

MINUTES, MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEANS AND DIRECTORS

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, 16-17 OCTOBER 2014

Host: Professor David Choquenot, Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra.

In attendance: Lynette Abbott (UWA), John Bartlett (Sunshine Coast), Simon Beecham (UniSA), Andrew Campbell (President Elect and CDU), David Choquenot (Canberra), Cheryl Desha (QUT), Steve Dovers (ANU), David Dunkerley (Monash) Tor Hundloe (Bond), Julia Lamborn (Swinburne), Hamish McCallum (Griffith), Mick McCarthy (Melbourne), Graciela Metternicht (UNSW), Andrew Millington (President and Flinders), Charles Morris (UWS Hawkesbury), Nicola Porter (RMIT), James Schulmeister (UQ), Scott Smithers (JCU), Steve Turton (Immediate Past President), Judith Wake (CQU), Ben Wilson (Charles Sturt)

For LTAS Environment and Sustainability Project

Bonnie Mclean, Liam Phelan

Apologies: Mark Adams (Sydney), John Bailey (Murdoch), Andy Ball (RMIT), Michael Clarke (La Trobe), Sandy Cruden (Monash), Grant Daggard (USQ), William Gladstone (UTS), David Gust (QUT), Rod Keenan (Melbourne), Peter Nelson (MacQuarie), Randall Robinson (UV), Guang Shi (Deakin), Nigel Tapper (Monash), Karl Vernes (UNE), Grant Wardell-Johnson (Curtin), Jennifer Watling (Adelaide), Iain Young (UNE)

Thursday 16th October

10-11 ACEDD Business Session I

Dave Choquenot welcomed delegates to the University of Canberra. This was followed by a round of introductions.

The minutes of the previous meeting (SWIT, Margaret River, 1-2 May 2014) were confirmed, subject to the addition of the names of field leaders being obtained, and Bonnie MacLean's attendance recorded.

President's Report

Andrew Millington (President) reported on the actions since the previous meeting in Margaret River. The items reported were all discussed in detail in the Council Business sessions at this meeting and, therefore, reported in these minutes.

Finance Report

Tor Hundloe (Treasurer) provided a verbal report on the Council's finance. The Council had a current surplus of \$105,000, and was advised that ACEDD was now in a position to fund the position of Executive Officer and new initiatives. The issues of delegates knowing whether their universities had paid their annual subscription was discussed. Council **confirmed** the annual subscription date was 1st January each year.

Action: All delegates to send the name and contact details of the person in their institution to whom the annual membership invoice should be sent to thundloe@bond.edu.au

Executive Officer

Delegates discussed the detailed proposal for **the appointment of an Executive Officer**. Agreed the President will prepare a draft position description and send to delegates for comment before it is circulated to people who might be potentially interested through ACEDD university delegates.

Agreed: send the call for applications before the Christmas vacation; set the deadline for application in mid January; then interview candidates by teleconference in late January (with the option of an airport interview if required). If this schedule is feasible, the Executive Officer should be in place to organize the Autumn Meeting at Paramatta in April.

Interview panel to comprise two members of the Executive and another delegate. Delegates were of the opinion that the interview panel should have a mix of genders.

Constitution

The **revisions to the constitution**, circulated six weeks before the meeting according to the constitution in force were discussed. The President identified the main changes. **The revisions were passed unanimously.**

The new constitution takes effect immediately and it will be posted on the ACEDD web site.

11.30-12.30 LTAS Environment and Sustainability Project

Bonnie MacLean and Liam Phelan (LTAS Project Co-PIs) outlined the project for the benefit of new delegates at the meeting. They stressed that TEQSA needs threshold learning outcomes (TLOs) for auditing in 2015. The remainder of the presentation

focused on (i) the consultations that had taken place in 2014, (ii) external evaluation procedures, (iii) plans for piloting TLOs, and (iv) “where to from here?”

Delegates were asked to comment on the TLOs. The commentary continued into the LTAS session on the second day of the meeting. Delegates stressed that the ‘triple bottom line’ of social science, economics and ecology must be made clear in the TLOs.

