



Australian Regolith Geoscientists Association (ARGA)

Annual General Meeting

1.30 pm CST Wednesday 11th April 2018

Keg Room, Coopers Alehouse, Wallaroo, South Australia

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

In the absence of the President (Leah Moore) and Vice-President (Vanessa Wong), John Keeling (Treasurer and Public Officer) sought approval from members to Chair the opening proceedings of the AGM. This was agreed to by the members present. Ian Roach was invited to record minutes of the proceedings.

Annual General Meeting opened by John Keeling at 1.30 pm.

Apologies: Leah Moore (President), Vanessa Wong (Vice-President), Andrew McPherson

Present: John Keeling (Treasurer and Public Officer), Carmen Krapf (Committee Member and Conference Organiser), Nadir de Souza Kovacs (Committee Member), Ian Roach (Committee Member and Webmaster), Ignacio Gonzalez Alvarez (Member), Sara Jakica (Member), Ken McQueen (Member), Lisa Worrall (Member), Tony Eggleton (Member), Richard Greene (Member), Brad Pillans (Member), David Dunkerley (Member), Trish Fanning (Member), Anna Petts (Member), Savannah McGuirk (Member), Adrian Fabris (Member), Allan Chivas (Member).

2. Adoption of Minutes of Previous AGM

Minutes of the previous AGM held on 23 February 2017 were circulated to members. These were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting, without amendment – moved by Carmen Krapf, seconded by Nadir De Souza Kovacs - **Agreed**.

3. President's Report

In the absence of the President and Vice President, no President's Report was formally presented. The Chair informally advised the meeting that the President commended the work of the committee in addressing the future of ARGA and its role as an effective Association to promote and further develop regolith science. The deliberations of the committee were formalised in a discussion paper

which was circulated to the then 35 members of ARGA in July 2017. The discussion paper included the proposition that ARGA merge with the Geological Society of Australia (GSA). Distribution of the discussion paper was accompanied by a ballot in which members were invited to give their preference of 4 options, as a means of providing feedback to the Committee in the lead up to the 2018 AGM. Twenty responses were returned, 15 in favour of some form of merger with GSA, 5 for status quo of ARGA as a separate organisation. Based on the result of the ballot, ARGA committee members moved to develop the resolution to be considered and voted on by members at the 2018 ARGA AGM.

The President had also commended the work of Conference Organiser Carmen Krapf in planning and delivering an excellent conference and associated field trips, presently being enjoyed at Wallaroo. Carmen's efforts and those who assisted, namely John Keeling and Anna Petts, are much appreciated by all members. The Geological Survey of South Australia is thanked for its contribution for printing the proceedings and field guides, as well as providing logistical and in-kind support.

4. Treasurer's report and statement of accounts

John Keeling (Treasurer) tabled the ARGA financial report as at 6th April 2018 (see Attachment 1). Details of the financial situation were discussed briefly in a positive light.

Motion to accept the Treasurer's financial report was moved by John Keeling, seconded by Ken McQueen – **Agreed.**

The Committee and all present members thanked John Keeling for all his work in managing the Association's finances over the past 10 years and keeping them close to the original seed funding of \$35k when ARGA was set up. This was especially endorsed by Lisa Worrall and was acknowledged as being an agreed objective, confirmed at the Mildura conference in 2012.

Concerning the conference costs for the 2018 conference in Wallaroo, Carmen Krapf indicated that they will likely to be neutral or slightly over. The Treasurer advised that after conference expenses were paid, the balance of funds was anticipated to be approximately \$29,400.

5. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members

The Chair advised that nominations had been received for all positions on the Committee and that only one nomination had been received for each position. Under Rule 13.4 of the Association the nominated Members were duly elected as follows:

President: Carmen Krapf

Vice President: Leah Moore (Retiring President is automatically elected as Vice President under Rule 12.2)

Secretary and Website: Ian Roach

Treasurer (and Public Officer): John Keeling

Ordinary Members: Nadir De Souza Kovacs, Ignacio González-Álvarez (Nacho), Anna Petts, Savannah McGuirk*

*Lisa Worrall commented that the committee should invite non-geologist or academic members in order to reflect the broad nature of regolith geoscience. Savannah McGuirk volunteered to join the Committee as an additional ordinary member, moved by Carmen Krapf and seconded by Lisa Worrall - **Agreed.**

Carmen Krapf, as incoming ARGA President, was invited to take the Chair for the remainder of the AGM.

