**WSCS – ASPS Council Report 2024**

Contents: Social Media, Phytogen, website update and member metric

WSCS team: Janet Wheeler, Beth Loveys, Frances Sussmilch, Scott Boden, Caitlin Byrt, Alison Bentley, Razlin Azman and Lucas Auroux.

New Chair for WSCS

Scott succeeded Caitlyn as the chair for WSCS at the beginning of 2025. Scott would like to encourage communication of new and emerging research in the community. We will ask ASPS members who have recently secured funding to contribute a short communication about the aims of their project that can be published in Phytogen.

We welcomed Alison Bentley as a new member of the committee, and Alison highlighted the benefits of drafting a communication strategy plan that could help prioritise future communication activities to highlight research outcomes from our society. We plan to draft this communication strategy plan in early 2025.

ASPS Social Media

In the past year, the ASPS WSCS has continued to make use of our social media platforms to raise the profile of the Society, highlight Australian plant science research and facilitate networking between our members. Since our last annual report, we have gained 471 new followers on X (formerly Twitter). We make a concerted effort to find and follow Australian plant scientists, particularly students/ECRs who are not yet members to foster new connections with our Society. We continue to add social-media-active ASPS members to our social media ASPS member list to help us to see and amplify content from our members and to help our members connect with each other, and include a new question on our updated membership/membership renewal form where members can add their social media handles to facilitate this. We have 122 ASPS members included on this list in X, and encourage members to DM us to be added. We also continue to encourage members to tag @asps\_ozplants so that we can share their Australian plant science-focussed content. We retweet ASPS member research papers, particularly from students and job opportunities when they are relevant or tagged, with an average of 5 tweets/retweets per day. The ASPS Facebook page now has over 2700 followers, up more than 300 followers from last year. The Facebook page has attracted 2600 likes and each post is reaching approximately 200 people.

We hope to continue to learn and grow as we engage with our members and the wider community on these social media platforms into 2024.

There are plans to coordinate tweets during the 2024 conference, with confirmed representatives for Victoria (Lucas), WA (Razlin), Janet has sent out email asking for SA, NSW and QLD organising committees to identify someone to help.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

WSCS helped the Executive Team to update and improve our DEI philosophy and progressed actions to improve ASPS DEI.

ASPS Phytogen

As outlined above, the X, Facebook and emailing out were excellent in helping to get the content out. Razlin Azman and Lucas Auroux took over as Phytogen co-editors in April 2024 along with Janet Wheeler providing additional support during transition. Each Phytogen newsletter has had contributions from discipline representatives as outlined earlier in the year. We have also been actively pursuing reports from SMP awardees, R.N Travel fellowships and feature all student awardees who attended IMBP 2024 in Cairns this year. We have launched a new section dedicated to highlighting student members’ research. Uptake has been slow, and this has required additional efforts by the editors with little support from the ASPS student representative. January 2024 edition highlighted ASPS Life member Emeritus Professor Hans Lambers (UWA) and ASPS corresponding member prof Steve Long (u of Illinois, USA), plant nutrition trust report, student report from ASPS 2023 conference. April 2024, we welcomed the new Phytogen co-editors, and SMP report from Dr Lim Chee and ASPS Education and Outreach Award report by winners Robert Sharwood, Michelle Donovan-Mak, Jayakumar Bose, David Randall, Jing He, Oula Ghannoum and Zhonghua Chen, and ASPS awards application extension. The ASPS 2024 conference was first publicised in the February 2024 edition and continued to be featured in each month leading up to the conference. May 2024 edition congratulated Prof Ros Glendow on her election to the Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, and Prof Keiko Torii on her Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon. We also had contribution from whole plant representative Dr Dugald Reid, SMP report from Dr. Neeta Lohani, and R.N. Robertson Travelling Fellowship report 2023 by Dr. Celine Mens. June 2024 had contributions from Dr Francine Perrine-Walker and announcement for rare gardening and botanical book sales. July 2024 had contribution from plant-microbe interaction representative Dr Stephanie Watts-Fawkes, and we started to highlight on the student awardees of the ASPS travel grant of the International Plant and Molecular Biology (IPMB) conference held in Cairns in June, which concluded in October newsletter. We also launched the new section dedicated to highlighting our student members. The first student contributor was Zane Marks who is the ASPS student representative. August 2024 edition celebrated Ros Gleadow and Keiko Torii on their achievements, SMP report by Dr Nijat Imin, contribution from Cell Biology Representative Dr Crystal Sweetman, and student contribution from Lucas Auroux. October 2024 was lively with announcement of ASPS award winners which generated a lot of interaction on X, along with announcement for new ASPS committee members and discipline representatives. We also had contribution from Education Representative Dr Lucas Cernusak, a R.N Trave Fellowship report from Alistair Hockey (UWA) and research contribution from Dr Francine Perrine-Walker. October 2024, we started the countdown to the conference with reminder for abstract submissions and early bird registrations, and we started to highlight the ASPS winners starting with A/prof Jenny Mortimer winner of the Jan Anderson award. We also had contribution from genetics and Molecular Biology Rep Dr Nipuni Peththa Thanthrige, and student contribution from Benjamin Wee (Latrobe Uni), and the final cohort of student travel awardees. November was published just before the conference and served as a warmup to introduce the keynote speakers for the conference. The following editions will serve as warp ups for the hybrid conference with each state providing highlights.

