



Australian Regolith Geoscientists Association (ARGA)

Committee teleconference 4 July 2018

Minutes

Meeting opened 3.00 pm AEST.

Present: Carmen Krapf (President), Leah Moore (Past President), John Keeling (Public Officer and Treasurer), Ian Roach (Secretary and Webmaster), Anna Petts (Committee Member), Savannah McGuirk (Committee Member), Nacho (Ignacio González-Álvarez) (Committee Member).

Apologies: Nadir de Souza Kovacs.

Ian asked Carmen to lead the meeting.

1. Discussion of the merger proposal between ARGA and the Geological Society of Australia (GSA): the GSA's response to ARGA's questions

Carmen opened the meeting by detailing the activities that had occurred to date on the possibility of ARGA merging with the GSA. Caroline Tiddy, GSA President, had responded to ARGA's questions in a detailed document setting out how the proposed merger would function. Carmen commented that some ARGA Committee members had emailed her separately to suggest caution on any merger, raising the issue of whether the GSA would serve ARGA's best interests. Once the GSA's response was received, Carmen felt the need to call a Committee meeting to discuss the GSA's response, adding that Nadir had previously commented that the GSA doesn't appear to offer ARGA much.

Some Committee members stated that they were both ARGA and GSA members (Nacho, Anna, Ian), and Nacho added that he was the WA Division Chair of the GSA.

Carmen asked Leah to share the news regarding the Australian Universities Geological Education Network (AUGEN) and their association with the Australian Geoscience Council (AGC), and whether ARGA could form a similar association, rather than merge with the GSA.

Leah described how AUGEN was approached by Bill Shaw, the President of the AGC to develop new Tertiary Threshold Learning. AUGEN was also considering a merger with the GSA, but was now investigating an arrangement under the umbrella of the AGC.

Carmen noted that ARGA hadn't even thought of the AGC, as the ARGA Committee wasn't aware of being able to affiliate before Leah raised it.

Carmen then invited the Committee to share their thoughts on the GSA's response.

- Nacho is involved with the GSA: he is the Chair of the Western Australian Division and is familiar with the GSA's structure. He thinks that a merger would be excellent because there are too many small groups in Australia. He looked at the GSA's terms and thought about whether this represented a good deal for ARGA. He stated that he could not honestly say that it did, with the fees going from \$1 a year to \$170 a year, with specialist group fees in addition to that. He asked what are GSA members currently getting for that fee and answered that it was not much. Nacho expressed the opinion that he did not know if the deal on the table was worth it.
- Anna suggested that ARGA could grow the membership by being more proactive rather than merge with the GSA. Alternatively ARGA could push back on the GSA by ensuring that exposure was greater, including having a dedicated page in The Australian Geologist (TAG) and an active web presence. Anna commented that the merger would be the best way to grow the membership.
- Carmen noted that the GSA couldn't offer special membership rates to ARGA members because that would be special treatment. GSA also stipulated that ARGA could no longer use the word "association" in its name if it merged.
- Leah noted that there is no urgency to merge with the GSA and the membership could be grown if members were more proactive.
- Ian added that another of the reasons for starting the merger conversation was to be more involved in national decision making by being part of a larger organisation with a bigger voice.
- Savannah added that the AGC was very positive and did a lot of outreach, had a lot of student involvement and its purposes were well aligned with ARGA.
- John contributed the knowledge that there were increasing costs for maintaining ARGA's accounts, its mail box, the address list, etc. The GSA would cover all of this including the mailing list. Although the GSA would not allow non-GSA members to sit on any regolith specialist group committee, we would be getting more for less in a merger.
- Ian agreed with John, adding that there was nothing to stop non-GSA members from attending the biennial ARGA conference, so the net effect would be negligible.

Ian suggested that the Committee needed more information on the possibility of a merger with the AGC. Leah added that the Committee also needed to know whether the AGC would be willing to accept that.

Carmen made the suggestion that ARGA attempt to create a newsletter to raise its profile and be more proactive to raise membership. ARGA had never attempted to do that, relying instead on email and the biennial conference. Carmen asked whether we could attempt to do that in the next year? Carmen also added that the majority of the ARGA Committee was still in agreement to pursue the merger negotiation with the GSA.

Leah noted that the more we think about it, the merger seems more sensible, given John's comments about the continual slow drain on ARGA funds.

Nacho said that the GSA's fees are the main problem faced by ARGA members. The merger would allow more exposure and cheaper infrastructure. Nothing prevents ARGA

friends from coming to ARGA conferences, whether they are a GSA member or not. The only real negative is the increase in fees to become a fully-paid GSA member. Nacho felt that the Committee still had a strong case to continue with the GSA merger talks.

Leah asked whether the Committee needed to monitor the ARGA money within the GSA, and what this would mean for the CRC LEME website:

- Ian explained here that the CRC LEME website was actually totally out of ARGA's control, and that the Intellectual Property (IP) resides with the CSIRO, which was the lead agency of CRC LEME. Lisa Worrall and Ian had attempted to move the CRC LEME website to ARGA's control about 4-5 years ago, but CSIRO refused, saying that the site was very popular with industry. ARGA cares about the CRC LEME website and would continue to monitor it.
- Carmen and Anna explained that the GSA monitors any specialist group funds. ARGA could only spend its own funds and would earn interest on them through the GSA. GSA would ensure that ARGA funds could not be used by other groups. Anna acknowledged that it was sometime difficult to get up-to-date financial statements, citing the experience of the South Australian Division of the GSA. Carmen added that with ARGA, John does most of the work and that ARGA really only spends over a short period every two years at conference time.

Carmen stated that ARGA committee members needed to talk to the AGC at the Australian Geoscience Council Conference (AGCC) in October to sound them out on the possibility of ARGA becoming associated with the AGC. ARGA Committee members also needed to talk to GSA Council members at the same venue to hash out any decision. We should aim to having a decision for or against a merger with the GSA, or the AGC, by the end of 2018.

The question was raised about whether ARGA Committee members would nominate for the GSA Council to raise ARGA's profile? Nacho, Leah and Ian agreed that it would be good for an ARGA Committee member to join the GSA Council. Nacho agreed to volunteer, given that Western Australia would have no representation on the Council at the end of this year, and he could represent the WA Division and ARGA. Anna also agreed to apply to represent South Australia and ARGA.

Carmen summarised the meeting:

- The ARGA Committee still favoured a merger with the GSA, but should enter into discussion with the AGC.
- The Committee still needed to do some lobbying with the GSA, and the AGC, at the AGCC in October, to determine the direction to take.
- The Committee should have another teleconference in November to discuss the results of that lobbying.
- Carmen supported Leah's suggestion for an ARGA pop-up booth at the AGCC to promote ARGA and gauge feelings for a potential merger.
- Carmen asked John to circulate the latest financial statement.

2. ARGA Bank accounts 4 July 2018:

Westpac Community Solutions cash reserve	\$27,347.35
Westpac Community Solutions everyday	\$2,342.94
Total	\$29,690.29

Meeting closed at 1540 AEST.