

APPS: stepping into the future – how far can we go?

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Abstract. The history of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society (APPS) dates back to 1969 and the APPS has grown considerably in stature since its inception. Key Society functions are to stage a biennial conference, produce a well known journal increasingly recognised on a world stage and to serve its members in a variety of ways. The retiring Executive recognised several areas where Society functions could be strengthened, including strategic planning, financial arrangements and instigation of sub-committees. Changes have been made in these areas. Opportunities to further improve the way the Society operates remain, including governance and long-term planning. The APPS has achieved a great deal since its formation nearly 40 years ago.

Introduction

Pathogens have been affecting habitats of various descriptions through the history of civilisation and will no doubt continue to affect agricultural and horticultural production and natural ecosystems well into the future. Diseases have influenced ethnic movements and late blight of potatoes in Ireland was no exception – causing starvation in the 1840s that led to the migration of Irish families around the world. This paper describes some of the early developments in plant pathology in Australia, the origins of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society (APPS), and recent Society developments. The question is ‘where are we headed next?’ It is always wise to consider the past before planning for the future.

The past

Diseases – a brief overview

Diseases have probably been affecting Australian crops since the first Europeans stepped foot on land at Botany Bay in 1788; plants and seeds in their cargo that initiated pioneer crops were most likely infested. If only strict quarantine protocols had been in force from the beginning! In the second half of the 19th century, crops were plagued with diseases such as Cereal stem rust, Take-all of wheat and Sugarcane gumming disease, to name just a few. In the 1870s, crop disease names were loosely applied. Terms such as ‘rust’ were used for disease symptoms in sugarcane in an attempt to explain poor crop growth. A lack of disease knowledge often made these descriptions erroneous at best.

The discipline of plant pathology arose to meet these challenges, and pathologists such as Daniel McAlpine, David North, Nathan Cobb and others were at the forefront of investigating disease controls in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There was much to research and the work of several of these pathologists has stood the test of time in their accuracy

of symptom description, the detail of their observations and in their development of suitable control measures.

Meetings of plant pathologists

The first recorded meetings of plant pathologists were in the 1890s, with conferences on wheat rust organised in Melbourne (1890), Sydney (1891), Adelaide (1892), Brisbane (1894) and again in Melbourne (1896) (Murray 1983). Other meetings were held over the years, but it was not until 1948 that the Australian Agricultural Council requested CSIR (later CSIRO) to organise a national plant diseases conference in Melbourne (Purss 1994).

The 1948 meeting was followed by meetings in Richmond, New South Wales (1955), Adelaide (1961), Toowoomba (1966) and Hobart (1971) (Purss 1994). National plant pathology meetings to discuss observations, results and control measures, plus a written record for distribution to a broader range of pathologists, no doubt provided a huge stimulus to the development of the discipline in Australia. At the Toowoomba meeting, Noel Flentje presented an address titled ‘Australian Society of Plant Pathology – is one desirable?’. This led to discussions that concluded with the intent to start the then Australian Plant Pathology Society.

Formation of a Society

Plant pathology societies around the world had been in existence long before the Australian Society formed. For example, the American Phytopathology Society (APS) formed in 1908, and the Japanese Society in 1915. A steering committee was established in 1966 to develop concepts for an Australian Society, a result of the momentum generated by Noel Flentje. Initial responses from Australian plant pathologists suggested 137 people were interested in joining the proposed Society.

The first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Australian Plant Pathology Society was held in Adelaide during the

ANZAAS (Australia and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science) conference in 1969. The first Council included Noel Flentje as President. Councillors were appointed for each state as well as Papua New Guinea. The draft Constitution was adopted by 62 members at the Adelaide meeting (Purss 1994).

In 1974 it was suggested that 'Australasian' be substituted for 'Australian' in the Society name, to provide a more regional focus. The Society also joined the International Society for Plant Pathology (ISPP) in that year.

Constitution

The adopted constitution was based on those of the Australian Society of Microbiology and the Australian Entomological Society. A review of the constitution by a lawyer was undertaken when the Society incorporated (1994).