6. Special Resolution

Motion of a special resolution for decision by members on the “Future of ARGA”:

Motion: “Members endorse the ARGA committee to proceed with application to the Geological Society of Australia Inc. to establish a regolith Specialist Group within GSA and, if accepted, the committee to then proceed with winding up the Australian Regolith Geoscientists Association Inc. and the transfer of remaining financial assets to GSA, principally to support the activities of the regolith Specialist Group, as detailed in a memorandum of understanding with GSA.”

Moved by John Keeling and seconded by Anna Petts.

Background: The ARGA Committee finalised the ‘Future of Regolith’ paper in 2017, detailing how regolith science is diminishing in Australian universities and government agencies. The Committee also acknowledged that the membership of ARGA is not increasing. The Committee felt that promotion of the discipline within the GSA seemed the most logical place, given the wide demographic of the GSA. ARGA could continue its biennial conference, and also enjoy increased membership through awareness-raising at the GSA conferences through symposia.

Discussion: The President (Carmen) set the scene regarding the Committee’s view towards the preference for merging with the GSA in that:

- ARGA has shrinking member numbers, with most activity occurring around the biennial conferences
- Less and less people were available for a 3 to 5 day national conference and it is harder for people to attend with shrinking budgets. Many members are now retirees.
- ARGA needs to gain more exposure and a higher profile within the Australian geoscience community, but which society or group should ARGA merge with?
- Most members felt that the merger should be with either the GSA or the Soil Science Society of Australia (SSSA). Each group has their own benefits and shortcomings. It is viewed that the regolith discipline is so much more than soil, and that the interests of ARGA are too broad for the SSSA.
- It is acknowledged that a merger with the GSA will alienate some members, but not so many as would a merger with the SSSA.
- It is acknowledged that not all members would be from a soil or mineral exploration background, but the question remains: what large organisation represents most of ARGA’s interests?
- Discussions with Caroline Tiddy (GSA President) indicated that the GSA would be pleased to consider ARGA’s proposal, as it had no regolith representation.

An open discussion from the floor followed, summarised below:

- Anna Petts (GSA SA Branch representative) confirmed that ARGA's funds would transfer to GSA but would be held specifically for use by the regolith specialist group, as directed by members of the specialist group. GSA could arrange a website for ARGA, or link to the present web site. ARGA would be welcomed by GSA to continue its present biennial conference and become an active specialist group. GSA acknowledges that some specialist groups are non-functioning.
- Lisa Worrall asked how much the GSA would expect to earn in fees from ARGA members. Anna replied that naturally the GSA would expect to earn something from ARGA. Lisa stated that ARGA charges only a nominal fee. Carmen commented that the GSA was not too concerned about numbers.
- Ken McQueen commented that ARGA members would get better value from the GSA and that worries about 'stealing' money were unfounded. The GSA wants to become more inclusive and broader by including regolith.
- Carmen commented that the GSA merger would broaden the ARGA membership base and attract previous CRC LEME students who have dropped off the radar. Carmen recommended not changing the name 'ARGA' but to maintain the branding.
- Trish Fanning asked how much it would cost to join the GSA. Anna replied \$175 including the Australian Journal of Earth Sciences. Trish asked if it would be required to be a GSA member to attend the ARGA conference. Anna and Carmen replied that it would not be required. One could be a non-member of the GSA and still attend ARGA conferences.
- Tony Eggleton suggested that only GSA members could be ARGA Committee members and that non-GSA members needed to be able to hear about the ARGA conferences. He further commented that there is a greater chance of that knowledge coming with GSA membership, which would by-pass non-members. Carmen suggested that ARGA maintain the 'Friends of ARGA' email list, and that this would not be an issue. There is already ad-hoc advertising by word of mouth and through the ARGA website and Facebook page. Ian Roach suggested that indeed there would be more likelihood of non-GSA members hearing about the ARGA conference. Anna stated that non-GSA members can be on mailing lists. The specialist groups of the GSA can pretty much do what they want. GSA handles notices for co-advertised functions in a relaxed manner, and it would not be an impediment. Anna suggested that ARGA introduce an invited speaker to visit GSA branches around Australia, and that there will be excitement by members to hear that there are regolith-related talks, which could be more interesting than the traditional GSA talks. ARGA has a good chance to engage in non-hard rock themes.
- Nadir de Souza Kovacs stated that ARGA needed to fill a gap formed by Critical Zone work in other countries, and increasingly in Australia, and engage with these researchers.
- Savannah McGuirk stated that it was hard to discover information on ARGA activities and that ARGA either to hold its own activities or be associated with someone else. ARGA needed free advertising for other activities.
- Lisa stated that ARGA needs to be active in promotion for its conference, and asked had we investigated association with other societies like the ASEG, GSA, SSSA, AIG and their conferences? Carmen stated that the main society investigated was the GSA. John Keeling asked what were the mechanisms available for association with other societies? Lisa stated

