

## ASPAC Digest – December 2017

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*10th Edition, December 2017*

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### Contents

Greetings from the Chair.....	2
New Forum for Laboratories.....	3
2017 Training.....	4
Soil Technicians Worksop 31 OCT – 1 Nov 2017, Ravensdown Analytical Research Laboratories (ARL), Napier, New Zealand.....	4
Travel Awards 2017 .....	4
2017 Roger Hill ASPAC Travel Award.....	4
Conferences.....	5
Committee Contacts .....	6

## Greetings from the Chair



**Dave Lyons – Chairman ASPAC, Queensland Representative**

Merry Christmas everyone - this is our Christmas Newsletter and being a busy time of the year, we will keep this issue a relatively short one.

ASPAC held its' first Annual General Meeting outside of Australia at 9am New Zealand time on 31st of October, 2017. Fifteen members attended the meeting at Analytical Research Laboratories (ARL) Limited, in Napier, New Zealand. We had 17 others also in attendance, as the AGM kick started a Soil Technician Workshop held over two days commencing at 10am. An Executive meeting was held the preceding day at the same venue. Thanks to Will Bodeker from ARL for hosting these events. We rely a lot on member laboratories to host workshops to help keep costs down for all. Our special thanks to Janice Trafford who has facilitated workshops over many years, in such a thorough and professional way. Rebecca Withnall (NZ Rep) made our visit to Napier so informative and enjoyable and thanks also to those who presented over the two days. Our thoughts are with Brian Daley who took ill while in Napier and was unable to attend. Brian had been a presenter at all previous soil and plant technician training workshops run by ASPAC.

Some information for members that arose from Napier and more recently, follow:

- It was agreed to increase the cost of corporate membership to \$400 plus GST from 2018. ASPAC had to employ professional help with website design and financial matters over the last couple of years. As of now, we will only have one face to face meeting per year for both the Executive (for the AGM) and the Laboratory Proficiency Committee (to meet with Global Proficiency). We have also applied a nominal charge for participants of workshops to reduce what the Council sponsors. Also, our inter-laboratory proficiency programs (ILPP's) have got more complex with more tests being offered for both the SoilChek and PlantChek programs. Moreover, we have commenced certification of the acid sulfate soil ILPP, so overall, more voluntary time of committee members is required.
- Certificates have been distributed to laboratories involved in all three proficiency programs recently. Performance in the acid sulfate program has slipped a bit for some tests and a couple of labs, so thought will be given to running a training workshop next year, as we did in 2010.
- ASPAC is now one of four kindred organisations that have teamed up with Soil Science Australia in the National Soil Conference to be run in Canberra from November 18 to 23, 2018 at the Hyatt Hotel. See website <http://soilscienceconference.org.au/>. Session Topics specific to what ASPAC promotes have been included in the program. We ask members to please support this conference (and pass the message on to others) by attending and preferably presenting an abstract. Session topics will proceed if enough abstracts on each have been received. Abstracts can be submitted from early January to early June. We have a great opportunity to showcase what ASPAC is all about to the wider Australian Soil Science Industry.
- Craig Newman our Tasmanian Rep. has initiated a chat site app. (excuse the lingo, as I am from the old school and proud to say so). This will allow members and individuals from laboratories to raise any topic of relevance to ASPAC, particularly advice on technical matters (anonymously if they want). Stay tuned.

Finally on behalf of all members, a big thank you to Committee members for the time they devote to ASPAC. Much of this is voluntary done after work time, but some time is gratis thanks to employers. ASPAC relies on such commitment.

## New Forum for Laboratories



Scientists always seem to be willing to help each other succeed. Scientists know that science is hard, that the tools and instruments that modern day labs use are becoming increasingly sophisticated and that by helping each other everyone wins.

To cope with these demands there has been a long identified need for a place where Lab technicians can:

- Meet and discuss these challenges
- Gather ideas about how to get the most out of the equipment they run
- Perform tests better
- Network with other users to troubleshoot problems

ASPAC is committed to facilitating exactly that kind of collaboration, it's why we run proficiency testing, workshops and conferences. Getting people together to learn from each other and improve as an industry.

ASPAC is excited to announce that we now have a new way to keep that collaboration happening. We have developed our own little home on the internet through the online community of Reddit. A collective of knowledge where people can go to help and to get help.

For those unfamiliar with Reddit, it is the world's biggest online community, there is literally a small sub-community (called a subreddit) for every interest or topic you can imagine, including (now) one especially designed for us ASPAC Labrats.

A few points I'd like to make about Reddit:

Reddit is truly anonymous: nothing you post can be traced back to you, or your company. It is the ideal forum for asking delicate questions about delicate topics.

