ASPS Treasurer's Report for the Period 1 May 2023 – 30 Apr 2024

Prepared by Mark Waters (ASPS Honorary Treasurer)
Presented at the AGM on Friday 29 November 2024, Online meeting based at UWA

BUDGET

The financial position of the Society, for the financial year 1 May 2023 – 30 April 2024, continues to be strong. The Society holds significant cash reserves, largely due to the significant income received from the profits of the ASPS and ComBio conferences. Membership income has remained strong. In 2023/2024, this culminated in an end-of-year operating surplus of $37,720.07, which is a welcome return after the previous year's deficit. A large proportion ($19,636) of this year's surplus results from growth in the RN Robertson Fund which benefitted from a major rebound in financial markets, and donations. As of 30 April 2024, our accumulated funds in the Commonwealth Bank totalled $188,197.18 ($2,620.97 Transaction Account plus $185,576.21 Online Saver Account), while the balance of the Robertson Fund is $169,372.00.

ASPS INCOME

ASPS has three main sources of income: 1) a proportion of the profits from conferences we support (ComBio/ASPS); 2) ASPS membership fees; and 3) bank interest, donations and advertising.

ComBio 2022 (Melbourne) and ASPS 2023 (University of Tasmania)

The ComBio joint conference, spearheaded by the Australian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB), was highly profitable. Our share of genuine profits for ComBio2022 ($18,207.78) was received in this financial year. Likewise, our society annual meeting in Tasmania (November 2023) was very successful and returned a remarkable profit of $27,252.13. These strong results reflect the hard work of the conference organisers and underline the importance in obtaining substantial sponsorship for these events. Such success also allows us to subsidise other events, most notably the hybrid meeting in 2024 and student travel awards to non-ASPS meetings such as IPMB2024.

Membership Income

We received $20,810 in membership income this year, slightly more than the previous year ($18,910), and similar to two years before ($21,360). Such fluctuation is normal, especially as student membership lasts for two years and there was a significant boost in student numbers for the 2021 hybrid conference. Our membership breakdown is as follows:

Category	**23/24***	**22/23**	**21/22**	**20/21**	**19/20**	**18/19**	**17/18**	**16/17**	**15/16**	**14/15**
**Ordinary	121	167	151	142	96	127	132	127	237	107
**Student	192	173	193	171	84	118	201	224	292	345
Retired	19	26	11	15	40	7	31	31	35	36
Corresponding	19	24	12	12	12	12	13	12	12	6
Life	14	17	15	7	8	7	6	6	6	7
Honorary	3	5	1	3	3	4	2	2	0	1
**Sustaining	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total (**financial)	369 (314)	412 (340)	383 (344)	350 (313)	245 (182)	275 (245)	385 (333)	402 (351)	582 (529)	502 (452)

* As at 19 November 2024

Current membership fees are: Ordinary, 1/2/4 years $100.00/$180.00/$340.00; Student, 2 years $50.00; Sustaining $600.00.

Bank Interest, Donations and Advertising Income

After the recent rises in the cash rate, respectable interest is earned in the CBA accounts ($1843.09), although rates offered by CBA have fallen back during the year. The RN Roberston Fund benefitted from a substantial gain of $19,636, following a loss of $3,328 in 2022/23. This growth included $4,100 in generous donations from our retired members in 2023-24. Our award budget of $7,000 per annum is sustainable and likely still appropriate under these conditions.

We received $312 in website income from Hogan Media for advertising three employment opportunities.

EXPENDITURE

Research and Conference Travel Support

Significant outgoings included supporting student travel to both ASPS2023 in Tasmania ($20,350 to 59 individuals) and to IPMB2024 in Cairns ($10,006 to 19 individuals). Collectively this represents the largest contribution to student travel award the Society has ever made, and is made possible by our healthy financial position and successful conferences. Three Carers Support Grants totalling $1,584 were made to support attendance at ASPS2023. We provided two research travel awards from the RN Robertson Fund in 2023 ($3,500 to Samantha Norman [UWA], $3,500 to Celine Mens [Uni Melbourne]). The Society also supported two members to attend Science Meets Parliament ($3,150; Dr Lim-Chee Liew [La Trobe] and Nijat Imin [Western Sydney Uni]).

Society Awards

The 2023 Goldacre Award was sponsored by Functional Plant Biology/CSIRO Publishing ($2,000). The 2023 Jan Anderson Award was joint-sponsored by CSIRO Agriculture and Food ($1,000), the ARC CoE for Plant Success ($500) and the ARC CoE for Plants in Space ($500). Thus, both awards were fully sponsored.

ASPS Operating Costs

The ASPS website requires continual data management and web servicing. Our website is hosted and maintained by Conetix ($420.00). We also invested in a 10-year supply of blank, gold-plated Goldacre medallions ($1,459) to reduce the administrative overheads of maintaining this tradition.

We use eWay to process website card payments for membership and conference registration. We paid a total of $1007.50 in fees, which included a three-year service subscription renewal. Bank Merchant fees for receiving card payments into our CBA bank account totalled $331.45.

ASPS is a member of Science and Technology Australia (STA), which runs Science Meets Parliament, and the Global Plant Council (GPC). These memberships are important for developing networks and highlighting the importance of the plant science in Australia and internationally. We paid $1,287.00 to STA in 2023/2024, and $1,612.64 to GPC for one year of membership (2023).

The financial transactions have been audited (Aaron Turner) 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 in the ACT by our Public Officer (Prof. John Evans).

In summary, the society's finances are in robust health. The society has generated a strong return for 2023/24. This will ensure we can support our activities in 2024/25, which will include investment in an all-new website and running our hybrid meeting in 2024. While we do not provide direct cash support for conference meetings, we are usually open to providing travel support for students to attend conferences allied to the Society's interests.



Mark Waters, Honorary Treasurer ASPS

29 November 2024, ASPS AGM 2024