Treasurer: Frank McRae
Secretary: Janelle Witschi
Past President: Vacant
Committee: Sarah Baker
David Harbison
Jeff McCormick
George Truman
Jonathan McLachlan nominated from the floor as a committee member
Moved: Michael McDonald
Seconded: George Truman
Keith Garlick nominated from the floor as committee a member
Moved: David Harbison
Seconded: Frank McRae

David Harbison passed on our sincere thanks to Peter Wilson for steering the ship for the last couple of the years. It has been a bumpy couple of years and the challenges are there in front of us and he will try and continue to contribute but is encouraged by the enthusiasm for the next 12 months. Also share thanks to Helen Burns, Nathan Ferguson, Stuart Tait and Greg Miller who have contributed to the committee and are stepping down.

The meeting was handed over to newly elected President Lester McCormick who welcomed our new members and thank you to continuing members and the support we have gotten for the committee going forward.

BRANCH REPORTS:

None were tabled.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Secretary Janelle Witschi advised this will be her last Annual General Meeting and is only staying on until someone is able to take over (sooner rather than later). Thank you all for the past 15 years and wishes everyone all the best going forward.

Stuart Tait wished to pass a vote of thanks for Janelle's service to the Society and 15 years is a big commitment.

Send a nomination for vacant committee member position for to Adrian Keith.

The President thanked everyone and closed the meeting.

MEETING CLOSED: 7.20pm

Minute taker: Secretary Janelle Witschi

Signed:

Date:

Signed:
President Lester McCormick