ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Meeting – Thursday 28th August 2025 (Board Meeting #3)
Commencing 11:00 AEST
[NSW, QLD, VIC, ACT, TAS – 11:00; SA, NT– 10:30; WA – 9:00]

Zoom Meeting:
https://zoom.uts.edu.au/j/88208795521

GoogleDrive Documents:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KUaaFxICaBMlf484IVR6R5MKLk5uU5P3?usp=drive_link

Distribution list: Pep Turner (President), Dieter Hochuli (President-elect), Ayesha Tulloch (VP – Public Outreach & Policy), Georgia Ward-Fear (VP – Science & Applications), Diana Kuchinke (VP – Next Generation), Nathan Browne (VP – Membership Services), Zoe Xirocostas (Secretary), Phu Nguyen (Treasurer), Nigel Andrew (Austral Ecology – Editor-in-Chief), VACANT (EMR – Editor-in-Chief), Stephen van Leeuwen (Director – Indigenous Engagement), Patt Finnerty (Director – Early Career Research), Angela Moles (Director - Inspiring Ecology Teaching), Gail Spina* (Executive Officer), Jacky Tierney* (Finance & Membership Officer), Claire Halliday* (Communications Manager), Caryn Marks* (Membership & Digital Services Officer). *Ex-officio members*

1.0 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Chairperson's Welcome and Introduction

Pep welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the lands which we were all meeting from.

1.2 **Present:** Pep Turner, Zoe Xirocostas, Patt Finnerty, Dieter Hochuli, Jacinta Humphrey (guest), Nathan Browne, Georgia Ward-Fear, Jacky Tierney, Gail Spina, Ayesha Tulloch, Phu Nguyen
Apologies: Stephen van Leeuwen, Diana Kuchinke, Angela Moles
Absent: Nigel Andrew

1.3 Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (May 2025) – for ratification*

Minutes attached.

Motion: That the minutes of the previous Board meeting be accepted as a true and correct record.
Moved: Zoe Xirocostas
Seconded: Dieter Hochuli
All in favour; motion carried.

2.0 BUSINESS for Discussion and/or Voting

2.1 2025-2029 Strategic Plan [DRAFT] - Pep Turner* (5-10 mins)

Following on from our July Strategic Planning Workshop, Pep drafted V1.0 and sent to Dieter. Edits/Comments from Dieter were incorporated into V2.0 2025-2029 Strategic Plan (attached). The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan Mission, Vision and Values remain largely unchanged (Knowledge Sharing has 'Championing academic freedom' and an additional Value 'Achieving Impact' has been added). The document describes our Operating Environment (reflecting the PESTLE analysis), Challenges and Opportunities, Our Path (Strategic Priorities and Objectives) and Our Actions (SubAims - how these have been generated is described in the comments section of the document). "How we work" and

"Review" sections are largely unchanged. The ESA Governance structure has been reformatted (alas attempts to create a new visual display proved difficult!).

The timeline is as follows:
1. Draft 2.0 sent to the ESA Board for 28th AUGUST 2025 meeting. President and President Elect to summarise and answer any questions. ESA Board to return comments/edits on Draft 2.0 to President by THURSDAY 18th SEPTEMBER. Pep to address edits/comments.
2. Draft 3.0 sent to ESA Executive for 25th September 2025 meeting. ESA Exec to return comments/edits on Draft 3.0 to President by WEDNESDAY 22ND OCTOBER. Pep to address edits/comments.
3. President to bring Draft 3.0 with final comments addressed to the ESA Board meeting THURSDAY 30TH OCTOBER. We have time to finalise the Strategic Plan before or at Planning Day.

Sincere thanks to everyone for their contributions.

Pep welcomed comments to initiate discussion regarding this item. The Board discussed whether we could have a more stripped down version of the strategic plan, similar to that of the American ESA. We could have an alternate document that zooms out and acts as a roadmap, that holds the details and helps the Board operate but not as publicly facing to avoid overwhelming our membership. Our membership has moved toward a more transactional relationship where they may not understand the full breadth of things we do. A summarised page of our actions could be useful to engage more of our membership with our strategic goals. Pep thanked all for contributing to this document and is conscious of the timeline that has been set to release the document.

NEW Agenda Item #			**Action arising**	**Person**	**Baseline**
Board	Aug (#3) 25	2.1.1	Board members to provide comments on the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan draft document, to be discussed at the September Executive meeting.	All Board	18 Sept 2025

2.2 Constitution Review - Pep Turner (10 mins)

The Constitution Working Party (Pep, Gail, Dieter, Nathan, Bek, Phu and Fiona [Aspen Legal]) had a productive meeting in Melbourne on Aug 4th. A huge thank you to everyone for your thoughts and hard work.