that she didn't know, but that ARGA should look at the combined conferences like ASEG-PESA-AIG. Ken pointed out that ARGA already publicised itself through other groups.

- Lisa stated that ARGA needed to have a stated objective of publicity. Tony pointed out that ARGA also needed to keep in touch with mining companies and the exploration industry. John stated that the target of publicity depended on the purpose of the ARGA conference. ARGA was about getting like-minded people together rather than being solely focussed on the minerals industry. ARGA was not set up to support the minerals industry.
- Lisa pointed out that there would be a perception that a merger with the GSA would be 'geological'. Richard Greene stated that he would not join the GSA. He wants ARGA to try and attract other groups to meetings. There is the potential to solicit like-minded organisations and ARGA needed to maintain a collegiate group.
- Carmen pointed out that the merger was more about getting more exposure for ARGA and its interests. ARGA should promote the history of regolith document in The Australian Geologist (TAG) to encourage further education about ARGA. ARGA is not currently in that mindset. The merger with the GSA will give the Committee more impetus to promote ARGA's interests. Lisa countered by saying that we can do a lot more to promote ARGA without losing individuality. Ken stated that ARGA needs a big brother to help us develop links to larger organisations. ARGA would draw people into the GSA and that the GSA needs to loosen its regulation regarding specialist group membership. Ken suggested to rename ARGA to the 'Specialist group in Regolith and Critical Zone Science'. Tony asked if ARGA members could join the GSA as 'Affiliate members'.
- Carmen stated that we had been talking about the future of ARGA for nearly ten years and had still not moved forward. Lisa stated that membership of all societies seemed to be falling and ARGA was not going to fix this by joining the GSA. Carmen stated that the GSA needed to revisit its cost model and introduce other styles of membership. Ian Roach also supported this view that ARGA needed to approach the GSA and ask what the GSA could do for ARGA. Ken agreed and said that we needed to make sure that we get the best deal we can with respect to membership fees.
- Trish asked to hear any other arguments against the proposed merger. Lisa stated that Colin Pain had objected to the proposal. Ken stated that the opinion of 'why change?' was backward-looking. Carmen acknowledged that ARGA could continue as it is and get the Committee to address the issues of falling membership and poor conference attendance. Trish stated that ANZGG wouldn't dream of joining the GSA, and that its members didn't want to. Lisa pointed out that the ANZGG had been running for 35 years and its conferences attracted between 30 and 130 people. Trish noted that there were a lot of arguments for the merger with GSA, but few against. Carmen stated that this issue had been recurring for the past 6 years. Lisa stated that Colin Pain and Matilda Thomas felt that ARGA would lose its identity, it was very different to geology, and felt that the uniqueness of regolith science would be lost, and that the GSA and Geoscience Australia (GA) were biased against regolith science. Ian objected to the assertion about GA and stated that the current 'Exploring for the Future' program featured a very strong regolith and cover science focus, and was fully supported by the Mineral Systems Branch Head, Richard Blewett. Tony noted that there was no regolith taught at the ANU, although Penny King was currently teaching Critical Zone science, and that the Australian Clay Minerals Society (ACMS – another obvious merger opportunity) was dying off.