The editors would like to thank Janet for her amazing support and unwavering support during this period. Looking forward, we would like to have more structure around themes, coincidences with major plant science events, and input from the WCSC. Women in Science theme has already been decided for early 2025, with Allison Bently leading the charge. This collaboration has strengthened Phytogen with more content and better student engagement/representation, even without support from the ASPS student representative.

ASPS website update

The current ASPS website was designed and launched in 2013. Early in 2024 the Executive team supported the appointment of a new web designer who has been working on an updated ASPS web site. The new site retains all the (updated) information from the current web site with a clearer profile featuring more member images. The new website will be demonstrated at the 2024 AGM and launch early in 2025.

Current ASPS membership

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Membership type** | **Number of members** |
| Ordinary membership 1 year\* | 25 |
| Ordinary membership 2 years\* | 45 |
| Ordinary membership 4 years\* | 51 |
| Student membership 2 years\* | 192 |
| Retired | 19 |
| Life | 14 |
| Corresponding | 19 |
| Honorary (reciprocal Societies) | 3 |
| Sustaining\* | 1 |
| **Current financial members\*** | **313** |

In the last year we posted 14 jobs on the jobs page.

**Draft 2024-2025 ASPS blog post calendar**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Usual eg GPC, employment | Committee contributions | WCSC contributions | Student contributions | Phytogen related | Secretary |
| December 2024 | GPC E-bulletin |  | Reflection of local conference | Yes, to find. | Any overdue reports? | Welcome to new President elect |
| January 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | President’s welcome |  | Yes, to find. |  | New life and corresponding member profiles |
| February 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Awards opening | Call for Jan Anderson and Goldacre, Teaching and outreach Award applicationsWelcome to new WCSC reps | Yes, to find. | ALL awards close 4th April 2025 | Send reminder for Committee Contribution |
| March 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Awards  | Science meet parliament this month , request reports. | Yes, to find. |  | Reminder of awards about to close.  |
| April 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Awards closing | Advertise the next meeting to be held in Adelaide?Report SMP 2025.call for nominees for 2026 SMP. | Yes, to find. | Fascination in Plants Day – What are you planning (May 18th)Winner  | Close of Jan Anderson, Goldacre award, Teaching and outreach awardSend reminder for Committee Contribution |
| May 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Whole Plants Rep | Fascination in Plants DayReminder Adelaide.Report SMP 2025.call for nominees for 2026 SMP. | Yes, to find. | Reports on Fascination in plants Day events | Send reminder for Committee Contribution |
| June 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Plant-Microbe Interactions Rep | What did you do for Fascination in Plants Day?Reminder Adelaide. | Yes, to find. | Early bird registration and abstracts due for Hybrid?IPMB reports | Send reminder for Committee Contribution |
| July 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Plant Development Rep | Reminder Adelaide. | Yes, to find. |  |  |
| August 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Cell Biology Rep | Reminder Adelaide. | Yes, to find. | National Science week reports (Aug 10-18) – What did your institution/lab do?  | Secretary AGM docsMinutes of AGM. Action items from Council/AGM. Instructions for ASPS reps for next ASPS meeting/ComBio. Send reminder for Committee Contribution |
| September 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Secretary AGM docs | Reminder Adelaide. | Yes, to find. |  |  |
| October 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Genetics & Molecular Biology Rep | Reminder Adelaide. | Yes, to find. | Preparation for hybrid conference | Secretary AGM docsMinutes of AGM. Action items from Council/AGM. Instructions for ASPS reps on LOC of next ASPS meeting |
| November 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Environmental & Ecophysiology Rep | Month of the conference in Adelaide?Ask report asap after the conference to poster/presentation winners. | Yes, to find. |  | Welcome to new discipline/student reps. |
| December 2025 | GPC E-bulletin | Inclusion rep |  | Poster/presentation winner reports | Poster and oral student winnersReflections of the conference | Welcome to new President electnew discipline/student rep. |