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## Vice President's Report

### 2017/18 Annual General Meeting

29 August 2018

2017/18 represented a year of changes for the Economic Society of Australia's WA Branch. The WA Branch Council has commenced a number of new activities to increase the visibility of the Society amongst professional and academic member to ensure we are providing a valuable service.

I thank those Council members who have contributed to this effort. In particular, Peter Kolf as the incoming President has been invaluable in improving our visibility in the professional sector.

Over the year I have been responsible for a number of the Council's key activities, including:

- representing the WA Branch on the Central Council;
- updating the constitution of the WA Branch; and
- considering WA branch membership structure and fees.

An overview of each is discussed in the following sections of this report.

#### **Central Council Report**

I have had the pleasure of representing the WA Branch on the Central Council since August 2017. This has provided a great opportunity to work with other branch representatives to coordinate activities nationally, but also to share ideas and learnings to better achieve the objectives of the Society.

#### Australian Conference of Economists

The key event for the year was the Australian Conference of Economists (ACE) held in Canberra. The event attracted significant Government sponsorship and was well attended. Erin noted that despite the event being successful, the ACT branch was concerned that the revenue would not sustain the branch as it had done previously.

At the ACE, a number of awards were presented a number of awards. This included:

- Deborah Cobb-Clarke as the Distinguished Fellow
- Allan Fells as the Distinguished Public Policy Fellow
- Rachel Ong ViforJ as the Young Economist

The Trevor Swan award was jointly to two papers:

- Daniel M. Rees, Penelope Smith and Jamie Hall (2016) “A Multi-sector Model of the Australian Economy”
- Cain Polidano and Chris Ryan (2017) “What Happens to Students with Low Reading Proficiency at 15? Evidence from Australia”

The WA Branch nominated Rachel for the Young Economist award, and we congratulate her on this achievement. The Central Council discussed the ongoing application of the awards and decided that, in the future, the young economist award should be made to

The Central Council is supporting the Victorian branch in the coordination of ACE 2019 to be held in Melbourne.

ACE 2020 will be held in WA. The Council will be commencing organisational activities in the upcoming year to ensure the event is well planned. Regular reports will be provided to the Central Council.

#### Journals and Publications

The Society’s journals are becoming better regarded due to the great effort being put in by the editors and publications teams. Rachel Ong ViforJ, from the WA Branch as the editor of the Economic Papers has been recognised as a major contributor to this success.

Highlights on the Society’s content in the past 12 months were:

- Tweeted 137 times
- Reached the news 98 times
- Mentioned in 3 policy documents
- Cited in 2 patents

With ACE 2020 to be held in Perth, the WA branch raised concerns about limited revenue streams available to support the branch and noted we were looking to cut costs to the extent possible. We highlighted the publication and post of hard-copy journals as being one of our largest costs that we would like to reduce through encouragement of our members to elect to electronic copies. The Central Council agreed to work with the publishers to consider factors including the impact on the unit cost.

#### Women in Economics Network

The Women in Economics Network (WEN) national branch reported a number of significant achievements over the year as follows:

- The register of economists was launched in September 2017, this was pushed by the WEN’s desire for a central register of female economists.
- A video targeting year 11 and 12 students “Understand the World Around You” was launched at ACE and is now in distribution mode. WEN will promote through teachers’

associations in each state, in addition to screening at school events that are planned, where school children will also hear from economists.

- The second WEN Retreat was held, attracting 33 junior to mid career women, who were mentored by 6 prominent economists. Over 90 applications were received for this event which was reported as highly successful.
- The Gender Economics Workshop held in February in Fremantle will be repeated in 2019 with the venue selected as RMIT.

#### Other points of note

- Following a decision to defer the Eminent Speaker Series in 2018 due to the NSW Branch financial challenges resulting from ACE2018, the Central Council agreed to reinstate the series in 2019. The WA Branch had discussed the possibility of Tim Besley from the London School of Economics being available for this, or as a speaker for ACE 2019.
- The Central Council is considering a branch in the Northern Territory. The starting point is establishing interest and a local point of contact interested in supporting the Society, with an event or two to follow. The WA and ACT branches are assisting.
- Central coordination of the Young Economists Network (YEN) is being considered. The aim is to facilitate discussion of successes and shared learnings from those running the sub-committees. The leader of each branch is encouraged to attend ACE 2019 in Victoria to support this. Additional teleconference meetings were also suggested.

#### **ESA WA Constitution**

In 2015, the State progressed changes to the *Associations Incorporation Act*. These required all incorporated associations and clubs to ensure that their rules (or constitutions) are compliant. It included a three-year transition period for making the changes, which concludes on 30 June 2019.

Over recent months we have worked to ensure that the WA Branch Constitution is compliant with the legislative requirements. The Council was presented an updated draft of the amended constitution for comment.

It was agreed that the draft constitution be circulated to members more broadly for comment and that a special general meeting be called to progress its formalisation in compliance with the new requirements.

The special meeting is likely to be called to coincide with a function to be held in the near future.

Once agreed, the amended constitution will be lodged with the WA Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety Consumer Protection for approval.

#### **Membership fees**

In recognition of the WA Branch's declining reserves and the prospect that future ACE events will not generate the income as in the past, a review of membership fees was seen as necessary.

The Council proposes to separate membership fees from journal fees, with:

- membership fees increasing in line with inflation and being automatically rolled-over; and
- a new journal fee being introduced to cover the printing and postage of each of the journals.

It is estimated that the cost of publishing the two hard-copy journals is around \$25 per journal per annum. It is proposed that the cost of journals remains partially subsidised as it is a key service provided by the Society for its members, but that there is sufficient incentive for those who do not value the hard-copy to receive electronic only access.

It was also proposed that the journal fee is not automatically rolled-over, with members requesting hard-copy journals needing to opt-in annually. This was thought to again reduce any unnecessary printing and postage costs.

The introduction of these fee arrangements will require the amended Constitution to be implemented first.