Management Committee

A Management Committee (MC) structure was established to operate the APPS national Executive. The Executive consisted of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and other members. The constitution provided for a MC located at one geographical location within Australia, to ensure good communication between Executive members. There was no formal program for selecting the location of the next APPS Executive, but since then informal planning has ensured that the MC rotates to locations around Australia and New Zealand with some logical order (Table 1).

Membership

Sixty-nine members attended the first APPS meeting and membership has increased substantially. Numbers now compare favourably with membership in similar societies such as the Australian Entomological Society. Fig. 1 details the membership statistics for the period 1994–2007.

There was a rise in membership during the latter part of the 1990s, but since 1999 there has been a trend towards lower numbers. Higher membership numbers tend to be associated with key Society events, such as biennial conferences and those of the ISPP. With registration discounts for APPS members

Table 1. Location of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society Executive and President since 1969

Year	Location	President
1969	Adelaide	N. Flentje
1971	Sydney	R. H. Taylor
1973	Brisbane	G. S. Purss
1974	Melbourne	L. L. Stubbs
1975	Perth	G. Evans
1976	Christchurch	R. C. Close
1978	Canberra	C. J. Shepherd
1980	Adelaide	A. Kerr
1983	Sydney	D. M. Griffin
1985	Sydney	K. J. Scott
1987	Sydney	B. J. Deverall
1989	Melbourne	R. H. Brown
1991	Brisbane	A. C. Hayward
1993	Perth	G. C. MacNish
1995	Armidale	J. F. Brown
1997	Adelaide	J. W. Randles
1999	Melbourne	D. I. Guest
2001	Sydney	L. Burgess
2003	Christchurch	R. Falloon
2005	Tully	R. C. Magarey

at biennial conferences, there has been a tendency for higher membership numbers in conference years and lower numbers in non-conference years.

National conferences

The first national conference of the APPS was held in Sydney in May 1974 with over 100 members attending. Abstracts of papers were published in the *The Australian Plant Pathology Society Newsletter (APPS News)*. At the associated AGM, a motion was passed to have a national conference every 2 years to coincide with the change in the APPS Executive. Biennial conferences have been held ever since, except for the 3-year gap associated with the staging of the International Congress of Plant Pathology in Melbourne in 1983.

In 1974, the Society also agreed that a Memorial Lecture in honour of Daniel McAlpine be given by an eminent plant

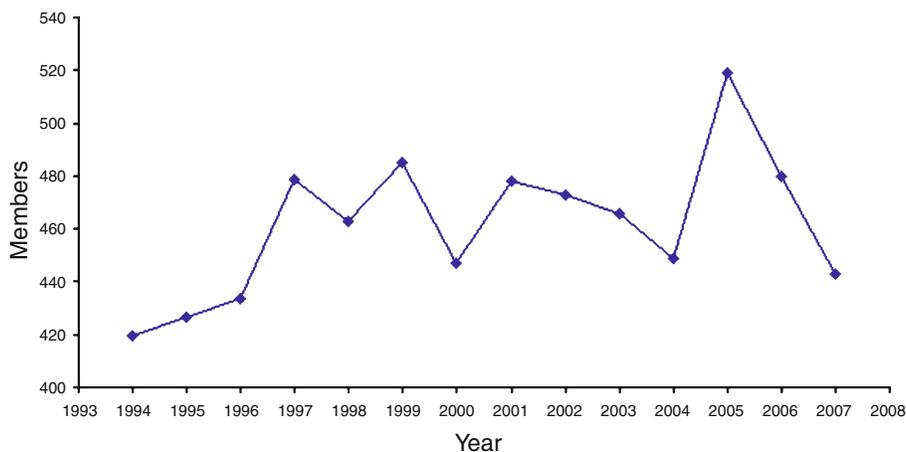


Fig. 1. Australasian Plant Pathology Society member numbers from 1994 to 2007.

pathologist at the national conference, at intervals of not more than 5 years. The first McAlpine Memorial lecture was given by Dr Lilian Fraser on research into citrus diseases. It was presented at the second national conference in Brisbane in May 1976. Since that time, these lectures have been given at each biennial conference. Conferences of the APPS continue to be a key event in the APPS calendar and are held around Australasia. Locations were restricted to capital cities until 2001, when Cairns staged the first conference held in the tropics. Despite the collapse of Ansett airlines and the security scare associated with September 11, attendance at that conference was high.

