

# SCANZ AGM 2023 Minutes

**Date and time:** 12.55-pm, Thursday 16 November 2023.

**Location:** Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington Pipitea Campus

**Chair:** Sarah-Jane O'Connor, President

**Notes for Minutes by:** Georgia Carson, Secretary

In attendance: Sarah-Jane O'Connor, Georgia Carson, Andrea Liberatore, Emma Hudson-Doyle, Katherine Hurst, Kati Doehring, Jonathan Puddick, McKayla Holloway, Rhian Salmon, Mike Kilpatrick, Molly Magid, Kaitlyn Martin, Penny Fairbrother, Dacia Herbulock, Rhianne Tod, Jana Makar, Erin Smith, Ceridwyn Roberts.

Quorum was formed.

Annual General Meeting commenced at 12:55pm

- 1) Karakia, welcome
- 2) S-J's first president report (see below for full report)
  - a) Doing hybrid set-up for 2023 conference ourselves to save money
  - b) This year has been setting up systems, for instance the membership. No one has had any issues? No, membership rolled out smoothly.
  - c) Conference Innovators arrangement wrapped up – we felt distant from our membership, not effective for us any more
  - d) New admin with Katherine (paid) has been very helpful!
  - e) New rolling membership system, rather than 1 July renewal
  - f) Open to ideas and suggestions
  - g) Networking nights have continued in 2023, plus online options during winter to be accessible
  - h) New award: Emerging Science Communicator
  - i) 6 scholarships for the conference
  - j) Lessons were learned e.g. with hybrid and venue costs in 2022
  - k) We had a loss in 2022, but have come through with 10k in sponsorship and about 100 registrations both days
  - l) Flagging constitutional updates to come with Societies Act deadline in 2026 for registration. Will do updates in 2024 AGM. Changes needed i.e. to apply for charitable status
  - m) Exec changes
    - i) Laura, Maria left
    - ii) Emma leaving in 2024
    - iii) Jana, Penny joined, further new members in 2024
    - iv) Open for EOI on new executive members that can be brought on next year. Let us know if you're thinking of joining in future, may be able to transition in to help with e.g. events
- 3) Emma: Financial statement as year-end March 2023
  - a) Had 7.5k loss last year (mostly from conference outgoings). Higher than expected.
  - b) Tracking to break even or even slight profit this year (can use to reinvest in scholarships etc)
  - c) New accountant
  - d) Xero management
  - e) Bank change to come (current arrangement is unwieldy). Thoughts and suggestions welcome.
- 4) Questions?
  - a) Dacia: appreciation to S-J. Great progress SCANZ is "thriving". Everyone clap!

- b) S-J: we've had a great number of sponsors and memberships.
- c) Rhian: Usually committees in groups like SCANZ have issues with getting people to join the executive, so it's lovely to have so much enthusiasm, brilliant job!
- d) Rhian: Lots of freelancers here, could we have a database of membership for getting work? A members directory.
  - i) S-J: yes, plus we will be expanding activity in LinkedIn and Slack.
  - ii) Emma H-D: This could link into NNN
  - iii) Ceridwyn: Opportunity to use Slack etc to make sure gains of the National Science Challenges aren't lost
  - iv) Dacia: And could be split into freelance and special interest groups.
  - v) SJ: We want to be that support network especially for sole comms people, best to make our own thing rather than trying to chase the next social media trend.
- e) Kati: Some younger sci-comms are coming through. Does the exec need an early career representative?
  - i) S-J: That's an idea; we also have the Australian relationship who are holding an early career symposium
- f) Jonathan: It is refreshing to have SCANZ be so organised, do you want more volunteers?
  - i) Jana: We will need support in 2024, perhaps an Auckland working group, delegating to the community etc. Even if not a formal member of executive.
- g) Jonathan: Scholarships: are we over or under subscribed? Is there flexibility to offer more?
  - i) SJ. We will check after end of financial year. Possibility, we will like to do more on getting sponsorships for scholarships
- h) Rhian: We could think about a way to provide support without joining the exec, if there were more ways to offer support from our organisations. Not just to ask for money but time and resources.