Reddit is secure: We can lock down the subreddit to keep the trolls away if we need to. The software is open source and is continually being kept up to date.

It's easy to use: It may look a little daunting at first glance, but poke around a little and you'll see how simple it is to post, reply and get feedback. We've even included a few links to help you get started, just look under the welcome to /r/ASPAC post

It's 100% free: who doesn't like a freebie?

The ASPAC subreddit (like all of Reddit) is very much community driven, the more people who get involved, post and ask/offer assistance the more useful the site will become. It is our space on the internet to make our own

So what are you waiting for?

Go to <https://www.reddit.com/r/ASPAC> join Reddit and hit the subscribe button, (don't forget to bookmark the page) and get started sharing your experiences.

Lastly and most importantly get your workmates involved too, the more people using it the better it is for everyone!

## 2017 Training

**Soil Technicians Workshop 31 OCT – 1 Nov 2017, Ravensdown Analytical Research Laboratories (ARL), Napier, New Zealand.**



Applied Research Laboratories (ARL) in Napier, New Zealand, hosted this year's Soil Analysis Workshop. We had 19 attendees, with a fairly even split between New Zealand and Australian members.

The programme covered essential quality components and also specific troubleshooting discussions and presentations for targeted topics, rated in order of preference by the attendees during the registration process. The ASPAC executive would like to thank the various members of the committee and presenters who volunteered their time towards making the workshop a success. In particular Rebecca Withnall and the team from ARL who whole heartedly became involved in the planning of the workshop with four of the team presenting and the whole lab team included in a lovely lunch before a very informative tour of the laboratories operations and facilities.

The workshop ended with a coach trip to The Centre for Land and Water's onion crop field trial site, with the bus driver providing bonus tourist information during the journey from Napier.

Feedback from the attendees at the workshop was on the whole very positive. Many were also keen to be involved in a trial of ASPAC's new online community forum for laboratory technicians – ASPAC LabRats, using Reddit. We are hoping this will keep the momentum of collaboration and interactions going long after the workshops have finished.

## Travel Awards 2017

### 2017 Roger Hill ASPAC Travel Award

As reported in the last edition of the Digest this year's Travel Award has been granted to Dr Stephanie Watts-Williams who attended the 18th International Plant Nutrition Colloquium. Copenhagen, Denmark, 21st-24th August 2017. Stephanie has kindly prepared a report on the conference titled "Plant nutrition for global green growth – the topic for discussion in Copenhagen at IPNC '17" which is [available here](#).

## Conferences

# 2018 NATIONAL SOILS CONFERENCE

Soils, the key to the past, the present and the future

18 - 23 November 2018 | Hyatt Hotel Canberra, ACT

### KEY DATES

#### Abstract Submission

**08 January 2018** - Call for Abstracts open

**04 June 2018** - *Abstract Submissions close*

#### Registration

**04 March 2018** - - Early Bird registrations open

**27 August 2018** - *Early bird registrations close*

**12 November 2018** - *Online registrations close*



SOIL SCIENCE  
AUSTRALIA



NATIONAL SOILS CONFERENCE  
Canberra 18-23 November 2018

## Committee Contacts

**Executive Officer** Warren Webber [webber@xtra.co.nz](mailto:webber@xtra.co.nz) Phone: +64 27 478 7758

### Elected Executive Committee

Chairperson	Dave Lyons	<a href="mailto:daveandtrish8@bigpond.com">daveandtrish8@bigpond.com</a>	Queensland
Vice-Chairperson	Paul Kennelly	<a href="mailto:Paul.Kennelly@incitecpivot.com.au">Paul.Kennelly@incitecpivot.com.au</a>	Victoria
Secretary	Matthew Wheal	<a href="mailto:mlbmsw@iinet.net.au">mlbmsw@iinet.net.au</a>	Tasmania
Treasurer	Craig Newman	<a href="mailto:cnewman@agvita.com.au">cnewman@agvita.com.au</a>	Western Australia
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### Laboratory Proficiency Committee

Chairperson Roger Hill  
 Dave Lyons  
 Leigh Sparrow

### Fertcare Advisory Committee

Graham Lancaster  
 Rob Norton  
 Craig Newman

### Travel Award Assessment Committee

Rob De Hayr  
 Dave Lyons  
 Matthew Wheal

### Methods Committee Convenor

Paul Milham

### Plant Nutrition Trust, ASPAC Representative

Janice Trafford

### Training Workshop Convenor

Janice Trafford

### Liaison Officer with Consumer Affairs Victoria

Secretary Matthew Wheal

### Membership Subcommittee

Chair Dave Lyons  
 Regional Exec. Rep. (applicant's location)