

**Minutes of the Australian Health Economists' Society
Annual General Meeting
6pm, 28 September 2006
Parmelia Hilton, Perth**

(Subject to ratification at 2007 AGM)

The President of the Society, Denzil Fiebig, declared the meeting open at 6.20pm.

Present: Jenny Watts, Denzil Fiebig, Lisa Gold, Mike Shields, Luke Connelly, Elizabeth Savage, Glenn Jones, Jane Hall, Henry Cutler, Rhema Vaithianathan, Ishrat Hossain, Ian McRae, Rosalie Viney, Tony Scott, Janet Dzator, Alastair Wilson, Brett Rogers, Jenny Williams, Cipri Martinez, Arnold Kihauale, Andrew Rintoul, Vishal Jaunky

Apologies: none

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was moved by Rosalie Viney and seconded by Glenn Jones that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted. The motion was carried.

President's Report

The President noted there was little to report due to the continued sound position of the society since the previous meeting.

Members were asked to provide feedback on the 2006 conference and on other aspects of services AHES currently provides or could provide in the future. Comments are welcome at any time to all members of the Executive.

The President expressed special thanks to:

- Jim Butler – for leaving the society in such good working order
- Pfizer Australia, WA Department of Health and Curtin University – who have kindly provided sponsorship for the 2006 AHES conference
- The AHES Executive - Mike, Lisa and Jenny – who have helped everything move along smoothly this year
- Sandra Hopkins - for local organization of the 2006 conference and in particular for organizing sponsorship of the conference from WA Department of Health
- Curtin University - for hosting the 2006 AHES conference

The votes of thanks were supported by acclamation.

Treasurer's Report

Jenny Watts tabled the 2004/05 financial report and presented the 2006 Treasurer's report. This was Jenny's first year of Treasurer and she had experienced a steep learning curve.

The current balance stood at a healthy looking \$81,500. The conference budget was also presented in the financial report since this is the main financial activity of the Society.

The 2006 conference had 93 registrants over the two days of the conference and 75 attendees at the conference dinner. This turn-out was larger than expected and boosted the conference income. The AHES conference aims to break even and it was noted that the conference would not have reached this target without the sponsorship income.

The President called for questions. Rhema Vaithianathan asked for clarification of the role of Pfizer Australia in sponsoring the conference, given the move in medical circles to recognise the role of drug companies and to avoid association with such companies. The President clarified that Pfizer Australia wish to continue their sponsorship of the AHES conference. There are no requirements on AHES linked to this sponsorship. AHES offered several conference places to the sponsors and Pfizer took up two places for the 2006 conference.

Luke Connelly reminded the AGM that the society has debated the issue of conference sponsorship in previous years and agreed that as long as sponsorship is not tied to conditions then sponsorship from private business (including pharmaceutical industry) is acceptable. Jane Hall added that iHEA has also agonized over this issue. The basic problem is that sponsorship is needed in order to fund good international speakers at a conference. However, sponsorship needs to be under conditions of no influence over what is presented and who is invited.

Janet Dzator added that it would be a good idea for all presenters to declare conflicts of interest.

The President agreed that it would be good for AHES to have a policy on sponsorship and conflicts of interest. Lisa Gold agreed to bring both iHEA and past AHES debates to the next AGM.

Election of Office-Bearers

Nominations for candidates for election as officer-bearers of the Society were called for in the second issue of the 2006 newsletter. By the due date of 21st September 2006, the following nominations had been received by the Secretary:

- President: Denzil Fiebig
- Vice-President: Michael Shields
- Secretary: Lisa Gold
- Treasurer: Jenny Watts
- Public Officer:
- General Committee: Marian Shanahan, Rosalie Viney

According to the rules of the Society, these positions were declared elected.

This left one vacant post for Public Officer (a role to be filled by a resident of new South Wales) and one vacant post on the General Committee. Nominations were called for these positions at the AGM. The following nominations were received:

- Public Officer: Henry Cutler. Nominated by Jane Hall, seconded by Elizabeth Savage
- General Committee: Luke Connelly. Nominated by Denzil Fiebig, seconded by Jane Hall.

According to the rules of the Society, these positions were declared elected.

AHES Travel Scholarships

Mike Shields reported that 5 submissions were made for the 2006 AHES Travel Scholarships. There were a significant number of queries concerning the definition of “the Asia-Pacific Region” and ongoing debate over the inclusion (or otherwise) of North America in this definition. The decision was made to exclude North America from the definition.

The five submitted papers were independently rated by the four members of the AHES Executive and two scholarships were awarded: to Vishal Jaunky of the University of Mauritius and Masha Somi of the Australian National University. Scholarships were awarded to reimburse up to \$1500 for travel and accommodation expenses related to attending the 2006 conference.

Denzil Fiebig moves that the process for 2007 follow that used this year, seconded by Lisa Gold. The motion was carried.

Conference Abstracts for 2003

The President noted that the Society had planned to publish the proceedings of the 2003 AHES conference (the 25th Conference of Health Economists) on CD-Rom. However, this process was delayed due to departure of key staff and the publication process has not been conducted to date. All papers presented at the 2003 conference are available on the members area of the website. The Executive proposed to the AGM that the plan to publish the 2003 proceedings on CD-Rom be abandoned.