- Ian spoke about his and Andrew McPherson's reasons for starting the merger conversation in Thredbo in 2016. ARGA needs to increase its influence with the universities and the Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) by merging with a politically-connected organisation. ARGA has no influence, and is unrecognised by the large organisations such as the AGC and the Australian Academy of Science. ARGA should have been consulted in making the large decisions in the last decade, such as the UNCOVER Initiative and the creation of the MinEx CRC. ARGA as it stands is unrepresentative and its meetings consisted of members only speaking to themselves.
- Anna stated that the current Australian science curriculum is missing geology, which ARGA could have a hand in addressing.
- Savannah asked why ARGA doesn't engage with overseas researchers? The ANZGG can attract Scandinavian researchers and that this was a really obvious way to raise the profile.
- Lisa stated that there was a trend to moving away from really big field-based conferences towards limited numbers conferences.
- Ian pointed out that ARGA needed to get big or it would be lost, and that the members at the meeting should acknowledge that today's decision was to approach the GSA asking to negotiate a merger, rather than being a foregone conclusion. John agreed. Carmen pointed out that the GSA Council would also need to vote to accept ARGA as a specialist group. The timeframe would be a decision by October 2018 at the AGC meeting, and that the Committee needed to keep the ARGA membership informed.

Vote on the resolution: The Chair drew the discussion to conclusion with the comment that a range of views had been openly discussed and that it was time to vote on the resolution. The members indicated that a show of hands was acceptable.

Proxies from members unable to attend the AGM had been invited in the Notice of Meeting. John Keeling read the list of proxies received and the names of members present to whom they were assigned. The proxies voted 9 for and 5 against the motion. A show of hands in the room had 8 for and 2 against the motion, with 3 abstentions counted. The votes on the motion were 17 for, 7 against and 3 abstentions. **The motion for the special resolution was passed.**

Comments following the passing of the special resolution

- Allan Chivas stated that there was a need to decide the actual cost of the specialist group membership fee, which should not be too great. Carmen suggested that it should not be more than the current \$1.
- Carmen stated that, based on the votes, the membership had endorsed the Committee to commence negotiations with the GSA.

7. Any other business

Next ARGA conference. The President suggested that it should be within the next 2 years. Richard Greene pointed out that the conference should again try not to clash with university teaching time, the AGU and school holidays.

Two options were put forward:

1. Queensland on the Atherton Tableland to engage with Critical Zone scientists at Malanda. September would be the best month due to weather. There are lots of potential groups to engage with in the region. This was suggested by Lisa Worrall.
2. Perth Critical Zone Observatory in the Avon River area. This was suggested by Carmen as a backup option.

Carmen suggested that the next Annual General Meeting would be the best time to decide where the next conference would be held. Carmen stated that she would do her best to promote the legacy of the previous regolith work in Australia.

Richard Greene thanked Carmen for her outstanding work on organising the Wallaroo conference.

Carmen asked for ARGA's best wishes to be passed on to Paul Morris, retiring regolith geochemist at the GSWA.

The Annual General Meeting was closed at 3.30 pm

Attachment 1:**Australian Regolith Geoscientists Association Inc.****Statement of Financial Position**

As at 6 April 2018

Note	6 Apr 2018 \$	22 Feb 2017 \$
Current Assets		
Cash		
Westpac Community Solutions cash reserve account	27,312.93	29,134.43
Westpac deposit account	4,486.10	1,376.90
Non Current Assets		
Property, investments etc.	0.00	0.00
TOTAL ASSETS	31,799.03	30,511.33
Current Liabilities		
Payables	0.00	0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0.00	0.00
NET ASSETS	31,799.03	30,511.33

Statement of Income and Expenditure

As at 6 April 2018

Note	6 April 2018 \$	22 Feb 2017 \$
Income		
Membership	2.00	0.00
Conference registrations	7,150.00	1,170.00
Bank Interest	181.70	269.47
Donations	0.00	1,000.00
Net operating Income	7,333.70	2,439.47
Expenditure		
Administration, website		199.00
Conference expenses		
Thredbo	0.00	872.25
Wallaroo	4,600.00	0.00
Student bursaries	1,250.00	0.00
Mail box	196.00	191.00
Audit and account fees	0.00	0.00
Net operating expenses	6,046.00	1,262.25
NET PROFIT (LOSS)	1,287.70	1,177.22
Opening cash	30,511.33	29,334.11
CLOSING CASH	31,799.03	30,511.33

Treasurer: _____ Date 6 April 2018

President: _____ Date 11 April 2018

*Note that final financial position after payment of conference expenses is ~\$29,400 (J Keeling).