Conference organising committees have been based locally and there has been an accepted tradition of conference committees operating semi-autonomously in relation to the MC. The demarcation of powers between the two committees has not always been clear.

Society publications

A motion was passed at the first AGM in Adelaide (1969) to publish a quarterly newsletter, *APPS News*. This contained items of Society and personal news as well as scientific notes in the form of 'Letters to the editor'. The first edition of *APPS News*, our first publication, was released in March 1972; the Honorary Secretary, Bob Dodman was the editor (Fig. 2). An editorial panel of three was appointed in 1978. *APPS News* was the forerunner to the journal *Australasian Plant Pathology* (APP) – the name was changed in 1978. New

formats have been developed over the years. In 1988, newsletter-type communications were removed from APP and a separate newsletter established. Journal contents were then restricted to refereed plant pathology publications. **CSIRO PUBLISHING** took on the publishing role for APP in 2001 and the journal format again changed. Wider publicity of APP was possible through the broader contacts of **CSIRO PUBLISHING** and increased circulation resulted. Six (instead of quarterly) issues of APP were published for the first time in 2006 and the journal is increasingly being noted as a quality publication on the world stage (the current impact factor is now 0.766, an increase of 30% since 2005).

The newsletter remained in print format until 2006 when an electronic version, which was posted on our website, became the standard. The new newsletter format includes colour photographs and longer articles.

In 2006, a new electronic journal, *Australasian Plant Disease Notes* (APDN), was launched to publish new records of plant diseases. Uptake of the journal has been exceptional.

Funding

APPS funding has traditionally come from ordinary membership subscriptions and the profits from biennial Society meetings. Recent analyses clearly show that membership subscriptions do not cover the costs of running the APPS and were it not for conference profits, the Society would run at a loss. Ten percent of conference profits are retained by the local APPS branch staging the conference. In recent times, conference profits have been considerable. Other sources of Society funding include job advertising on the APPS website and Associate Membership.

It was decided in 1971 that regional groupings of APPS members should receive 10% of annual subscriptions to support local plant pathology activities. More recently, this was modified to \$5.00 per member residing in the local state, territory or island (New Zealand).

The APPS has been a strong Society over the years and has succeeded in gathering plant pathologists from all over Australasia and beyond, to share ideas and to promote the science of plant pathology. However, the retiring MC has identified areas where the APPS could be strengthened, and these are detailed below.

The present

What did the retiring Executive do during our term?

Strategic plans

Issues addressed by the retiring Executive were largely identified in strategic planning sessions conducted near the start of our term. Two-year plans were developed to assess Society priorities. Professional facilitators were used to assist in plan development and this enabled worthy initiatives to be identified and potential future initiatives to be added to long-term Society plans. These plans have been circulated to members and placed on the APPS website.

Strategic plans offer an opportunity to identify core Society initiatives and help ensure significant events are not forgotten – for instance the 40th anniversary of the APPS (2009). Some of the identified priorities arising from strategic planning are detailed below.

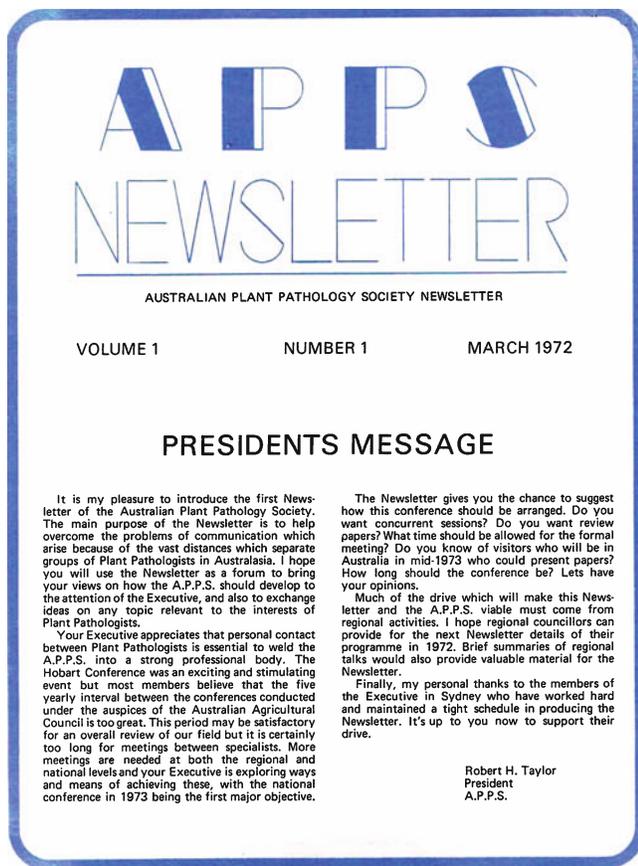


Fig. 2. The front cover of the first edition of *APPS News* in 1972.

