ASPS Treasurer's Report for the Period 1 May 2014 – 30 Apr 2015
Prepared by Brent Kaiser (ASPS Honorary Treasurer)
Presented at the AGM on Wednesday, 30 September 2015

Budget:
The societies financial position, for the financial year May 1 2014 - April 30 2015 is very good. We generated an operating surplus of **$34,054.60** in 2014/2015. This was a significant increase from 2013/2014, where we ran a deficit of **$6302.42**. As of April 30, 2015 our accumulated funds in the Commonwealth Bank totaled **$140,766.60** and the RN Robertson Fund **$81,455.87 (includes $3427.75 interest)**. Bank interest from our Commonwealth accounts totaled **$2582.97**. **$33,000** of the commonwealth bank account belongs to the Robertson Fund based on a previous decision made at the 2009 AGM.

ASPS Income:
ASPS has three main sources of income: 1) a proportion of the profits from conferences we support (i.e. Combio); 2) ASPS membership subscriptions and web-based advertising and 3) bank interest and donations. We received **+$37,288.20** from conference profits from Combio (2011, 2012, 2013) and ICAR 2013.

We received **+$12,359.15** in membership subscriptions and renewals and **+$416.00** in web-based advertising. The number of paid/updated ASPS members as of Sept 27, 2015 is **510** consisting of 107 ordinary members, 345 student members, 36 retired members, 6 corresponding members, 7 life members, 1 gratis members and 0 sustaining members (Table 1). Through the activity of Janet Wheeler, our database has been exhaustively updated and new features included in the ASPS website to inform members when their memberships are expected to expire as well as their current status.

There are 25 ordinary members whose membership lapsed and have not been renewed. We will continue to remind members by e-mail that their membership will be ending soon and encourage a renewal wherever possible. To request renewals of ordinary and sustaining members and where necessary expanded membership details. Although student memberships are steadily increasing I do have concern about the dropping off of ordinary memberships.

Table 1: ASPS memberships over the last 10 years.

Category	14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08	06/07	05/06
Ordinary	107	101	153	212	244	238	283	209	166	184
Student	345	229	210	192	164	151	176	151	158	175
Retired	36	28	14	14						
Corresponding members	6	10	10							
Life members	7	7	7							
Gratis members	1	1	2							
Sustaining members	0	0	2							
Lapsed ordinary	-25	-60	-80							
Total	502	316	318	418	408	389	459	360	324	359

The current membership fees are ordinary member: 1 year $85.00; 2 years $155.00 and student member 4 years $60.00. At the last ASPS AGM (2014) meeting it was proposed that membership fees be increased to help ensure both the long-term viability of the societies finances but also its ability to support Plant Science in Australia and abroad. Two suggestions were put forward: 1) membership renewal and new subscription costs be increased (see Table 2) and 2) longer subscription time periods be allowed when registering for the society. It was proposed both of these measures be put to a vote at the ASPS annual general assembly (Wed, Sept 30 2015).

Table 2: Proposed changes to ASPS membership fees

	Current	Proposed
Student (4 year)	$60	$100
Ordinary (1 year)	$85	$100
Ordinary (2 year)	$155	$180
Ordinary (4 year)	-	$320

Sustaining members of ASPS are important as the organization or company supports our Society by paying $300 per annum. In return for this fee they have their name, logo and web link placed on our website and they receive free advertising space in our e-newsletter *Phytogen*. Our total number of paid sustaining members as of April 2015 remains 0. This is an area we should look into in order to expand our profile amongst potential industrial partners.

Expenditures:

The society is a strong supporter of the annual Combio conference as a way to showcase the multidisciplinary aspects of Australian Plant Science and as an important gathering place to meet colleagues and to develop research collaborations. Combio also allows for the society to attract high-impact plant science researchers to Australia as plenary speakers and mentors to our student and early career members. In 2014/2015, ASPS provided **$3000.00** for Combio 2014 (Canberra) for speaker travel expenses.

The Society recognises the importance of student participation for its long-term wellbeing. Student membership is encouraged through special awards including the RN Robertson Fund and through subsidising a considerable part of their travel, accommodation, registration costs and the annual ASPS dinner encourages when they attend and present at ComBio. In 2014/2015, 27 students received support from ASPS to attend ComBio2014 meeting in Canberra at a cost of **$11,125.00 ($475.00 - $200.00 per student depending on distance travelled)**. Furthermore, ASPS rewards active participation by students in the ComBio program by recognising outstanding posters with monetary prizes. Last year we provided three-poster prizes at ComBio 2014 (**$600 in total**). The R.N. Robertson Travel Award **($3000**) was awarded to PhD candidate Stephanie Watts-Williams (Monash University). A further **$891.00** was used to underwrite the attendance of students to the annual ASPS dinner.

The society helps to facilitate scientific meetings (e.g. ICAR) that support Australian plant science and scientists to which greater domestic and international exposure of the societies activities and members can occur. In 2013/2014, ASPS supported seed funding (**$2,500.00**) to the 6th Asia and Oceania Conference on Photobiology: A joint Boden Research Conference between the Asia and Oceania Society for Photobiology and the Molecular and Experimental Pathology Society of Australasia (MEPSA). These funds and further profits (**$3,166**) from the meeting have now been reimbursed to ASPS. There was a request put forward by members of MEPSA that the profits be used to support student travel awards to the next MEPSA meeting in two years time.

The ASPS website requires continual improvement, data management and web servicing. Over the year, much of this has been done through the activities of members of the executive and through ad-hoc contract work involving our web-site host (Michael Major Media Pty Ltd) and our web-site executive assistant Janet Wheeler. There is still significant work still to be completed with the site and continual monitoring to make sure it works well. This is particularly relevant to the underlying database where data collection on memberships, payments and contact details requires some improvement. It will be important for the society to manage its website and membership renewals effectively to ensure long-term viability and membership expansion of the society.

The financial transactions have been audited (Wards Accounting Group, Camden NSW) and the Auditor's report is available for perusal with the financial summary at the AGM. Following the AGM, the Auditor's report and financial summary will be submitted to the Registrar General's Office by our Public Officer (Prof. John Evans).

In summary, I am pleased to report that the Society's finances have increased significantly and are in good shape. However, there is room for improvement in particular facilitating long-term commitments by members to the societies activities and ensuring we provide a proactive and engaging society to both new and existing plant scientists and supporters in Australia and overseas.

I would like to thank Janet Wheeler for her work in modernizing the data within the ASPS website, updating various pages and ensuring our memberships are kept up to date. I would also like to thank other members of the executive (John Evans and Martha Ludwig and past-president Tim Colmer) for their support and guidance over the last year.

Brent N. Kaiser
Honorary Treasurer ASPS
ComBio 2015 Melbourne