

**Proposal to make the Editor of the *Journal and Proceedings*
of the Royal Society of New South Wales
an appointed member of Council**

Explanatory memorandum

Background

The *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW* is one of the oldest peer-reviewed journals in the Southern Hemisphere. It has been published continuously since 1867 and is widely regarded as an important historical record of intellectual life in New South Wales.

From 1875 to 2021, the Editor of the Journal was a Council office-bearer, the Honorary Secretary (Editorial). In 2021, there was a major revision to the Rules of the Society and the office of Honorary Secretary (Editorial) was abolished. Unless the Editor stood for election as an ordinary Council member, there was no representation of the Journal on Council.

In 2022, a group of current and former Editors, Presidents of the Society, and Editorial Board members wrote to the Council requesting that this decision be reviewed. They argued that the Journal is the Society's premier output, being an important and acknowledged record of a large part of the Society's activities. Despite the rise of the internet, the on-line Bulletin and other recent offerings, it is the Journal that consistently ties the Society to its heritage. Over the past decade, the breadth and depth of scholarship and learning displayed in the Journal and the comprehensive proceedings of the Society have created a historical perspective that otherwise could be lost in times of rapid change.

The Council agreed to consider the request as part of the governance review to be undertaken during the master planning process that took place in the second half of 2023. The Council has concluded that because the publication of the Journal is such an important activity, the Editor again should be an office-bearer of the Society. Furthermore, because successfully editing a peer-reviewed journal requires very specific skills and experience, the Editor should be appointed rather than elected. Any such appointment should be subject to approval by the membership at a general meeting.

Hence, the Council is proposing that following resolution be adopted by the membership:

**The members of the Royal Society of NSW RESOLVE that:
*the Rules of the Society be amended as follows:***

Rule 16(c) be amended to insert "16(c)(vi) the Editor of the Journal and Proceedings" and the subsequent subclauses be renumbered accordingly.

Rule 18(a) be amended to read "The President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Librarian, and Webmaster and the ordinary Members or Fellows elected to Council shall be elected for a period of two years. The position of Editor of the Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales shall be appointed by Council, based on the skills and experience required to edit a peer-reviewed journal. The Editor shall hold office until the second Annual General Meeting after the appointment. The appointment shall be subject to approval by the membership at the next Ordinary General Meeting after the appointment".

Rule 27(b) "The Editor of the Society's Journal and Proceedings will be appointed by



Council” be deleted as it is no longer required and the subsequent subclauses be renumbered accordingly.

A vote of the membership will be taken **by electronic ballot that will open at 12 noon AEDT on Monday 25 March 2024 and will close at 12 noon AEST on Monday 15 April 2024.** During this period, members will have the opportunity to consider the matter and raise any concerns or issues with the Council regarding the proposal.

The Council also wishes to advise members that if the resolution is passed, it will appoint the current Editor, Robert Marks, to the position. Robert has done an outstanding job as Editor since 2016 and is keen to continue to contribute to the ongoing success of the Journal. Should this create a vacancy among the elected positions on Council, the next candidate on the current ballot to fill the five vacancies on the Council will advance.

The following Q&A attempts to address potential questions that may be asked by members.

Questions and answers

Q: What are the special skills and experience required by the Editor?

A: The peer-review process requires comprehensive general knowledge across the disciplines of the Society to determine appropriate referees to undertake the peer review. Finding suitable referees can be time-consuming and is greatly facilitated if the Editor has a broad network of contacts in many fields. Once referees have been identified, there can be lengthy correspondence between the referees, the Editor, and the author before a paper is accepted for publication.

Q: How time-consuming is the job of editing the Journal?

A: This varies according to the nature of the edition and the point in the publication cycle. The peer review process is only one part of the editorial responsibilities. A substantial part of the job is to record the proceedings of the Society, in particular, the record of the Royal Society of New South Wales and Learned Academies Forum. Once compiling the content of the journal is complete, typesetting and printing need to be arranged, drafts reviewed and the final printing and postage and electronic distribution organised. There is also the need to liaise with the libraries of deposit and correspond with institutions who participate in the journal exchange program. It can vary from one day to three or four days a week in peak periods – it is a large time commitment.

Q: Why is it so important that the Editor be an office-bearer, rather than just an ordinary member of Council?

A: The Council believes that because of the importance of the Journal and Proceedings in keeping the historical record of the activities of the Society, the position of Editor should be an office-bearer to reflect that standing.

Q: Why can't the Editor simply stand for election to Council like everyone else?

A: The Council considered the option of restoring the position of Honorary Secretary (Editorial) and renaming it as Editor. However, this does not solve the problem of ensuring that high editorial standards are maintained, and that the Editor possesses the suitable experience



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and knowledge to undertake the role. In the past, when all office-bearers were elected once a year, often there was only one candidate, who was therefore elected regardless of experience. The Council concluded that the best way to ensure the person possesses the qualifications required and is willing to undertake the substantial workload and time commitment, was to appoint the Editor subject to approval of the membership.

Q: Can you give some more detail on how the current election for new Council members will work?

A: *The call for nominations for this year's Council resulted in six nominations for five vacancies. This requires an election. One of the nominations was the current Editor, Robert Marks, whose two-year term expires at this year's AGM. The Council believes that the appropriate course of action is for the election to take place according to the current Rules. If the proposed resolution is passed by the membership, Robert Marks will be appointed as Editor. This will remove his candidature from the ballot for ordinary Council membership and advance the next candidate to fill the vacancy.*

If members have any questions or concerns, they are encouraged to contact the President (president@royalsoc.org.au) or the Secretary (secretary@royalsoc.org.au)

On behalf of the Council,



Dr Donald Hector AM FRSN
Secretary

20 March 2024

