

Minutes of The 2018 Annual General Meeting

DATE: Thursday **11 October 2018**
TIME: Dinner at 6.30pm; AGM from 7.30pm
VENUE: Upstairs at the Tivoli Club
291 Dandenong Rd, Windsor VIC 3181

Business of the Meeting

1. Formal matters

The meeting commenced at 8.55pm (following on from the talk given by Lara Kaput and Stephen Unthank).

Election of a chair

Meredith Doig was elected as chair of the meeting.

Moved: Joel Murray Seconded: Alan Jones

Accepted unanimously (by popular acclaim).

Attendees and Apologies

Members	Guests	Observers
1 Meredith Doig	Lara Kaput	Stephen Stuart
2 Leo Brewin	Steven Unthank	John Russell
3 Len Buller		
4 David Stimson		
5 Matt Withoos		
6 Ken Derrick		
7 John Hayman		
8 Alan Jones		
9 Les Allan		
10 Rosemary Watson		
11 Joel Murray		
12 Brett Davis		

Apart from those who sent in proxies, the following apologies have been received:

- George Leighfield, Jonathan Meddings, Les Fitzgerald.

Proxies

Member	Nominated proxy	Member	Nominated proxy
1 Derek O'Reilly	The chair	14 Peter Consondine	Meredith Doig
2 Anthony Krins	The chair	15 Kevin McDonald	Meredith Doig
3 Richard Fletcher	The Chair	16 Rex Williams	Meredith Doig
4 Rohan Navaratne	The Chair	17 Regina Hoepfner	Meredith Doig
5 Edmund Munday	The chair	18 Michael Henry	Meredith Doig
6 William Greer	The chair	19 Phillip Sweeney	Meredith Doig
7 Mark Taylor	The chair	20 Will Darvall	Meredith Doig
8 Victor Stevens	The chair	21 Ian Robinson	Meredith Doig
9 John Downey	The chair	22 David Freeman	Meredith Doig
10 Dominic Kelly	The Chair	23 Brett Connolly	Meredith Doig
11 Craig Sankey	The Chair	24 Jacquie Connolly	Meredith Doig
12 Hugh Wilber-Ham	The Chair	25 Graziano Birgi	Meredith Doig
13 David Higginbottom	The chair	26 Hugh Sarjeant	Meredith Doig
		27 Rex Williams	Meredith Doig
		28 Brian Morris	Meredith Doig
		29 Greg Norton	Meredith Doig

Quorum

The RSA Rules specify that a quorum comprises the lesser of 10% of the members entitled to vote, or 40 members entitled to vote. There being 12 Members present and 29 proxies, a quorum was achieved.

2. Minutes of the last AGM

Motion 2.1: That the Minutes of the 2017 AGM be accepted as a true record.

Moved: Brett Davis

Seconded: Matt Withoos

Accepted unanimously.

There is no formal business arising from the Minutes of the last AGM.

3. Reports

President's report

The society's president, Dr Meredith Doig, spoke to her report summarising the extensive activities conducted by the society in the past 12 months. The president made particular attention to the appointments of Prof. Gareth Evans and Dr. Rodney Syme as patrons of our society as well as the appointment of our first RSA Fellow, A/Prof. Luke Beck. The president also summarised our

campaigns and foreshadowed work ahead with the release of the Ruddock report. See Attachment 1 for the full report.

Motion 3.1: That the President's report be noted.

Moved: Joel Murray Seconded: Les Allen

Accepted unanimously.

Treasurer's report

The president noted that once again the society's financial situation is solid. The president did draw the members attention to the financial report showing an apparent jump in revenue in the past year from \$12,198 in 2017 to \$173,822 in 2018 (see the Net Surplus/(Deficit) item on page 4 of the financial report). Brett Davis (the RSA accountant) explained this as a consequence of shifting the JR Howard bequest from the bequest section of the society's accounts into the income/expenditure account. This is an internal shift of funds and does not represent an actual increase in the society's nett revenue. Brett also noted that the society did receive donations of nearly \$30,000 in the 2017-2018 year. The president also noted that with the departure in May of Tosca Lloyd (our full-time executive officer) our financial position will improve slightly though this would be offset by payments to casual staff to cover some of the activities previously undertaken by Tosca. See attachment 2 for the full financial report.

Motion 3.2: That the Treasurer's report be adopted.

Moved: Ken Derrick Seconded: David Simpson

Accepted unanimously.

4. Election of a Committee

The RSA Rules specify that a committee of at least five but not more than seven Members be elected.

Motion 4.1: There being six nominations received, it is moved that a committee of six be elected, comprising: Meredith Doig, Hugh Harris, Len Buller, Leo Brewin, Matt Withoos and Edmund Munday.

