

07 October 2020



Sydney City Skywatchers Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 07 October

Presidential Address, Toner Stevenson

I acknowledge Aboriginal Peoples of the country on which our members currently reside and pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. They were the first watchers of the Southern Stars and their knowledge of astronomy is enduring and respected.

This time last year no one predicted we would be riding out a global pandemic in 2020. As I was preparing our Annual Report last December's end of year party in the Australian Hotel came to mind. It was a joyous occasion, indeed we all got to know each other sitting shoulder to shoulder and we celebrated our shared interest in astronomy and life in general. This would not be possible today.

But as this is our 125th year we can remove ourselves a little from the present and reflect on the past by examining what the British Astronomical Association (BAA NSW) Branch did in 1919 when the Spanish Flu came to Sydney and the population also wore masks and quarantined. The 1919 February and March BAA NSW meetings went ahead as planned with a strong focus on Jupiter and its rapidly changing nature. However, there is then a gap in meetings and in July 1919 it was noted in the Daily Telegraph that 'after an interval of several weeks owing to the influenza epidemic the NSW Branch of the BAA resumed its monthly general meetings and the President, Mr. Walter Gale, resumed its chair and there was a good attendance of members.'¹

The reason our society was formed in 1895 was to bring like-minded people together to learn about astronomy from each other, Over 125 years this has ambition has not changed and our use of communication technology has meant Sydney members, and members much further afield can continue to do this perhaps even more so in our current global pandemic. I sincerely want to thank all members who have contributed in some way to this ambition.

Attendances at our monthly meetings, in person and on-line, has been strong. Many of you ask questions and participate regularly. Let's reflect on the presentations we have had over the past 12 months:

- On Wednesday 2 October 2019, at Sydney Observatory, Skywatchers member, Peter Osman, took us on a journey using his telescope knowledge to find and map astronomical objects. We then had a sensational observing night.
- Nov 04, 2019 Professor Fred Watson AM explored the hottest topics in space science and astronomy in his Cosmic Chronicles presentation in the marquee, an event we shared with Sydney Observatory and MAAS team.
- Then our end of year event last December. I think we would all agree that Elizabeth Cocking is the mover and shaker for that presentation.

¹ <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page25782258>

- On Feb 03, 2020 we investigated Meteorites as 'Visitors from Outer Space' with Ross Pogson, Scientific Officer and Collection Manager at the Australian Museum, this was packed house at Sydney Observatory.
- On Mar 02, 2020 Dr Antoine Martinod from the University of Sydney, explained how he was developing a new way to reveal new worlds from darkness, in his search for exoplanets in the habitable zone. We will likely return to see how his newly developed discovery methods are performing.
- On Apr 06, we began our venture into Astronomy in the Age of COVID-19. This was our first Zoom meeting. Using NASA resources I presented the science of Solar Storms and Space weather.
- On May 04, 2020, we celebrated our 125th Anniversary with a number of short presentations reflecting on our past and life in that era. Dr Nick Lomb presented the Keynote address titled 'Snippets from 125 years of history'. Mike Frost from the BAA in the UK, joined us on-line and later posted an article in their monthly journal. We toasted each other and our society, 125 years of history and astronomy online.
- Jun 01, 2020 we examined the Journey of Metals Through the Cosmic Web with Dr Anshu Gupta from UNSW who presented her research on how galaxies evolve in conjunction with their chemical evolution.
- Then on Jul 06, 2020 we participated in live astro-broadcasting: staying connected in isolation with MAAS Senior Science Educator Geoff Wyatt broadcasting from the telescope in his backyard.
- Dr Alice Gorman from Flinders University uncovered the archaeology of our solar system on Aug 03, 2020 and what she spoke about; particularly the dilemmas about the proliferation of satellites and ownership of Space have recently emerged as hot topics.
- On Sep 07, 2020, Dr Richard Wainscoat from The Pan-STARRS Observatory in Hawaii showed us how he searches for Near-Earth Objects.

Our website has grown in its importance and uptake during this time. I would like to especially thank Elizabeth Cocking and Monty Leventhal OAM, who have kept our website vibrant with their relevant and topical blog posts. In the past 12 months Elizabeth has written 24 posts and Monty 12. Other members, most notably Ann Cairns, Andrew Wood and Garry Dalrymple, have also contributed. And whilst our page views have grown to over 3,000 over the year, it is also important to have great content for social media.

The social media presence continues to have impact thanks to the activities of Michael Chapman, Ann Cairns and all those who like, share and comment on the Sydney City Skywatchers Facebook page. We have 735 Facebook likes and continue to reach more people with website content. We have 544 Twitter followers and one tweet in the past year reached 2,300 impressions. Our reach is comparable with much larger astronomy societies and our member's expertise, photography and associations with other groups stimulate conversation, enquiry and other outcomes. The Sydney City Skywatchers Astronomers Bulletin is now also available on the website and editor Jeanette Brenan's eye for a good story and quality of presentation makes this a great read for all.