Overall, the meeting established that there was much in the Constitution that was procedural, and as such, we were looking at consistent ongoing tweaking and amending which is not good governance. Subsequently, the Working Party has made the changes needed to better reflect the current structure and function of the ESA, allowing procedural items to go into By-Laws.
A brief on what has changed:
1. S3 Objects. These were focused on. Objects has been pared back to reflect the Aims, Vision and Mission of the ESA, be more concise and more contemporary.
2. Membership, Membership processes and procedures, subscription and cessation of subscription reflect current practices and provide for future change.
3. General meetings- procedures are clearer, as is proxy voting.
4. Directors - clarity on merit based Director' roles (i.e. those we advertise)
5. Quorum and minimum number of Directors no longer conflict; the numbers are clearer.
6. clarity on meetings using technology
7. Items that were in conflict or no longer relevant have been removed/amended. (e.g. Bulletin, relating to journals access)
8. and minor amendments to the By-Laws.

The revised document from Fiona has substantial tracked changes. The aim is to send to the ESA Board a cleaner version for the Board to review and comment on.

The timeline is as follows:

1. Constitution draft 1.0 sent to the ESA Board following the 28th AUGUST 2025 meeting. President to summarise and answer any questions at the 28th August 2025 meeting. In addition, Pep will set up and send around 4 optional 30 min online meeting dates (between 29 Aug and 17

Sept) to enable ESA Board members to connect and discuss the Constitution. ESA Board to return comments/edits on Draft 1.0 to President by THURSDAY 18th SEPTEMBER. Constitution Working Party to address edits/comments.
2. Constitution Draft 2.0 sent to ESA Executive for 25th September 2025 meeting. ESA Exec to return comments/edits on Draft 2.0 to President by THURSDAY 9TH OCTOBER. Constitution Working Party to address edits/comments.
3. President to bring FINAL DRAFT with final comments addressed to the ESA Board meeting THURSDAY 30TH OCTOBER. If not the October Board meeting, the proposal is to amend the ATO clause and the remainder held over for AGM 2026.

Proposed amendments to the Constitution need to be sent to the membership 21 days before the AGM; this is the 3RD OF NOVEMBER 2025. The timing is tight but achievable.

Thanks to those who have helped us to get this far.

Pep thanked all who contributed to this Working Party meeting to help improve our Constitution to meet ESA's functional needs. The Working Party made changes to remove things that are no longer current and to ensure our documents are fit-for-purpose. Fiona was essential to ensuring that our Constitution satisfies legal obligations. We need to be careful with the phrasing on our documents to ensure our DGR status isn't jeopardised. The number of people attending an AGM to reach quorum (higher) vs. calling a special general meeting (lower) are two different considerations to be had. We could potentially suggest 5% of members (~65 people) or 20 members, whichever is fewer. From here, a document will be shared with the Board showing a summary of the major amendments made.

NEW Agenda Item #			**Action arising**	**Person**	**Baseline**
Board	Aug (#3) 25	2.2.1	Working Party to review constitutional changes and send to Fiona by September 5th. Fiona will provide context about the changes and distribute to the Board for out-of-session review and then further discussion at the September Executive meeting. Final sign-off will occur at the October 30th Board meeting.	All Board	October Board 2025

2.3 Board Code of Conduct - Pep Turner (1-2 mins)

In brief, we have an ESA Board Code of Conduct that dates back to 2014. It requires review. Dieter and I have made some changes. Next is to send it to Gail. There are some clauses that refer to breaches and other policies - these are related to the clauses in the Constitution,and/or ESA governing documents. We need to look at this (we've flagged Fiona from Aspen Legal here). The intention is to bring a Draft to the ESA Executive, and then to the ESA Board either in October or at Planning Day.

The current version of this document requires updating as it has not been reviewed for many years. Given the importance of proper director onboarding, the document must be current and fit-for-purpose. Key sections need revision to align with current organisational guidelines and clearly define director roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

NEW Agenda Item #			**Action arising**	**Person**	**Baseline**
Board	Aug (#3) 25	2.3.1	Board Code of Conduct to be drafted and presented for discussion at Planning Day.	Pep/Dieter/Gail	Planning Day 2025

2.4 The Global Ecology Alliance - Dieter Hochuli/ Pep Turner* (5 mins)

*Concept note and email communication attached**

Briefly, there was discussion at the Ecological Society of America's International Society Leaders' Forum which proposed a new federation to represent the global ecological community: the Global Ecology Alliance. We have been asked to share this concept note with our Board for discussion.