Moved: Meredith Doig Seconded: Alan Jones

Accepted unanimously.

5. General business

Nil.

6. Next meeting

The next AGM will be held between 1 July and 30 November 2019. The Committee of Management will decide the actual date and notify members at least 21 days prior.

The meeting closed at 9.41 pm.

Attachment 1

President's Report 2018

Introduction

The RSA was delighted during the year that Professor the Hon. Gareth Evans AC QC, Chancellor of the Australian National University and former head of the International Crisis Group, agreed to become a Patron of the Society. He joined the Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG, former High Court judge, our first Patron, and they were later joined by Dr Rodney Syme, Vice President of Dying with Dignity Victoria. Rodney Syme's valiant efforts over more than 30 years in support of the rights of the terminally ill to die with dignity finally bore fruit in November 2017 with the passing of the Victorian *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act*.

We also welcomed our very first RSA Fellow, Associate professor Luke Beck from Monash University. Luke's encyclopaedic knowledge of section 116 of the Australian constitution – the religion clause – will come in handy in the future and he is already working with us on our Chaplaincy Challenge.

During the year, Executive Officer Tosca Lloyd worked with the board to develop an updated strategic plan, focusing on supporter growth and engagement, maintaining financial viability, consolidating and raising the RSA's public profile, and advocacy. Tosca left the RSA in May 2018 to pursue her passion for international human rights work, but the strategic plan she left provides a solid foundation for the future.

Campaigns

Drug Law Reform

Executive Officer Tosca Lloyd continued the RSA's efforts supporting sensible reform of drug laws, lobbying the Victorian Premier, Health Minister and Police Minister in support of medically supervised injecting rooms.

Rationalist Curriculum

The Victorian Government's decision to roll out a new "Worldviews" curriculum, which would include education about secular humanism and rationalism, seems to have slowed down, with no recent action by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. RSA will keep a watching brief.

Ruddock Inquiry

Australia finally got same sex marriage in December 2017. But not until the PM had to 'buy off' the conservatives in his party room by promising an inquiry to look at the supposed undermining of 'religious freedom'. This Inquiry, chaired by veteran Liberal Philip Ruddock, took submissions and conducted consultations during the first few months of 2018. The RSA made a major submission and had over an hour with Ruddock and co-panellists Frank Brennan (prominent Catholic), Annabelle

Bennett (reportedly a secular Jew), and Nicholas Aroney (an elder of the Presbyterian Church) on 20 February 2018 presenting our case.

Our submission made the following points:

- Freedom of religion must include freedom *from* religion
- We reject the current exemptions afforded religious organisations, as they are simply based on prejudice
- We propose a general human rights instrument be legislated at federal level.

Following the Liberal Party's leadership coup in August 2018, new Prime Minister Scott Morrison, an avowed practising Christian, has stated publicly that he is intent on bringing in new legislation to protect 'religious freedom'. However, the Federal Government is yet to make public its official response to the Ruddock Inquiry. This project will remain a major focus for us over 2019.

Chaplaincy Challenge

The RSA has long argued against the overt discrimination inherent in the National Schools Chaplaincy Program (NSCP). With the assistance of Associate Professor Luke Beck of Monash University, we submitted a legal challenge to the NSCP at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), on the basis it discriminates on religious grounds, which is unlawful in Victoria.

Appearing at VCAT necessitated finding a suitable plaintiff, and fortunately we found one (Juliet Armstrong) willing to work with us to challenge not only ACCESS Ministries (the main provider of chaplains in Victoria), but also the Victorian Education Department.

The Department openly admits on their website that, to "not breach anti-discrimination laws, schools are required to engage third party chaplaincy service providers", such as ACCESS Ministries, rather than employ chaplains directly.

We will argue at that the Department cannot "outsource" such an unlawful activity. The case went to a Directions Hearing in September 2018 and is scheduled for a Compulsory Conference on 29 October.

Voluntary Assisted Dying

The successful passing of Victoria's *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act* in November 2017 has provided a benchmark of good process when dealing with highly controversial law reform in areas of 'hatching, matching and despatching' (births, marriages and deaths). Western Australia has now proposed its own Bill and Queensland has announced an inquiry into end-of-life care, drawing lessons from the Victorian process but also experience from Oregon which negates the 'slippery slope' argument.

During August 2018, we urged RSA Members to support the attempt by Senator David Leyonhjelm to restore the rights of the ACT and the Northern Territory to debate voluntary assisted dying laws, notoriously squashed by Catholics Kevin Andrews and Labor's Tony Burke in 1995. Unfortunately this was not successful, demonstrating yet again the importance of such actions having support of the government in power rather than coming from a private member.

