

SCANZ President's Report

It is very difficult not to begin this report in a clichéd way given the immense challenges we have all faced in the last 15 months. The word 'unprecedented' has been vastly overused, but there is no escaping the fact that the effects of the spread of SARS-CoV2 have been profound. As I write this report I am acutely aware that these impacts are still being felt.

In addition to the world being turned inside out, there has been quite a lot of activity within SCANZ since the last Crystal meeting (the joint AsCA/Crystal32) in December 2018, which being the last time we could all interact in person, seems a lifetime ago. One of the major changes is that I am writing to you as president, rather than David Aragão. As you will be aware, David relocated to the UK in early 2019 for both work and family reasons, generously remaining in the role as President until late last year, despite no longer being (geographically) part of the Australasian community. We all owe David a sincere thank-you for all that he has given – through his roles in SCANZ (as Treasurer, Vice-President and President), the crystallography schools and his work at the Australian Synchrotron.

There have been two crystallography schools since the Crystal32 meeting – the first in January 2019 at the University of Queensland and the second at the beginning of this year, held entirely online. These schools continue to be a major strength of the activities of SCANZ and I extend a debt of gratitude to all those who have contributed to organising, delivering and attending these schools.

Another major initiative that has been actioned since Crystal32 is the transfer of the 1987 fund to professional management by Grant Thornton. More detail is provided in the report from Mark Spackman that accompanies this. These changes provide the Society with a predictable annual income and the opportunity to budget for new initiatives. Mark Spackman has worked with the other 1987 fund trustees (Megan Maher, Charlie Bond) to implement this change. On behalf of the Council and the membership I'd like to thank Charlie and Mark for their significant work in this area.

Some new initiatives have commenced and some are planned. You will have noticed already that in addition to the award of Maslen scholarships to support student registration for this year's IUCr, bursaries for ECRs have also been provided. SCANZ has also subsidised the current Crystal33 meeting in order to significantly reduce registration costs. Future initiatives that are planned include financial support for care givers to attend international meetings and additional support for the crystallography schools. The naming of the new awards (ECR bursaries and the support for carers) is something the Council will be working on in the immediate future. We would very much appreciate suggestions from the membership.

Of course, IUCr 2023 is on the horizon and under the direction of Michael Parker, planning is well underway. I know Michael is hopeful that (just as the 1987 meeting did) the conference will provide a long lasting legacy for our crystallographic community. I hope for the same – this is an amazing opportunity to highlight the incredible strength and breadth of Australian science, to reinvigorate our disciplines and engage a new generation of our community. I am very much looking forward to the next 2 years.

A number of people are completing their formal contributions to SCANZ at this meeting. Thank-you very much to Jade Forward and Tara Christie for their service to the Education Committee, Jo Etheridge for her contributions to the Nominations Committee, Suzanne Neville for her membership of the Council and Brendan Abrahams for his service as Treasurer. Finally, sincere thanks to Chris Ling for his time as Secretary, President and Past President and particularly for the incredible persistence he has shown in chairing the organisation of this Crystal33 meeting. It has definitely not been an easy road and I am very grateful that he has seen it through. He and the other members of the Organising and Program Committees – Aaron Oakley, Jade Forward, Alison Edwards, Suzanne Neville, Katrina Zenere, Michael Gardiner, Tom Caradoc-Davies, Alastair Stewart and Yun Liu – should be congratulated on delivering an outstanding meeting under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. I hope they are all now looking forward to a good rest.

The SCANZ Council intends to respond proactively to the changing world as we progress out of this acute phase of the Covid19 pandemic, and as outlined above, is open to rethinking its existing activities and considering new ones. In addition to the diversity and inclusion policies already in place, core values of openness, transparency, inclusion and collegiality are crucial to providing effective support to our community. As President, I am committed to ensuring that this will be the culture that the Council and the Society will enjoy.

Megan Maher