Meeting ended at approximately 1:30pm.

## President's Report - SCANZ AGM

**16 November, 2023**

**Sarah-Jane O'Connor**

This is my first AGM as President and marks one year since taking over from past President Laura Goodall. It's been a busy but productive year as we come out of a few COVID-19 disrupted years and reestablish both our executive committee and event schedule after many changes and challenges the past few years. My focus this year has been on making some upgrades to our systems that I hope will better enable SCANZ to serve its members and focus our volunteer committee's energy toward new initiatives rather than administrative work.

Since 2020, SCANZ has worked with Conference Innovators to manage its members' database, finances and tax filings. While this has served the committee well, the system wasn't designed for membership management and several issues were apparent, particularly with a lack of visibility for members to know their current membership status and easily update details. In mutual agreement, we wrapped up that relationship in April 2023 and contracted an accountant, a paid administrator, and shifted to a new membership system, Membershipworks.

We launched this new system in July 2023 and it enables members to pay the annual dues directly through the website, request an invoice if necessary, and update their own details. We used that transition period to also switch from a single renewal date (July 1) to rolling renewals, meaning members will get a year's membership regardless of when they register. This has also allowed us to keep conference registration in the same system and directly tied to members' discounts. With the system now set up and working well, from 2024 we can consider expanding other features this system offers - including members' only areas, a members database and noticeboard (e.g. job vacancies). We welcome feedback from members on the system itself and what other features you may wish to see SCANZ use, and thank you for bearing with the changes.

In 2023 we hosted three in-person networking events and two online events, alongside our annual conference. We have also run our biennial awards, with a new addition this year of an Emerging Science Communicator category and a boost in the Excellence in Science Communication award from \$1,000 to \$1,500. We have supported six scholarships for attendance at the 2023 conference - two registration only, four registration plus travel one of which was sponsored.

Our 2022 conference, held in Ōtepoti Dunedin was our first held in person since 2019. We struck several logistical difficulties that meant we did not cover the full costs of the conference through ticket sales. From previous experience, conferences in Dunedin tend to attract fewer registrations, presumably due to travel costs, and our sense is this was exacerbated by a disinclination to travel and congregate due to COVID-19. The venue was booked in 2021 and deferred when the 2021 conference shifted online during the extended Auckland lockdown. Therefore, SCANZ was locked into a venue agreement that we needed to use in 2022 and necessitated paying extra to fly invited speakers into the city and hire A/V support to enable live streaming and recording that the venue was not set up to accommodate. In addition, the committee did not have capacity to seek sponsorship due to the resignation of the sponsorship officer earlier in the year. In total, this meant the revenue from conference registration did not cover the costs of delivery, leaving a shortfall of \$11,000 - a cost the executive committee elected to absorb because of the importance of rebuilding an in-person SCANZ conference experience.

However, we've taken the lessons from 2022 and worked hard to make sure our 2023 conference will at minimum break even, but looks on track to recoup some of the losses from last year. In particular, we have been grateful to receive sponsorship support from seven organisations, free venue hire and A/V support from Victoria University of Wellington, a greater number of ticket sales (approximately 100 compared to 70 in 2022) and an increase in active membership which contributes to scholarships and the biennial awards. So while the losses from last year are stark and disappointing, I am confident that we have learnt from the experience and will report a more positive balance in the current year's financial statement, particularly alongside cost savings on operational expenses as described above.

A main priority in 2024 will be to update the association's constitution in line with the new Incorporated Societies Act (2022), which we must do by April 2026. I would like to complete this during my Presidency so as not to leave it for a future executive committee to deal with. During this process, I also intend to propose changes to the constitution which will be required if we wish to apply for charitable status in future, with the goal of making all required changes in one update.

But for now, I extend my thanks to our volunteer committee, our members, corporate sponsors and the wider community that continually shows up to keep SCANZ relevant and lively.

Committee member changes 2022-23:

- Resignations: Laura Goodall (past President), Maria Thomas, Emma Hudson-Doyle.
- New executive: Jana Makar, Penny Fairbrother