The Victorian legislation is to be implemented from July 2019. There is some risk of it being repealed – or its regulations frustrated – should a conservative government be elected at the Victorian election in November 2018. Not all conservatives oppose VAD but Members should keep this risk in mind when assessing their support for candidates in their electorates.

Prayers before Parliament

Prompted by a recommendation by Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon to replace the exclusively Christian Lord's Prayer, read at the beginning of each parliamentary sitting, with a more general statement of reflection, the RSA added its voice of approval. In our submission, we argued:

- Australians are no longer a universally Christian people
- The parliament should be representative of all the people
- An overtly religious ritual is no longer appropriate
- Religious observance is low even among believers
- Privileging one faith is unfair to other faiths and no faith
- Symbolism is important
- Standing Order 50 (reciting the Lord's Prayer) falsely describes the purpose of parliament and may be unconstitutional.

Outreach

Public meetings

Our public meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (in Melbourne). Unlike many other group meetings, we deliberately don't have guest speakers; rather, Treasurer Len Buller prepares a topic with three or four inquiring questions and we divide into small groups to discuss. The idea is to make rationalism and critical thinking *real*, not theoretical. The year's topics have ranged from chaplains to China to the Communist Manifesto, sport and false witness, religious freedoms for the non-religious, and the value of an Aussie President.

Members and their friends based in Melbourne are warmly encouraged to try out one of these meetings!

Print publications

We continue to publish our flagship quarterly journal, the *Australian Rationalist*, under the editorship of professional journalist David James. The last year featured cover stories on the battle between progressives and conservatives; living in a fake news world; conspiracy theories; and origins of the universe.

Electronic publications

Our daily curated bulletin RSA Daily continues to attract subscribers, up nearly 20% (from 466 to 556). The RSA maintains a reasonably active presence on Facebook and Twitter. We also send direct email updates to Members, though not too many - approximately one a month.

Governance

The RSA Board meets monthly during the year, with the Financial Advisory Committee and the Editorial Committee meeting on a quarterly basis. The board thanks departing board members Jonathan Meddings and Robbie van Dijk for their contributions and welcomes new board member Edmund Munday.

Financials

The Society's funds continue to be governed by a Financial Advisory Committee, comprising the President, the Treasurer, the RSA's *pro bono* Accountant, and a professionally qualified independent expert, reporting to the Board. The Board continues to follow a prudent 'passive' investment policy.



Dr Meredith Doig, President

Attachment 2

Not For Profit - Association Report

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc.

ABN 41853904693

For the year ended 30 June 2018

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Income and Expenditure Statement

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2018

	2018	2017
Income		
Income		
Investment Income		
Investment Income	57,764	75,438
Total Investment Income	57,764	75,438
Member Revenue		
Member Donations	192,209	4,705
Membership Fees	21,620	18,124
Total Member Revenue	213,829	22,829
Revenue from operating activities		
Event Revenue	1,030	-
Journal Subscriptions & Sales	2,921	5,001
Total Revenue from operating activities	3,951	5,001
Gain on sale of investments	12,387	-
Royalties	1,915	-
Total Income	289,845	103,268
Total Income	289,845	103,268
Gross Surplus	289,845	103,268
Expenditure		
Campaign Expenses		
Campaign expenses	-	95
Commissioned Reports	1,100	1,100
Minor Collaborations	255	500
Reason Project	-	7,625
Total Campaign Expenses	1,355	9,320
Employment Costs		
Superannuation	5,102	165
Wages and Salaries	55,109	1,739
Total Employment Costs	60,211	1,904
General Expenses		
Finance Charges	511	347
President's honorarium	-	11,875
Total General Expenses	511	12,222
Journal Production Costs		
Authors and Contributions	2,250	1,687
Editors Fees	16,600	17,925
Journal Design Fees	3,675	5,300

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

	2018	2017
Journal Posting and Mailing	6,611	5,190
Printing Journal	15,153	18,499
Total Journal Production Costs	44,289	48,600
Marketing		
Marketing	326	12,354
Total Marketing	326	12,354
Office Expenses		
Accounting Software	600	-
Admin Officer's Fee	-	1,250
Insurance	1,143	-
Meeting Expenses	529	512
Office Expenses	675	2,102
Rent	2,290	-
Postage	1,210	-
Printing & Stationery	37	1,845
Staff training	2,257	-
Telephone & Internet	250	296
Total Office Expenses	8,991	6,005
Website Expenditure		
Web Hosting & Maintenance	340	220
Web Services	-	485
Total Website Expenditure	340	704
Total Expenditure	116,023	91,110
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	173,822	12,158

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Assets and Liabilities Statement

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc.