Dieter outlined the BES concept to establish a peak body of global ecological societies. Unlike INTECOL's volunteer-based model (which focuses on wetlands), BES proposes a funded approach that may prove more effective. The alliance aims to secure a more prominent role for ecological societies at major environmental summits, moving beyond current ad-hoc participation. Georgia expressed support for joining this alliance, noting it could enhance ecology's profile as a credible scientific discipline. The Board discussed whether investment in this alliance might be more strategic than current STA involvement, concluding that ESA should remain engaged during this developmental phase.

NEW Agenda Item #			**Action arising**	**Person**	**Baseline**
Board	Aug (#3) 25	2.4.1	Contacting organisers to express ESA's interest in joining a global ecology alliance.	Pep/Dieter	September Exec 2025

2.5 New Bank Account - Phu Nguyen/ Jacky Tierney (5 mins)

Currently ESA pays the Super Guarantee Levy (SGL) for staff through the ATO clearing house.

Aside from the fact this clearing house may close in the next year, the preferred method for payment of the SGL is through our accounting software XERO as it streamlines the process accurately, automates the monthly payment directly to the ATO, and, eliminates the need to maintain logins via MyGov.

We have not been able to utilise this method of payment until recently as we needed:
- a dedicated one to sign bank account, so it can setup the authorised link from Xero to the bank to ATO, and;
- to ensure the segregation of duties for authorising this payment were within our established financial controls policy as we do for all payments.

Recently Xero introduced a change that established separate duties for one payroll admin to initiate and another to approve. ESA has this setup already for all other payroll functions within Xero.

The creation of the one to sign bank account is further segregated from the payroll admin roles as it is to be created and authorised by two separate board members – the President and Treasurer as two of our official signatories on our other bank accounts. The account transactions also create a separate audit trail for monitoring.

Jacky summarised the item background for the Board. The Board agreed this motion would save administrative time and reduce human error.

> ***Motion: That a new one to sign bank account be created with Bank Australia for the purpose of automating the superannuation guarantee levy payments directly from the Xero accounting system to the ATO. The signatories to create the account are to be the Treasurer and President.***
> Moved: Ayesha Tulloch
> Seconded: Georgia Ward-Fear
> All in favour; motion carried.

3.0 ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1 Matters Arising from Previous Board Meetings

Agenda Item #			**Action arising**	**Person**	**Baseline**	**Last update (May Board)**
Planning Day	July (#1) 23	3.1.1	Develop surveys for membership and conference attendees (and non-attendees) to better understand the perspectives of	Gail/Pep	Planning Day 23	Caryn will delve into the data to understand what our members are looking for. This will work into our

			different ESA sectors RE: sustainability & conferences			membership and volunteer strategy. **Ongoing.**
Update: **Ongoing.**						
Board	Oct (#4) 24	3.1.2	Progressing ESA's Reconciliation Action Plan for presentation to the general membership.	Georgia/Pep /All Board	ESA24	Georgia hadn't been able to connect with the IEWG as of yet. Gail shared that the RAP has been revised and submitted 4 times (with less feedback each round), we are now awaiting the outcome. **Ongoing.**
Update: We are getting closer. A final draft was received from the creative design team. The current aim is to launch the RAP at the conference on Monday when the Indigenous Ecological Symposium is running. We can also present it at the AGM. **Ongoing.**						
Planning Day	Dec 24	5.2.1	Advertise for and create a working group to conduct ESA's constitutional review.	Pep	March 2025	Pep shared that things are ticking along with the constitutional review. The group has decided to bring it to Strategic Planning Day to have comments from the broader group, pertaining to the main principles of ESA. The WG can then come together a few weeks later with legal advice to progress this item. **Ongoing.**
Update: NEW ACTION. See 2.2. **This item will now be removed.**						
Planning Day	Dec 24	7.1.1	Discuss impressions of STA with other societies to determine whether ESA should renew our membership in July 2025	Pep/Dieter	March 2025	No further updates. Discussions were had on the technology and engineering focus that STA has, with limited mentions of ecology/environment. It costs ESA ~$10k per year to pay for STA membership and Science Meets Parliament. The Board questioned whether it is better for us to make change from the inside or throw stones from the outside. Perhaps ESA's funds could be better spent on other activities related to government (i.e., parliamentary interns?). If we keep our membership, we would need a concerted strategy to make change from the inside. We will continue this discussion at Strategic Planning Day to come to a clearer decision. **Ongoing.**
Update: Dieter has conversed with Jas Chambers and STA's perspective is that the environment is on their radar. For now we will keep this item as **ongoing**.						

4.0 BUSINESS for Noting or Information Only

4.0a STANDING ITEMS: REPORTS

4a.1 Correspondence Report – Zoe Xirocostas*

Report attached.

