



President's Report – Annual General Meeting – 26 November 2020

As we progress toward the close of 2020 we have all endured a year of unprecedented challenges. From massive bush fires in Australia to a global pandemic, events this year have generated huge disruptions to many aspects of day-to-day life. For many, these upheavals have greatly reduced the scope of what has been achievable in 2020. I for one have had considerably reduced productivity this year. However, I have been fortunate to have maintained both my health and my livelihood. On behalf of those of us who have been fortunate this year, I extend my thoughts and sympathies to those who have not weathered the storm as favourably.

For the Malacological Society of Australasia the year's the business has progressed against the backdrop of 2020's challenges. Council has maintained quarterly meetings, convening by Zoom in February, May, August and immediately prior to this Annual General Meeting. Ongoing topics of discussion this year have included: strengthening and growing membership, the (social)media presence of the society, the photography competition, and the uncertain situation regarding the Molluscs 2021 conference. This is in addition to the usual activities of supporting mollusc focused research, publication of Molluscan Research and the MSA newsletter and managing the membership and finances of the Society.

As can be seen in Carmel's Treasurers report, the Society currently enjoys a good financial position which sets us in good stead heading into a conference year. Membership has been maintained in the 90s for much of this year, which is relatively low and a concerning trend of slow decline is evident. To some extent we can expect an increase membership associated with the 2021 conference. However, there is an opportunity to explore how the MSA can grow a vibrant and engaged membership into the future.

In support of research, two Malacological Research Awards have been made this year to very deserving recipients. Additionally, one Molluscan Research Achievement Award will be made, following review of 40 eligible papers from the journal. Despite the challenges of the year, malacological research in Australasia continues to be exciting.

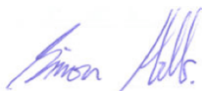
Membership and media presence are topics with overlapping scope. Both are relevant to building the strength of the Society and growing our membership into the future. Throughout the year Council has discussed a number of strategies and potential activities in these areas to increase the reach of the society and connect with more potential members. Several action points have not yet had significant traction (mainly my fault), but with the approval of the 2021 council, we will survey our membership during year to canvass thoughts about how the Society can best engage existing and new members.

One area of media engagement that has seen activity this year is the calendar competition. This has seen some amazing photographic entries, some of which have been shared on the MSA Facebook page. With such fantastic images we really should be elevating molluscs to status of “charismatic fauna” in the public mind. Activities like this competition are an important avenue for the Society to engage with the wider community, and we aim to repeat the process in 2021.

Next year marks a year for the Society’s triennial conference. Under Lisa Kirkendale’s expert guidance, planning for the meeting to be held in Perth had been proceeding apace. Then covid-19 emerged, and now considerable uncertainty exists about the likelihood of travel and the feasibility of large gatherings. Currently planning for Molluscs 2021 is in flux as contingencies are explored. If possible, we will hold the meeting in a more central location, and possibly in a blended, live plus remote, format. At this stage signs look promising for Molluscs 2021 in late November or early December next year (famous last words). As for meeting in Perth, perhaps that should be our plan for 2024.

The continuing success of the Society is in no small way the result of the dedication of the MSA council. I would very much like to thank the whole council for their enthusiasm and commitment this year in the face of myriad challenges. In particular, I would like to thank a number of key members, who have been instrumental in moving us forward this year. Matt Nimbs, our Membership Secretary, who has done a great job keeping tabs on our membership. Carmel McDougall, who has continued to artfully navigate the dark science of Treasurer. Don Colgan for meeting and exceeding the particular challenge of managing the Molluscan Research journal, and also for striving to increase diversity and equality of representation on the editorial board. Platon Vafiadis for producing the perennially high quality MSA newsletter. Finally, I must thank our Council Secretary, Pricilla Salloum, for managing the council generally and myself specifically throughout the year.

To the incoming council of 2021, I wish you the very best, and hope that we all might live in somewhat less interesting times than has been the case for 2020.



Simon Hills, MSA President