As at 30 June 2018

	NOTES	30 JUN 2018	30 JUN 2017
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash & Cash Equivalents			
Cash at Bank		47,340	15,401
PayPal		900	2,172
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents		48,240	17,572
Other Current Assets			
Distributions Receivable		28,853	44,048
Franking Credits Receivable		4,740	4,563
Total Other Current Assets		33,594	48,611
Total Current Assets		81,834	66,183
Non-Current Assets			
Direct Share Investments		-	77,688
Managed Funds		854,508	727,266
Total Non-Current Assets		854,508	804,954
Total Assets		936,342	871,137
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Employee Entitlements		5,406	204
Total Current Liabilities		5,406	204
Total Liabilities		5,406	204
Net Assets		930,936	870,933
Member's Funds			
Capital Reserve			
Asset Revaluation Reserve		60,451	14,176
Current Year Earnings		173,822	12,158
Equity		696,663	684,505
J R Howard bequest		-	160,094
Total Capital Reserve		930,936	870,933
Total Member's Funds		930,936	870,933

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

Notes of the Financial Statements

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2018

Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

The financial statements are special purpose financial statements prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act Victoria. The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity as there are no users dependent on the general purpose financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historic costs and do not take into account changing money values or, except where stated specifically, current valuations of non-current assets.

The following significant accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless stated otherwise, have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

Income Tax

The Rationalist Society of Australia Inc is a registered organisation with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission(ACNC). The committee has completed the "Endorsement review worksheet for income tax exempt charities" and concluded that no change in the eligibility criteria occurred during the 2018 financial year or in the subsequent months after year end.

Having satisfied the eligibility criteria of a Tax Concession Charity (TCC) as prescribed by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), the financial reports for the 2018 financial year have been prepared on a tax exempt basis

Employee Provisions

Provision is made for the association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee provisions have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

Cash on Hand

Cash on hand includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

Revenue and Other Income

Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received.

Dividend and interest income are recognised on a cash basis.

Grant and donation income is recognised when the entity obtains control over the funds, which is generally at the time of receipt. The bequest from J R Howard previously recognised in the balance sheet has been reclassified to the revenue account "Member donations" in accordance with this accounting policy. This reclassification has had a material impact on the financial reported for the 2018 financial year.

Financial Assets

Investments in financial assets are initially recognised at cost, which includes transaction costs, and are subsequently measured at fair value, which is equivalent to their market bid price at the end of the reporting period. Movements in fair value are recognised through an equity reserve.

Movements in Equity

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2018

	2018	2017
Equity		
Opening Balance	870,933	904,918
Increases		
Surplus for the Period	173,822	12,158
Other Increases	(113,819)	(46,143)
Total Increases	60,003	(33,985)
Total Equity	930,936	870,933

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report.

True and Fair Position

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2018

Annual Statements Give True and Fair View of Financial Position and Performance of the Association

We, Meredith Doig and Len Buller, being members of the committee of Rationalist Society of Australia Inc., certify that –

The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. during and at the end of the financial year of the association ending on 30 June 2018.

Meredith Doig - President

Dated: / /

Len Buller - Treasurer

Dated: / /

Certificate By Members of the Committee

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2018

I, Meredith Doig and Len Buller certify that:

1. I attended the annual general meeting of the association held on / /
2. The financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2018 were submitted to the members of the association at its annual general meeting.

Meredith Doig - President

Dated: / /

Len Buller - Treasurer

Dated: / /

Compilation report

Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. For the year ended 30 June 2018

Compilation report to Rationalist Society of Australia Inc..

We have compiled the accompanying special purpose financial statements of Rationalist Society of Australia Inc., which comprise the asset and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2018, income and expenditure statement, the statement of cash flows, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes. The specific purpose for which the special purpose financial statements have been prepared is set out on Page 6 of 11 in the financial statements

The Responsibility of the Committee Members

The committee of Rationalist Society of Australia Inc. solely responsible for the information contained in the special purpose financial statements, the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the information and for the determination that the basis of accounting used is appropriate to meet their needs and for the purpose that financial statements were prepared.

Our Responsibility

On the basis of information provided by the committee we have compiled the accompanying special purpose financial statements in accordance with the basis of accounting as described on page 6 of 11 to the financial statements and APES 315 *Compilation of Financial Information*.

We have applied our expertise in accounting and financial reporting to compile these financial statements in accordance with the basis of accounting described on page 6 of 11 in the financial statements. We have complied with the relevant ethical requirements of APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants*.

Assurance Disclaimer

Since a compilation engagement is not an assurance engagement, we are not required to verify the reliability, accuracy or completeness of the information provided to us by the committee to compile these financial statements. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion or a review conclusion on these financial statements.

The special purpose financial statements were compiled exclusively for the benefit of the committee which is responsible for the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the information used to compile them. We do not accept responsibility for the contents of the special purpose financial statements.

Brett Davis - CPA

Dated: 7th of October 2018