

November 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: Wednesday 17th November 2010

TIME: 6pm

VENUE: Tivoli Club, 291 Dandenong Rd, Windsor.

MINUTES

1. Formal matters

Ian Robinson was elected as Chair for the meeting.

Present: Lyn Allison, Jason Ball, Kevin Childs, Will Darvall, Barb Darvall, Bodye Darvill, Meredith Doig, Edwin Dravitzki, David McKenzie, Brian McKinlay, Wal Parker, Ian Paroissien, Diane Preston, Ian Robinson, Tania Rook, Lillian Van Der Molen, Karl Willrath, Ken Wright.

There being more than ten paid up Members present, the Chair declared a quorum.

Apologies: Trevor Lee, Barbara McKenzie, John Perkins

2. Minutes of the previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on Sunday 13th December 2009 at 1/6 Pilley St, St Kilda East, had been circulated and were also available for those present. It was moved by Kevin Childs and seconded by Lyn Allison that they be accepted as a true record. Carried without dissent.

3. Business arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the Minutes of the previous AGM.

4. Reports

a) President's report

Ian Robinson told the meeting that this would be his last year as President of the Rationalist Society. Citing Psalm 90, he said "Our days may come to seventy years" but he did not want his years to end "in labour and sorrow" and therefore he had decided to retire.

Ian recalled his long association with the Rationalist Society, from joining as an ordinary Member in 1967, becoming (the youngest) member of the Committee in the early 1970s, and then rejoining the Committee after an interregnum of 15 years - still the youngest!

Ian said he has been determined that this should not happen again and he has been delighted to see people half his age now on the Committee, people who have introduced the RSA to new technology like Facebook, Twitter and an updated website.

Ian encouraged Members to get involved in pressing issues such as defending the quality of public education, and in particular its secular nature; and challenging 'pseudo science' in the public sphere.

He concluded by saying that he had enjoyed his time with the RSA, as committee member, as Editor of the journal, and as President. He recalled the wonderful Greengables conferences and the monthly talks and he paid tribute to Sonja Delander, Bill Cooke, the Crosbie-Goolds, and Lois Sweet as mentors and friends.

Ian promised that he will continue to speak and write for the RSA in the years to come.

b) Secretary's report

Secretary Meredith Doig reported that there were presently 425 paid up Members (last AGM, 403). The Committee has met consistently on a monthly basis, other than January (and October, when the Secretary was overseas).

The website has been provided with additional functionality. Readers can now make comments on journal articles and the most recent archived journals are restricted to paid up Members. It is hoped this may encourage more people to join.

Anticipating the retirement of the President, a new Membership Secretary position had been established and Meredith introduced Tania Rook, who has assumed this new role, to the meeting.

Since the last AGM, there have been three journal issues - 84, 85 and 86. Issue 85 was particularly exciting, as it featured young writers.

c) Treasurer's report

Treasurer Meredith Doig tabled a financial report for the Financial Year to 30th June 2010 and commented that inflows to and outflows from the Society were almost evenly balanced, with inflows of \$19,814 and outflows of \$18,661.

The Committee has been prudent in utilising members' fees, ensuring that the costs of mounting events or producing goods for sale (eg, T shirts) were matched with the revenue.

The Committee made contributions to 'good causes' amounting to \$1,000. These included support for the legal costs of Leo Igwe, a representative of the IHEU in West Africa who has been harassed by local police; a contribution to Ron Williams' High Court challenge to the constitutionality of religious-only chaplains in government schools; and sponsorship of a seminar on Secularism put on by the Macquarie University Atheist League.

The Society has about \$10,000 in the bank.

5. Motions received with the required 21 days notice

- a) Moved Barbara Darvall and seconded David McKenzie, to amend the constitution of the Rationalist Society to read:

1 (a) *To propound and advance Rationalism, that is, adherence to the principle that all significant beliefs and actions should be based on reason and evidence, that the natural world is the only world there is and that answers to the key questions of human existence are to be found only in that natural world. which is defined as the attitude of mind which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason, and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics independent of all arbitrary assumptions of authority.*

Carried with one against.

- b) Moved Meredith Doig and seconded Bodye Darvill, to amend the constitution of the Rationalist Society to read:

2 (c) *Every application shall be in writing in such form as the Committee may require, and shall disclose the full name, postal address and ~~occupation~~ email address (if available) of the proposed member.*

Carried without dissent.

- c) Moved Meredith Doig and seconded Bodye Darvill, to amend the constitution of the Rationalist Society to read:

14 (i) *If directed to do so by the Committee or a general meeting of the Society, the Treasurer shall procure the accounts of the Society to be audited and for that purpose shall submit all relevant books, accounts and papers to the Auditor, ~~as required by the Committee or a general meeting of the Society.~~*

Carried without dissent.

6. Election of a Committee

Nominations for office bearers were received from Meredith Doig as President, David McKenzie as Vice President, Bodye Darvill as General Secretary, Lyn Allison as Treasurer, and Jason Ball, Diane Preston, and Kevin Childs for the Committee. There being fewer nominations than vacancies, the Chair declared all duly elected.

Upon his retirement from the post of President, Ian Robinson automatically becomes Immediate Past President. In addition, it was moved by Meredith Doig and seconded by Jason Ball that Ian be appointed as *President Emeritus*. This was carried without dissent.

Further, it was moved by Meredith Doig and seconded by Jason Ball that Diane Preston be appointed General Counsel. This was also carried without dissent.

7. Any other business

In recognition of his long contribution to the Rationalist Society, it moved by Ian Robinson and seconded by Meredith Doig that David McKenzie be appointed a Life Member of the Society.

In speaking to this motion, Ian drew Members' attention to the unflagging contribution that David has made to the Society over more than 35 years. The motion was carried with acclamation. David joins a small group of other Life Members that includes Bill Cook, Sonja Delander and Lois Sweet.

In accepting this appointment, David graciously acknowledged the honour of being a Life Member of the Rationalist Society of Australia.

Meredith Doig then explained to the meeting that Member John Perkins could not be present for the meeting, but had asked for assistance with letterboxing the Victorian electorate of Melbourne, where he was standing as a candidate for the Secular Party.

8. Close of meeting

The new President thanked Members for their attendance and invited everyone to share a meal at the Tivoli Club.