



# THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SINCE 1821

## Minutes of the 1299<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Meeting of The Royal Society of New South Wales held by ZOOM Webinar on Wednesday 1 December 2021 at 6.30PM.

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There were 42 Members, Fellows and guests in attendance.

### 1. WELCOME

The immediate Past President, Emeritus Professor Ian Sloan AO FRSN presided at the meeting. He welcomed members and guests and gave an acknowledgement of country. He also referred to the Society's Diversity and Inclusion Policy and asked that members consider nominating female candidates and those from diverse backgrounds for membership of the Society.

#### 1.1 Minutes of the 1298<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Meeting held on 6 October 2021

The Minutes of the previous Ordinary General Meeting, previously circulated, were approved.

### 2 CONFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP

As no valid objection had been lodged within two weeks following the 1298<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Meeting, the election of the following Members took effect from the date of that meeting held on 6 October 2021.

#### 2.1 Members

Ms Neanne Alnafta  
Dr Fakhri Athari  
Ms Claire Eloise Flitcroft  
Dr Budhadya Majumdar  
Mr William Bradley Webster

### 3 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

#### 3.1 Fellows

It was noted that at its meeting on 12 October, the Fellows and Members Assessment Committee made the following recommendations for Fellowship. These recommendations were circulated to Councillors following the meeting and no objections were received. If no objections are received by 6.30pm on 15 December, the election of the following new Fellows will take effect from 1 December 2021.

Professor Michele Therese Ford  
Professor Simon Ho  
Professor Jennifer Louise Martin  
Professor Robert A. Minasian  
Associate Professor Alice Elizabeth Motion  
Professor Louis Michael Rendina  
Professor Charles Christopher Sorrell  
Honorary Professor Graham Edward Town  
Scientia Professor Toby Walsh

### **3.2 Members**

It was noted that if no valid objection was lodged within two weeks of this Ordinary General Meeting, that is, by 6.30pm on 15 December 2021, the election of the following new Members would take effect from the date of this meeting.

Mr Benjamin Fry  
Mr Michael Atkinson  
Ms Alice O'Keefe  
Dr Michelle Humphries  
Mr Nicholas Raphael

## **4 REPORT FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL**

Professor Sloan reported on the following matters.

- Council approved the 2022 Budget at its November meeting.
- Council approved a Conflict-of-Interest Policy at its November meeting
- The Annual Forum held on the mornings of 4 and 5 November with the theme *Power and Peril of The Digital Age* had been very successful. There was a detailed report in the December issue of the *Bulletin* and all presentations were available on the Society's YouTube channel.
- The Society's exhibition NEXUS in the Jean Garling Room at the State Library of NSW was now open. He encouraged members to visit. It was open Monday 2.00 – 5.00pm, Thursday 3.00 – 6.00pm and Sunday 2.00 – 5.00pm. The exhibition had been extended until 31 March 2022.
- The 2021 Awards would be announced at the February 2022 Ordinary General Meeting.

## **5 QUESTIONS**

There were no questions sent to the President in advance.

## **6 THE EVENING'S PRESENTATION**

### **MANAGING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN TIMES OF STRESS: HANDLING THE STRESS OF COVID-19**

**Professor Richard Bryant AC FASSA FAA FAHMS  
Scientia Professor of Psychology and Director, Traumatic Stress Clinic  
University of NSW (Sydney)**

Professor Bryant's research has focused on the nature and treatment of stress reactions. He has identified key genetic, neural, and psychological factors underpinning stress reactions and strategies to manage them. His assessment and treatment protocols have been translated into over 15 languages and used in many countries. Professor Bryant has written 6 books, 75 book chapters, and 670 journal articles. He has worked with the World Health Organization to develop programs to manage stress reactions and has adapted these to manage mental health problems during the pandemic. This program has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, and anxiety, and is being evaluated across Australia, Europe, and India.

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Australia has a long tradition of dealing with environmental challenges, including seasonal impacts of bushfires, floods, drought, and severe storms. These events can result in marked deterioration in the mental health of Australians. This pattern has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen a significant increase in mental health problems across the nation. This has sparked calls both in Australia and globally for novel approaches to manage mental health problems in the wake of these mass events.

The presentation described a body of work that has mapped many of the key mechanisms that promote better mental health after adversity. It also described work that has harnessed this evidence to develop brief mental health programs that can be readily disseminated to people in times of need. Controlled trials were reported that have evaluated the extent to which these programs can improve mental health, and how this approach points to a re-think of how mental health is managed by governments.

There followed a pre-recorded question and answer session with Dr Elizabeth Deane, who also gave the vote of thanks.

## **7 CLOSE**

In closing the meeting, Professor Sloan thanked Professor Bryant for an excellent presentation.

The meeting closed at 7.53pm