

President's Report – AGM, 12 December 2019

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for choosing to be a member of Soil Science Australia and helping our Society as the national peak body thrive as we move into our 65th year of service.

It has been a very productive year for Soil Science Australia, packed with achievement that I would like to share with you today.

I am proud to announce our new [2020-2021 strategic plan](#) has just been released.

There are four strategic pillars in this plan—Advocacy, Community, Accreditation and Education.

I want to reflect on some of our many achievements in these four areas over the last year.

Advocacy

When I was elected President one year ago, I promised a stronger focus on external engagement to communicate the value of soils and soil science to the community. Some highlights:

- We released an inaugural snapshot of Australian soil issues based on expert survey and literature review. (Download the [infographic](#) and [media release](#) and [report](#)).
The snapshot was developed in partnership with many Soil Science Australia members and industry stakeholders who contributed to an expert survey earlier this year. Key messages from the report not only highlighted the top threats facing our soils including erosion, contamination, urban encroachment, salinisation, acidification and climate change but also offered recommendations for a way forward to tackle these challenges collaboratively.
- We accelerated our social media presence through the primary platform of Twitter which has increased to 2860 followers (up 30%). Content was also shared via the informal Facebook group.
- We published a record number of media releases earning news coverage and interviews in the last year. The recent Snapshot coverage returned 8 press articles, 2 media releases, 8 radio reports (ABC national), and 13 online news reports.
- We became members of the key science sector group, Science Technology Australia, which allowed us to attend the Leadership Forum in March 2019 and Science Meets Parliament in November 2019 engaging with Federal representatives.
- We have significantly increased our engagement with key stakeholders including the Office of the National Soils Advocate, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, EPAs, state agricultural and environmental departments, and Soils for Life.
- We have engaged with State and Federal Members of Parliament on the value of soils and soil science.
- We have participated in numerous industry panels and forums including those hosted by Australian Soils Network (ASN), Soil CRC, and the National Committee for Soils and Terrain (NCST).
- In October, we hosted the International Union of Soil Science President (IUSS) Professor Takashi Kosaki during the Australian Soil Judging Competition. He was very positive about our Society and asked us also if we could do more to help soil scientists in neighbouring developing countries (e.g. Indonesia, Pacific Islands).



*Luke Mosley with Takashi Kosaki, IUSS
President*



*Luke Mosley with Josh Teague, Member for
Heysen, SA*

Community

- It was great to see so many branch events bring our vibrant soils community together, most recently with World Soils Day on 5 December. For example the WA Branch integrated with their highly successful conference while Victoria hosted the Ian Sargeant Student Awards, Queensland the Ron McDonald lecture, and the SA Branch and other groups ran social events such as amazing soil cake bake offs.
- The new website membership portal is undergoing final testing and should be live in early 2020, this will bring new capability for member interaction and information delivery.
- Workshops and field days run by Soil Science Australia continued to prove highly successful conduits to our community engagement. The two-day Robinvale and Wagga Wagga events attracted strong numbers and resulted in new membership and great networking opportunities. Big thanks to Sam North, Jason Condon and Ed Scott and rest of organising teams.
- Early career researcher (ECR) networking event at the Soil Organic Matter 2019 Conference – Samantha Grover, Kate, Mottley (Ivanah Oliver), and myself ran the event attended by over 130 ECRs with Prof. Prof. Ingrid Kogel-Knabner gave a very well received talk about her stellar career and I gave a short talk also on careers in soils in Australia and how our Society can help ECRs.
- The 7th Australian Soil Judging Competition was held in on early October in Strathalbyn, South Australia. The three-day event went extremely well attracting over 70 students from 15 teams including three from Lincoln University in New Zealand. Cam Grant and Ed Scott led a small but dedicated event organising team which did an amazing job. Southern Cross University won the team award (beating the favourite Sydney University). University of New England teams were awarded second and third places. We had some good media response (radio and newspaper) and a local MP attended representing the Agricultural Minister in SA.
- The 2020 Conference Committee is in full swing with a professional conference organiser appointed and planning well under way led by Prof. John Bennett. The Cairns event promises to be a fantastic gathering with a diverse program and the opportunity to tackle some of the most pressing soil issues right on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef.