Our society is our members, and it is all of you who we are here for. It has been a privilege to serve as Sydney City Skywatcher President throughout this dramatic change in how we work and I especially thank the committee who play a vital role in representing the interests of members with respect for differing opinions and in consideration of all. The person you all know who does a lot of work behind the scenes is Secretary and Membership Manager, Elizabeth Cocking. Elizabeth makes everything work seamlessly due to her attention to detail and communications.

Dr Andrew Jacob, is our very important connection with the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and he has worked closely in helping organise events such as the one with Fred Watson. Andrew provides expertise and in maintaining a strong relationship with Sydney Observatory and Museum staff who I also thank for their co-operation, assistance, and encouragement. Sydney Observatory is our home and anchor even in these times and our affiliation with MAAS brings responsibility as well as opportunity.

Ann Cairns and George Mavrocodratos are the foundations for outreach and telescope viewing nights – our last one was a year ago and we are hopeful for an end of year hurrah. Ann and George have also been experimenting with our historic telescopes. Prabina Lord-Doyle has led on the new Logo design and its transformation into a beautiful badge for Members as well as keeping us aware of new trends. Monty Leventhal provides the wisdom of his experience in astronomy and our society, and his regular solar reports go to many places on the globe. Our Treasurer, Elizabeth Budek, has ensured the books balance and whilst we are not for profit, we have enough in the bank to stay viable and operate professionally as a not-for-profit. I would also like to thank Presiding Officer Ken Robinson, who will conduct the election of committee members.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Elizabeth Cocking

What a year it has been. With the COVID-19 pandemic it was not the way we wanted to celebrate our quasiquintenary year. SCS is 125 years old this year. It has made life interesting in continuing to run the Club but I am proud to say we have carried on and are still providing service to members.

It has been my pleasure to serve you as Secretary. I have found the job rewarding and enjoy the synergy with all of you.

I would like to thank Dr Toner Stevenson for her hard work as President over the year and for her guidance. Also, thank you to the rest of the Committee. To the Treasurer, Elizabeth Budek for making sure we keep financially secure and to Ann Cairns for organising the outreach events and viewing nights. We have a strong and hard working committee.

Membership

Despite, or probably because of, the COVID-19 pandemic we have had an increase in the number of members joining this session, with 11 new members being welcomed into the Club. There are currently 66 members on the books. Our attendance at meetings remains solid, with an average of 25-30 members/visitors attending, and thankfully has not decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meetings are being held via Zoom, which is proving popular among members. It has helped us to continue to provide communication and networking among the members.

Communication with members

Membership renewals and AGM documentation continue to be sent via postal mail. This is a check to ensure the member's details are correct. A reminder to all members to notify me of any change in their details. Notice of monthly meetings is sent via email.

Social Media

There has been an increase in the use of social media with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This has also helped to deliver information to members quickly.

Thank Sydney Observatory and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences

Thank you to Sydney Observatory and MAAS for providing our meeting venue. Without this we would not be able to operate. They also provide discount rates to SCS members at their events. It is important that we continue to support them by volunteering at their outreach events and in many other ways.

Astronomy 2021 Books

The Australasian Sky Guide 2021 by Dr Nick Lomb is now available for purchase at Sydney Observatory. The Observatory is open daily and you can purchase one there. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we will not be placing a bulk order to Quasar Publishing for the Quasar Astronomy 2021 books. As we are not meeting face-to-face it is not possible to get the books to members, postage is not an option as this would negate any discount offered. Members will need to purchase the book through other means.

I wish all SCS members good health during these challenging times and thank you for the support you have given me.

Elizabeth Cocking
SECRETARY

**SYDNEY CITY SKYWATCHERS ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
01 OCTOBER 2019 to 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

INCOME

Subscriptions:

Renewals.	\$1820.00
New Members.	\$120.00
Supper takings.	\$432.00
Donations.	\$250.00
Astronomy 2020 sales.	\$400.00
SCS Badge sale.	\$10.00
Transfer from Investment Account.	\$3009.94

TOTAL INCOME \$6041.94 CR

EXPENDITURE

Postage	\$218.35
Photocopying.	\$61.68
Supper costs (food, paper cups etc).	\$158.67
Public Liability Insurance.	\$474.65
Dept. of Fair Trading.	\$47.00
Internet costs.	\$261.26
Stationery.	\$23.18
Astronomy 2020 purchase.	\$408.40
BAA (UK) membership.	\$102.68
Binocular purchase.	\$500.00
Printing of 125th Anniversary tickets.	\$183.20
Graphic Artist cost for SCS Logo.	\$150.00
Flower arrangement.	\$85.00
Transfer to Business Debit Card.	\$500.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURE. \$3174.07 DR

SURPLUS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/2020.	\$2867.87 CR
BANK BALANCE AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020.	\$5129.89 CR
BUSINESS DEBIT CARD	\$494.60 CR

ASSETS

**Telescope/s
Binoculars**

**Elizabeth Budek
Treasurer
Sydney City Skywatchers
7 October 2020**