Retention of corporate memory

Due to the Executive moving between regions and countries (Australia/New Zealand), and there being no formal retention of previous office bearers, corporate memory loss was an issue. The total changeover of all Office Bearers (MC) risks loss of understanding of Society operations, Society plans, previous Society history and established inter-Society contacts. There are significant benefits from having fresh members from other states/regions on the MC, and this should be preserved, but corporate memory loss is unnecessary and at times, has significant repercussions. The current MC addressed this issue through several initiatives (including the formulation of strategic plans).

President-elect/immediate past-President

These positions were formally created so that the incoming President may become familiar with Executive matters before the presidential term begins, and the immediate past-President may offer advice (as requested) and take on roles as deemed appropriate by the current MC. The President-elect position is not new to the APPS but requires more active participation by the person filling the role.

Utilisation of experienced members

During our term, we recognised the wealth of experience residing in the more experienced members, and we utilised this to ensure better decision making. It is not that we needed new ideas, rather that experience was needed to fine-tune those ideas. The broader APPS membership is a very valuable resource that could be better utilised in the future, and provides a wealth of 'corporate memory'.

Recognition of foundation members

Foundation members were honoured during our term by distributing 'foundation member' certificates. I received several touching letters in response from some of our older members.

Working sub-committee structure

Over the years individual members and even APPS Executives have suggested that sub-committees be formed to assist the MC deal with issues of concern. For various reasons, these committees were generally not implemented. During our term, we established three sub-committees.

Public voice

At the 2005 Geelong conference, a motion at the business meeting called for a public voice for the Society. Members of a sub-committee were enlisted to consider the issue; these members were Grant Smith (NZCFR), Jane Moran (DPI, Victoria), Cheryl McRae (PMC, Canberra), Bill Roberts (DAFF, Canberra) and Simon McKirdy (CRCNPB). Conclusions reached were that: (i) non-controversial issues should be tackled first; (ii) the APPS needed to gain community credibility before difficult issues were commented on; and (iii) eminent members would be the spokespersons. In line with this, an eminent member was approached to assist in making a press release on the teaching and retention of plant pathologists within Australasia.

A second press release on conference highlights, to be made pre-conference, was also planned.

Councillors

The MC also recognised that the activity of Councillors in each of the regions in Australasia varied considerably partly because there had been minimal contact between Councillors and the APPS Executive. During the current Executive term, a sub-group of the MC took on the role of liaising with the Councillors on a regular basis, through either email or teleconference. We believe that the Councillors provide a useful link between members and APPS management – providing feedback on new initiatives and providing real stimulus to membership within a region. The Councillor system is a good one and offers great potential.

Information on plant pathologists

We live in an information age and knowing more about plant pathologists in Australasia has many applications. One of the questions we asked was 'How many non-APPS member plant pathologists are out there in Australasia?' This information would provide the APPS with knowledge on the proportion of professionals that have joined the Society, what scope there is for increasing membership and a means for determining why appropriate scientists have not joined the Society. A sub-committee was formed to attempt to gather this information. Some non-member details were recorded but privacy issues have made obtaining and disseminating this information difficult. Other bodies, such as Plant Health Australia (PHA), have also had difficulty gaining information on plant pathology expertise within Australia.

Synergistic interactions with other disciplines and societies

As a leading professional society in Australasia, the APPS has the opportunity to 'lead the way' in interactions with other societies and disciplines.