Education

- A new [State and National level soils information page](#) has also been formulated in collaboration with NCST to help soils professionals and community access soils data.
- Webinars and online information delivery has been enhanced in 2019 – we have livestreamed and recorded several events and webinars. A member survey has been undertaken to guide a webinar series in 2020.
- Training – A 1 day soils refresher and 1 day soil survey course was run at Waite Campus SA by our Training Committee Chair Bernie Powell and Dennis Baker from 14-15 November. Course material is being made available widely to all Branches, building on the Queensland curriculum while widening out to including issues and information from other States. We are looking at developing and delivering much more online and in person specialist training course content and delivering this in 2020.
- We have contracted the delivery of a Soils Education database (funded by ASN) to University of Southern Queensland. This will be made available on our website in the first quarter of 2020.
- We are also in discussion on options for building our Soils in Schools program in 2020 to integrate with existing online resources for teachers across Australia. More course content will be developed as part of this.

Accreditation

- Our CPSS program is going from strength to strength with around 130 members and several current applicants.
- I would encourage you to consider applying for this accreditation which is increasingly being recognised as the gold standard required to ensure the quality of soil professionals.
- We have plans to develop clearer pathways with allied professions such as engineering and environmental science and firmly embed CPSS as a mandatory requirement for major government and industry projects.

Acknowledgements

On a sad note, this year we lost Professor Sally Smith who was an outstanding soil scientist, and longstanding member and supporter of Soil Science Australia. In recognition of this Sally was a recipient of our two most prestigious awards, the J.K. Taylor OBE gold medal in 2006, and the J.A. Prescott medal in 2012. On behalf of our Society, I would like to express our gratitude to Sally for her decades of service and send our sincere condolences to her husband Emeritus Professor Andrew Smith and family.

Other distinguished members who passed included Dr Owen Denmead, Dr Max Raupach and Kevin Bligh.

The loss of members reminds us that the great strength of our Society comes from the people within it. Soil science is very much alive and well in Australia due to the people who believe so passionately in the art and science behind our profession.

I give sincere thanks to all those members who have actively contributed to the running of our organisation. In particular, I must mention *Federal Executive*: Vanessa Wong, Vice-President, Darren Kidd, Secretary, Ashlea Doolette, Treasurer and Kate Husband, Executive Officer, *Federal Council*: Uta Stockmann (NSW), Sam North and Jason Condon (Riverina), Edward Scott (SA), Robyn Doyle (TAS), Samantha Grover (VIC) and Henry Smolinski (WA), and Aaditi Dang and Jim Payne (QLD). I would also like to acknowledge the many Branch committee members and supporters who have volunteered in any capacity and attended branch events.

Thank you to CPSS Board Chair, JP Cummings (and previous Chair, Kirsten Barlow), members of the CPSS Board and assessor David Nash.

I also pay tribute to the 2018 Conference Committee chaired by the irrepressible Peter Bacon who delivered an astoundingly successful conference last year and is still working on a special issue of the Soil Research Journal arising from those presentations, the 2020 Cairns conference committee, and the 2019 Soil Judging Committee chaired by Cam Grant and Ed Scott who ran an incredible event in South Australia a few months ago.

Thank you to our talented Calendar Committee, (proudly chaired by Tim Overheu, with support from Aaditi Dang and Noel Schoknecht) who do so much behind the scenes to bring the artistry of soil science not just to our membership but to the community in general through the calendar. I am sure you will be impressed with the 2020 calendar which will arrive shortly.

I especially want to acknowledge our Training Committee, led by excellent Chair, Bernie Powell, with his unwavering commitment, focus and unique strategic insight which has proved invaluable as we strengthen this critical area of our Society.

I also want to recognise Dr Cam Grant's contribution which exemplifies the volunteer spirit of Soil Science Australia and he was recognised as a very worth recipient of our LJ Teakle Award last year for this. Cam retires as CPSS Administrator at the end of the 2019 to enjoy a well-deserved rest from the demands of juggling multiple roles within the Society. There are not many hats that Cam has not worn over the years with good humour and great energy, and on behalf of Federal Council, I thank him for his inspiring support which has been nothing less than heroic. Here is a gift from Soil Science Australia as a small gesture of thanks and we wish you well for the next stage of your life.

Finally, Soil Science Australia is a non-profit organisation that is entirely reliant on members and volunteers. Becoming involved often brings tangible benefits such as connections and new friends. Indeed, it has been a privilege for me to serve as a volunteer over the last year as President and meet many great new people

I am proud to serve you as President of Soil Science Australia and wish you all health and happiness for 2020.

Yours sincerely,



Assoc. Prof. Luke Mosley, CPSS

President [Soil Science Australia](#)