No comments.

4a.2 Working Group Report – All*

Working Group Portfolio Chairs should submit a written dot point report for their Working Groups allowing for discussion of questions and issues only, rather than taking time for verbal updates. Directors with WG oversight to collate and forward dot point reports to Secretary prior to Board meetings. **Working group reports are expected each ESA Board or Executive meeting, unless indicated otherwise**.

Oversight	Working Group	Chair	Update as at 28 August 25 (unless stated otherwise)
President	JOURNALS	Pep Turner	Nigel is still acting EIC of EMR. There's been a review of aims and scope to the editorial Board and they are set to change. They will be more concise and help us to accept more papers from the global south. We will soon advertise for a new EIC.
	HOLSWORTH FUND	Chloe Sato	
VP Science & Applications	INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	Stephen van Leeuwen/ Teagan Shields	Report attached*
	RESEARCH CHAPTERS	Vacant	
	RESEARCH AWARDS	Georgia Ward Fear	The AERA award will be going to Sarah Legge and the Next Gen ecologist award will be going to Eamonn Wooster. With excellent ecologists. - Georgia Ward-Fear (21/08/2025)
	PRACTITIONER ENGAGEMENT	Sam Lloyd	Report and EIA award flyer attached*
VP Next Generation	EARLY CAREER ECOLOGISTS	Patt Finnerty	Report attached* ECE WG had their networking week and received great feedback which will be implemented at later events. - Jacinta
	STUDENT ACTIVITIES & AWARDS	Diana Kuchinke	
	ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION	Angela Moles	Report attached*
VP Public Outreach & Policy	HOT TOPICS	Holly Kirk	Report attached*
	MEDIA	Claire Halliday	
	POLICY	John Morgan/ David Clarke	
	ACADEMIC FREEDOM	Don Driscoll	One anonymous report of violation of academic freedom was uploaded through the ESA portal. The first in a few years. With regular promotion to the society, this tool may let us keep our finger on the pulse of trends. -Don Driscoll (15/08/2025)
VP Membership Services	EQUITY & DIVERSITY	Leanda Mason	
	CONFERENCES	Jenn Firn	
	MEMBERSHIP	Nathan Browne	See 4a.4.
	POST-GRAD DAY (Sept/Oct report)	Susanna Venn/ Jeronimo	

Oversight	Working Group	Chair	Update as at 28 August 25 (unless stated otherwise)
		Vasquez Ramirez	
Treasurer	FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE	Phu Nguyen	Covered under 5.1.
	FUNDRAISING & SPONSORSHIP (quarterly report)	Vacant	

4a.3 Communications Report – Claire Halliday

Verbal update [provided by Gail Spina].

We are ticking along with business as usual. The photo competition is currently underway.

4a.4 Membership Report – Nathan Browne*

Report attached.

No comments.

4a.5 Conference Report – Gail Spina*

Report attached.

Conference preparations are progressing well, however a significant financial loss is projected due to increased convention centre costs and below-target sponsorship revenue. Sponsorship income remains under 50% of target, presenting challenges not experienced in recent years. The shortfall may be attributed to the conference location or potential sponsor fatigue following strong participation at last year's event. This would represent the first negative financial outcome in 14-15 years.

4.0b SUBMISSIONS

No submissions.

4.0c OTHER BUSINESS (Noting and/or Information)

No other business.

5.0 TREASURER'S REPORT

5.1 Treasurer's Report – Phu Nguyen*

Papers attached including:

a) Finance Report
b) Budget Variance
c) Balance Sheet

The papers presented are a draft, with a meeting of the FGWG and Auditors scheduled for next week to finalise them. We have a projected surplus of $187K which is in contrast to the deficit that was predicted earlier in the year. While Gail mentioned that we are looking at a financial shortfall for the current FY, this surplus from FY24/25 allows us a buffer to mitigate the financial challenges of the conference. Some contributing factors of the positive result this past FY include royalties from Wiley, increased memberships, and higher interest rates. Some expenditures from unfinished projects/initiatives have carried over into this year along with unbudgeted expenses such as Board training. Our balance sheet looks good and we have been set up well by our preceding Board. We are implementing a hybrid approach to our investments and leaning toward Vanguard ETFs which should see good capital growth over the long term. We don't expect to see any significant surprises from the Auditors next week when the accounts are finalised.

Motion: That the Board approve the budget as presented.

Moved: Pep Turner
Seconded: Zoe Xirocostas
All in favour; motion carried.

6.0 LATE ITEMS

No late items.

7.0 NEXT MEETING:

25 September: Executive meeting
30 October: Board meeting