Joint meetings

The retiring MC recognised the value of interaction and instigated discussions on a joint conference with the Australian Entomological Society and the CRC for National Plant Biosecurity. This will not occur in 2009 but it is hoped to continue discussions so that such a conference may be staged in 4–6 years time. The MC supported a bid for a joint conference with the Asian Association of Societies for Plant Pathology for 2011; this bid was successful and will combine our normal biennial meeting with the 4th Asian Congress on Plant Pathology. There is much to be gained by collaborating to a desirable level with other closely related disciplines and groups of similarly skilled professionals in Australasia and elsewhere, to stimulate new ideas and to gain the benefit of various synergies. Novel programs that include sessions with unique topics could feature in these joint meetings.

Contact with other society executives

During our term, I was fortunate to have had close contact with the APS Presidents, Professor John Andrews and Professor Jan Leach. The APS sponsored my attendance at the

2006 Quebec APS Annual Meeting and this allowed me to attend selected APS committee meetings. Not only was this scientifically stimulating but it enabled me to enquire about their Society structure. I was also able to liaise with the Canadian Phytopathology Society (CPS) President, Dr Bruce Gossen and to learn more about CPS. This interaction provoked further thought about the future development of the APPS and some ideas were adopted by the APPS Executive. One of these was the 'Ambassador' concept where long-term links with other societies are maintained by APPS members who have established linkages with a 'foreign' (or should I say 'alien'!) society. The APPS has now appointed Ambassadors to several major overseas societies. Our website has many links to websites of these societies and this reflects our view of the need to interact with pathologists and their societies on a world-scale.

Contact with membership

Another initiative of the retiring Executive was to keep in close contact with 'grass-root' members. Circular emails sent via our Business Manager enabled all members to hear of proposed initiatives and to respond to the APPS Executive. Members' views were then included in decision making. This occurred on several occasions during our term as the MC. This could become an increasingly practical way to ensure informed decision making within the Society. I also made contact with APPS past-Presidents on several occasions to access corporate memory and to ensure we made the best possible decisions. Many of them were motivated, enthusiastic and have the best interests of the Society at heart. Such previous office holders provide excellent counsel and could be further utilised by future Executives.

Identification of eminent members

During the past 2 years it became clear to the MC that a more systematic approach to the selection of eminent members (Fellows and Honorary Members) would help ensure that the most worthy members were honoured. In the past, 'ordinary' APPS members needed to remember that nominations for these honours were required by October of the year preceding the biennial conference. Therefore, the selection of the most deserving persons for honours relied on the keen attention of members (generally in each state, region or island). There is no doubt that, at times, deserving persons were not considered. The retiring MC considered that ordinary members should still be encouraged to nominate these persons but that a sub-committee consisting of a past-President plus two Fellows should systematically consider the merits of all members. This will help ensure appropriate recognition of prestigious Australasian members.

Website

A strong point of our Society is the work of the Business Manager (currently Peter Williamson). His development of the website has led to several additional uses of the website. During our term, website capacity and security have been upgraded significantly, which has enabled various search functions to be added. Search functions based on member identity, skills and experience enable rapid contact with scientists possessing sought

after skills. Privacy issues still need to be addressed, but the website illustrates another excellent resource of our Society.

The future

So where can the APPS go in the future? What are the possibilities for us as a Society?

Vision

It is important that our Society consider its future – what directions should we take to increase our effectiveness and how do we better serve our members? We identified that vision was needed in several areas.

Strategic plans

These are central to good planning – a failure to plan is a plan to fail! We propose the development of a 2-year strategic plan be one of the first actions taken by any incoming Executive, to identify the highest priority Society initiatives for the term of the MC. This will ensure that new vision is captured by the Society.

The formulation of a 10-year strategic plan would also provide fresh input into the more important longer term initiatives that could be adopted by APPS. Gaining membership feedback on directions would then provide members' ownership of these initiatives, as well as timely 'grass-roots' editing of the plans. I suggest that the incoming Executive develop our first 10-year strategic plan. Relevant topics could be governance of the Society, joint conferences with other Societies, new income streams, further development of an APPS public voice, APPS-facilitated regional workshops and activities associated with plant pathology curricula and encouragement of students involved with plant pathology.