2.00-6.00 Field trip

Delegates embraced the mountain air on a field trip to the Cotter Dam led by Professor Ross Thompson and selection of research assistants and PhD students. Discussions around water supply, regional climate alteration and the management of fisheries in the Cotter Dam ensued.

Council Dinner

Delegates dined at the Bella Vista Restaurant, Belconnen where Professor Ross Thompson was the dinner speaker.

Friday 17th October

9.00-10.00 Greg Raisin spoke to delegates on the scientific underpinnings of the Murray Darling Basin Commission. A lengthy and highly informative discussion ensued.

9.15-10.00 LTAS

Discussion on the outline TLOs continued from the previous day. A number of points were raised by delegates, the most notable of which was the need for the TLOs to embrace local knowledge, local and different national contexts,

Pilot testing of the TLOs will be done using a proven LTAS mapping tool. JCU, Griffith, UNE, UWS, ANU, Deakin, RMIT, Melbourne agreed to pilot the level-specific TLOs against their undergraduate courses. This is projected for November.

The following universities volunteered to pilot the TLOs against some of their Masters courses: JCU, Griffith, RMIT, UQ, with ANU, Flinders and UWA being possibilities.

The following universities volunteered to pilot the TLOs against some of their Honours programs: CQU, Flinders, QUT and RMIT. It was suggested that this would take 2-3 hours per courses.

The Council expressed confidence in the process that has been led by the team from the University of Newcastle. The immediate role for ACEDD is to endorse the TLOs with a longer-term continuing role to deliver compliant courses around the TLOs.

Agreed endorsement of the process should take place in late January or early February by up to 10 ACEDD delegates in Sydney. A call for volunteers to join the endorsement panel will be made when the time frame is clearer.

ACEDD Business Session II

Higher education fee deregulation and environmental courses

The Council discussed at length representation to politicians regarding the increase in fees for environmental courses.

Agreed a letter would be sent from ACEDD to relevant Federal and State Ministers, Federal Opposition Portfolios, and Cross-bench Senators. Suggestions were made regarding content and recipients. The President was asked to prepare a draft, to be reviewed by Simon Beecham and Steve Dovers.

ACEDD Scholars Scheme

Agreed to establish an ACEDD Scholars Scheme for undergraduate students who have shown academic excellence and have high potential to contribute to the field of environment. Each paid-up university will, on an annual basis, select a graduating student from their undergraduate courses on criteria that determined by the individual School (e.g, highest GPA or another aspect of outstanding performance). The School will provide ACEDD details of the student, who will be awarded a Certificate and a \$200 award. A policy statement will be developed and posted on the ACEDD web site.

This award will come into effect immediately, i.e . undergraduates who are completing their courses in 2014 and who will graduate in late 2014 or early 2015, will form the first cohort of ACEDD Scholars.

Science meets Parliament

Council decided to change the way that it interacts with the annual **Science meets Parliament** event. Agreed that ACEDD would fund the attendance of one higher level PhD student and one Early Career Researcher each year. The Council Executive will select two attendees from nominees from member universities in good financial standing. **Agreed** a draft policy to be prepared for further consideration.

ACEDD position of ethical investment policies in Australian Universities

Council started to discuss the issue of ethical investments by universities. Delegates were of the opinion that this important issue required further discussion and

suggested the item was revisited at the Autumn meeting. Hamish McCallum (Griffith) proposed a form of words that Council could use to continue the discussion at its next meeting: “The ACEDD supports universities using sustainability criteria in making investment decisions”.

Autumn Meeting, 2015

Charles Morris confirmed the **autumn meeting** would be held at **UWS Parramatta 9-10 April, 2015**. Visits to UWS Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains are potential attractions.

12.30 Closure of formal meeting and votes of thanks

The Council thanked Dave Choquenot and his staff for hosting and organising the meeting at Canberra University, and to Professor Ross Thompson and his research team for the field visit and after dinner speech.

The President thanked four members who had served for many years in the Council but were now stepping down – Hamish McCallum, James Schulmeister, Karl Vernes, and Judith Wake – for their many contributions to ACEDD meetings.

Meeting closed at 2.30 pm