

ASNSW Annual General Meeting 19th August 2016

President Report

Dear members,

As another year draws to a close the society finds itself in a very healthy position once again. This past year has seen growth and improvements within the society.

The meetings for this year have again been of the highest quality.

The End of the Universe with Dr Ignacio Ferreras, from University College London early this year and the visit from Dr Renee James from Sam Houston University in Texas who gave the talk Science Unshackled (Or 'Why You Should Give a Rat's @\$& About Pure Science Research). The response for this talk was amazing, many saying it was one of the best talks ever at ASNSW. On that response we invited Renee and her family to be guests at SPSP 2016 and I am happy to say that she was just as great there, in spite of her kids being carsick all the way to Wiruna. They did get to experience the dark skies that we have and it left them with memories of their time in Australia.

The continued support by astronomers from Australian Universities and facilities as well as talks and presentations given by members have made 2016 very special. It has reflected in the attendance numbers at meeting with a slight increase over 2015. Many thanks must again be given to Chris Ross who is able to get speakers of this calibre.

The South Pacific Star Party this year gave us a plethora of good weather with members arriving as early as Tuesday and getting the full benefit of Autumnal Wiruna Nights. Again talks were fantastic, as were the workshops that were conducted. The registration this year closed 10 days before the star party and around 20 people were told to register on site (those that rang). Then there were those who did not ring but rolled up anyway. Whilst we did accept them and didn't turn anyone away we did make announcements that next year we would not be taking onsite registrations. The problems we run into are in catering to an unknown number. Resources such as water, food, toilet paper etc need to be known prior to ensure the smooth running. It is difficult to run someone to Mudgee 65km away on Saturday morning because we run out of supplies.

The new building addition at Wiruna (kitchen extension) has been complete now to start deciding what to do with it. At the last committee meeting it was decided to get the blinds for the Eastern and Western aperture for weather protection. A new policy has been formalised and will be sent to all people who have permanent structures at Wiruna whether that is Observatories, Tents or sheds. The policy is to ensure that everything complies with fire regulation and also to control how Wiruna is being used and cared for.

Bowen Mountain has for the great part of the year had no formal Vice President, however many thanks to the following people who keep the place operational and in good repair. Ian Parr, Paul Hatchman, Les Sara, Richard Jaworski, Mick McCullagh who have worked on both the site and the upgrading of the instruments. There was a recent incident where the Observatory was used by someone and was not shut down using the correct procedure resulting in high winds causing some damage to the Dome. As a result the committee is doing an audit of keys, getting back copies not required to be out there.

The major project for Crago observatory over the last few years has been the renewal of our lease, which expired in December 2013. The process was started in 2011 knowing full well that it may take a couple of years to secure. A team consisting of Richard Jaworski, Les Sara and myself have been the link between the society and Crown Lands in all negotiations to date. Earlier this week we received the draft of the new lease for 20 years, of course there are many sections in the lease that will require some corrections and negotiations with Crown Lands Dept.

Our Insurance company as well as Rural Fire Service will have to approve the draft as it will concern both parties. We anticipate that this process will be finalise within a couple of months all going well.

I would like to seek permission of the society members for this team to continue with the negotiations of the draft and to bring it to conclusion.

As I indicated earlier this year I will be standing down from the committee tonight, whilst I am still happy to contribute and will continue to do so I feel it is time for some new blood in the running of the society. I first joined the committee in 1993 as secretary and have held many different positions since then. It has been a job that has given me great pleasure as I have been at the forefront of seeing the shaping of the society in that time. I am happy to leave at a time when the society is in a strong financial position in terms of both monetary and members and I thank you all for giving me the opportunity to have served.