Schedules

One of the issues noted by the retiring MC was the lack of planned schedules for location of the national Executive (MC) and for biennial conferences. Though there is some expectation as to where the next MC is likely to be located, and which state/territory/country should host the next conference, no formal plans are in place. This has led to failed expectations for some local APPS branches – they did not host the conference or Executive when they expected they would. Long-term planning of these schedules, with incorporated flexibility, would ensure every branch knew what was happening, would assist in facilitating the hosting of the Executive/conference in areas where this had not happened before, and ensure that key events (such as special anniversary meetings – for instance our 40th) were not forgotten. Such schedules could form part of the Society's 10-year plan.

MC

Governance is something the Society should consider more closely. The retiring MC was located in Tully, but comprised members from Mareeba, Cairns, South Johnstone, Tully, Ayr (northern Queensland), Toowoomba and Stanthorpe (southern Queensland). Two-thirds of the committee often joined meetings via teleconference. Interstate members also called by phone to provide information updates. New MCs could easily include members from around Australia, linked by ever

improving telecommunications. This would enable several further initiatives.

Members with special expertise

A geographically diverse MC could have the advantage of including members with special expertise adding to the skills base of the MC. This could include financial or organisational skills, or persons with exceptional plant pathology experience. This does not mean that geographically diverse MCs that rotate around Australasia would be eliminated, but that expertise from diverse locations could be added to each MC. As the Society grows, the need for improved MC skills will increase and such an arrangement would facilitate this.

Smaller states/territories

Those states, territories, islands (New Zealand) or Papua New Guinea where there has been no MC due to the paucity of APPS members could host a MC if additional committee members joined via telecommunication. This includes Tasmania, the Northern Territory, the North Island (New Zealand) and Papua New Guinea. The brakes are potentially off for these locations to host the MC. This would stimulate plant pathology in these places and provide unique local perspectives to the APPS, thus broadening the Society as a whole.

Constitution

The MC recognises the need to review the current constitution. This document was formulated at a time when the Society was being established and has only been revised to a minor degree since then. However, there are clear deficiencies related to defining how the Society operates. For instance, the duties and demarcation of authority between the MC and the local biennial conference organising committee is not well defined.

The retiring MC has updated a few of the out-of-date facts contained in the document, but a thorough review would ensure a current constitution incorporates the recent changes made to APPS operations.

Finances

Will the APPS be able to maintain a profitable position in a rapidly changing technological world, where journals are distributed electronically and information is obtained via the internet? Are our current income streams likely to continue? Could our total income be supplemented to serve our members better? To assist the MC, we commissioned one of our Fellows, Dr Graham Stirling, to analyse our financial position. He has provided a detailed report and raised several issues of considerable interest. Those of primary interest to the MC include:

Finance committee

A committee comprising people with identified skills is recommended to determine new income streams, to assist in decisions on financial income and expenditure and to plan for the longer-term financial future of the APPS. The current MC has adopted this strategy and has sought appropriate people for this sub-committee.

Online sale of information

A web-based service that provides both free and saleable information on plant diseases to the wider community should be investigated. The first step would be to develop a business plan to determine the viability of this proposal. This could include information on a range of issues from crops to horticultural systems to home gardening.

Incorporated APPS foundation

A finance committee should be formed to investigate the incorporation, management, financial and constitutional matters involved in establishing an incorporated foundation that would raise funds to support the discipline of plant pathology in the Australasian region. Such a foundation exists in other societies and allows amongst other things, the bequeathing of funds from wills and other funding sources. No such facility currently exists in the APPS.

Partitioning of accounts

Dr Stirling also suggested that the main APPS account be split into sub-accounts designated for major financial aspects of the Society (i.e. sub-accounts for operating the journal and for conferences). Funding would be directed to each sub-account and expenditure monitored during the financial year. This will provide an excellent record as to where income and expenditure have occurred and could be used to ensure each aspect of the Society remained financially sustainable.

Regional influence

The APPS provides leadership in plant pathology in different parts of the world – including Australasia and some parts of Africa and Asia. The current MC has suggested the APPS increasingly reach into Asia and the southern hemisphere (Africa and South America) – as areas where members are sourced, publications for APP and APDN arise, and Australasian scientists collaborate. Already many APPS members have projects in Asia and the Pacific (funded by ACIAR, AusAID or other agencies) and have considerable expertise to offer, especially to emerging countries. The current MC has embraced the suggestion that we host the 4th Asian conference on plant pathology and a bid has been lodged with the Asian Association of Societies for Plant Pathology. This meeting will be staged in Darwin in 2011.

