

AGUAI Committee Chair Report for AGM, 1 Dec 2022.

The primary task of the AGM is to elect a committee to take responsibility for organization of the next biennial conference. The current committee was elected/co-opted in 2018/19 and subsequently in 2020, 2021 with minimal change. By early 2020 preparation for AASC2020 was progressing well. Emi Tanaka had volunteered to create/manage a webpage, a deposit had secured the venue, a bank account fiasco (involving SA, NSW, NZ and Vic) had been sorted out, guest speakers and workshop leaders had been invited and accepted, progress had been made on the tour program, bus companies identified and lined up.

Then Covid hit. Melbourne became officially the most locked-down city in the world. Could the conference go ahead at the end of 2020? We judged not. With hindsight a correct judgment. When to re-schedule? In view of other conference dates, we decided the end of 2022 would be best. Again, with hindsight, a correct judgment. Availabilities of invited speakers were checked. The venue booking was re-negotiated.

Halfway through 2022, with Covid mutating, the proposed conference dates were still questionable. By the late stage that we got back to the invited speakers with a solid go-ahead decision there had been some attrition; 4 replacement speakers/workshop-presenters were needed. Suggestions from the original speakers and committee filled these reasonably quickly. I can't thank those speakers enough for stepping into the breach at relatively short notice.

The prolonged lockdown made it difficult for tourism businesses in Victoria to survive. The tours originally envisaged needed to be replaced by a different set due to closures of restaurants and galleries, new time restrictions, and environmental burns at a preferred destination.

In March 2022 I retired from AgVic, but decided to see the task of organising AASC2022 through. A little later, AgVic was down-sizing further. Biometrics, the main source of the local organizing committee, has now shrunk from 6 to 2 staff. Official AgVic support for AASC was withdrawn, leaving me holding the baby. Debra Partington however has managed to remain treasurer, and Giri, while being forced to resign as secretary, has continued to help in his own time.

Once again, the New Zealanders came to the rescue. I am extremely thankful, especially to Vanessa Cave (VSN), David Baird (VSN), fellow retiree Ruth Butler, Chris Triggs (U Auckland) for managing the academic program. Also thanks to David Baird and Pauline O'Shaughnessy for filling in as acting secretaries for the last few of months. Also thanks to Emi Tanaka for the website, and Sam Rogers and Peter Kasprzak from SA who set up TryBooking. Khageswor Giri has been my righthand man, whose support has meant a great deal to me. And of course thanks Debra Partington for continuing in the key role of treasurer.

The Covid years, 2020 – 2022, have been anxious years for the conference committee. Who will come? Will it be economically viable? Can we manage Covid? While Covid is still about and causing trouble, wider society has almost returned to normal. Meeting together in person is feasible. Earlier in the year I was bracing myself for a small conference attendance, run at a big financial loss. It remains to be seen how the budget turns out, but the attendance has by far exceeded my expectations. The problems switched from having too few to having too many with insufficient accommodation, transportation, and a program that may be too intense in its attempt to cram in as many presentations as possible, whilst adhering to the AASC tradition of no parallel sessions.

It was a relief to see local, national and international travel restored. The conference is now underway. We are indebted to the presenters, both invited and contributed, without whom the

conference would be pointless. We have appreciated the chance to meet face-to-face at AASC2022, to make and renew connections and to share ideas.

AASC has an historical link with Genstat, and we continue to enjoy the support of VSNi who own and market Genstat, This support has been critical. Nonetheless the name of the conference changed from Genstat to AASC. This has broadened its appeal but simultaneously made our association name, AGUAI, somewhat obscure and anachronistic, requiring explanation to new commers. I believe it would be worth considering a name change from AGUAI to something else. Perhaps the new committee could look into this and the bureaucratic process and costs needed to achieve it, as well as appropriate adjustment to the aims, to make them more congruent with the current reality, whilst respecting its historical links. Perhaps the committee could bring a proposal to the next AGM.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Murray Hannah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Murray Hannah

(Chairperson, on behalf of the AGUAI committee)