Journal

The APS has also been considering its future financial streams and what may happen with the print publication of their leading journals, *Phytopathology* and *Plant Disease*. Already many researchers are accessing these journals electronically and proceeds from those journals are decreasing as access is obtained electronically from central libraries rather than from personal printed copies. The APPS will equally need to consider the future financial return from our printed outputs, and how this will affect our economic viability. Our newly established finance committee will need to examine this first, but so will the APPS Executive, the Editor-in-Chief and members with special expertise. Long-term planning should begin soon to ensure we position our Society well. Longer term strategic plans could

embrace the necessary actions required to move to the preferred position – thinking and planning ahead is critical.

Workshops

The APPS could provide a role in the staging of plant pathology training workshops for young scientists within our region of influence (such as Asia). The Society may not entirely fund such workshops but could facilitate them through seed funding, the linking of members working in the region with Australian Government funding agencies (such as ACIAR or AusAID), or through facilitating communication between members in other regions and expert Australasian scientists.

Education and plant pathology curricula

There is no doubt our Society could play a supporting role in the education of young scientists at our Universities. Mentoring of new graduates, provision of adequate training opportunities (i.e. at workshops associated with our biennial conference) and in providing contact between older more experienced scientists and the younger graduates should all be examined. The recent highlight on University plant pathology curricula led by Professor John Irwin is an example of where the APPS and its members could provide further support.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that since its formation, our Society has served its members very well in many areas related to the discipline of plant pathology. Membership is large, finances are satisfactory, attendance at conferences is excellent and our journal is of note on the world stage. We have done many things very well. This is a result of the hard work of many Society members over nearly 40 years. We are very grateful for their input!

The renown of Australasian plant pathologists is also well acknowledged and we can be proud of their achievements. There are many in our Society today who ‘stand tall’ on the world stage because of their plant pathology skills and the application of these to challenging and strategic issues. In relation to world Society matters I note here that Professor Richard Falloon is the current President of the International Plant Pathology Society, Dr Greg Johnson is the Secretary (and incoming APPS President) and Dr Peter Williamson is now the Business Manager.

As with any position there is no guaranteed status and we should not rest on our laurels. It is important that we continue as a Society to improve how we operate, to identify emerging opportunities and to capture benefits as they present themselves. There is always room for change and improvement.

In some areas we are a mature Society in the light of our current status, administered by passionate volunteers who are committed to field experiments, project administration, a range

of technical assays, laboratory and glasshouse work – as well as the administration of Society affairs. Can we immediately adopt a revised model for our Society that includes changes in the way we are governed? A redefined Executive could incorporate the benefits associated with a ‘roving MC’ from various centres around Australasia, but incorporate governing expertise arising from members with special skills and abilities suited to Society administration. This not only applies to the MC but equally to the new Finance Committee, and potentially other sub-committees. What model will be ideal in 10–15 years from now?

On progressing individual components of our Society, strategic planning should be an ongoing focus of our operations. A well developed 10-year plan could include progressive changes to APPS governance, and other long-term strategies – such as the future of our printed journals (and our electronic capabilities), the emergence of an APPS public voice, and establishment of web-based resources. In all of this we should look to utilise the vast and expert resources contained within our membership. Expanding the membership by increasing our focus in relevant geographical locations outside Australasia should also be a prime objective. Wise use of our finances, and identifying new income streams, remains a priority.

There is still much to be done – if we do not go forward, we will probably be going backwards! How far we go will depend on whether we are looking ahead to identify the opportunities as they are presented. The Society needs to embrace new ideas and initiatives that will place us in good stead in the longer term. May the next 40 years lead to as many significant Society developments as there have been in the previous 38.

Acknowledgements

I thank the remainder of the retiring Management Committee, and our Business Manager (Dr Peter Williamson), for their team approach to our Executive role. I appreciated all your hard work and feedback on suggested initiatives. I would also like to thank other members of the APPS, including the previous Presidents, and Dr Graham Stirling for their input into Society matters and for the dedication of their time to these matters. Professor Richard Falloon nominated me to take on the role of President – I thank him and it was a pleasure to work with him.

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