Elizabeth Savage moved that the Executive cease the planned publication of 2003 conference proceedings on CD-Rom, seconded by Jane Hall. The motion was carried.

Format of conference sessions

Mike Shields raised the annual issue of conference paper submissions and session format. He argued that the required submission should reflect the aim of the conference. To date, AHES has asked people to submit abstracts. All submitted abstracts on a health economics topic are accepted and submission of full paper in advance of the conference is requested. This year almost half of presenters failed to provide a full paper in advance of the conference. The Vice-President tries to find discussants for all papers and this is always a difficult task. For 2006 this task was made far more difficult by the failure of presenters to submit full papers. There are essentially five options for conference submission:

- (1) Stay the same: Abstract submission (all accepted, full paper in advance of conference, author and then discussant present)
- (2) Full paper submission (all accepted, author and then discussant present)
- (3) Full paper submission with selection (selection based on paper quality, author and then discussant present)
- (4) Abstract submission (all accepted, full paper requested in advance of conference but no discussant allocated)
- (5) Abstract submission (all accepted, optional discussant role – full paper in advance of conference for discussant papers only)

Mike Shields has a preference for option (4).

Luke Connelly and Rosalie Viney both requested the clarification that ALL options require the provision of a full conference paper on the day of the conference. This was agreed by all. Denzil Fiebig noted that there was no expectation that the full paper be a 'polished' or publication-quality piece.

Elizabeth Savage requested more discussion from the floor in support of option (4) as she was concerned about the lack of floor discussion at the AGM to date. Jane Hall warned that, although we all need to be aware of the thankless task of the Vice-president in organising discussants, there must be some means of ensuring all presenters provide a full paper – to avoid the failure of this year.

Denzil Fiebig noted that he was aware that people are using AHES as a workshop and that that approach fits an abstract-based submission process.

Luke Connelly asked whether the AHES Executive could be empowered to drop papers that were not provided in full 5 days prior to the conference. He understood the thankless task of organising discussants but recognised the value-adding role that discussants play. Tony Scott agreed that in order to have fruitful discussion (an objective of the AHES conference), it was important that at least one other person had read the paper in advance of the presentation.

Jenny Watts suggested that another option is to reduce the length of each session. Elizabeth Savage argued instead for an increase in the time authors are given to present. She felt that 20 minutes was too short to explain the methods and approach of a preliminary paper.

Jane Hall noted that the absence of discussants would throw more responsibility onto the session chair to constructively comment on the paper. Denzil Fiebig argued that a conference without discussants would need to make good use of session chairs, if members were willing to fulfill this role.

Tony Scott asked whether there could be an optional discussant role if the decision were made to drop the formal discussant role from the conference. Denzil Fiebig added that this would work best if submitters arranged an organized session of papers with an explicit discussant role.

Denzil Fiebig moved that the 2007 conference follow a process of abstract submission with no discussants allocated but with the expectation that the full conference paper be provided one week prior to the conference (to be available for download from the website). There would be the option for papers to be grouped into organized sessions with one or more discussants. Seconded by Jane Hall. The motion was carried.

Conference 2007

Luke Connelly reported that he had been approached by the Executive to host the 2007 AHES conference in Queensland. The Executive had asked for a location outside Brisbane and logistics suggest a Gold Coast location that can also be accessed from Coolangatta airport. Jenny Watts suggested Cairns as an alternative. Luke Connelly argued that Cairns would be harder to organize from a Brisbane base, but he was also concerned about numbers if the location is the Gold Coast. Jenny Watts suggest that Brisbane also be considered as a valid option.

Denzil Fiebig moved that the location of the 2007 Conference be Queensland, with the final location to be determined by the AHES Executive, seconded by Rosalie Viney. The motion was carried.

AHES support for Sydney bid for iHEA 2013

Jane Hall tabled a motion in advance of the AGM, seconded by Rosalie Viney.

Motion: that AHES will join CHERE in submitting an expression of interest to the iHEA Board, and further exploring the feasibility of hosting the iHEA World Congress in Sydney in 2013. The full submission is included as an appendix to these minutes.

Jane Hall summarised the submission. The forthcoming iHEA World Congress will be in Copenhagen (2007) and then in Beijing (2009) and Toronto (2011). Therefore the next option is 2013. There has been substantial interest in bringing the iHEA World Congress to Sydney over the last 6-7 years. With a decrease in the required organizational effort and reduced demands placed on the local organising committee, CHERE are now considering hosting such a meeting. It is very important to push the idea that iHEA is international and this is a good opportunity to be the first iHEA conference in the Southern hemisphere. This would showcase local talent and expose junior researchers to an iHEA conference. CHERE will lead the process and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing have been very supportive of the concept.

Luke Connelly agreed that this was a great idea in principle. He raised concerns over the fundraising burden on local organizers and queried whether there was an expectation to raise US\$250,000 and to what extent we could allow AHES to be exposed to financial risk.

Jane Hall confirmed that the expectation for local fundraising is US\$200,000-300,000 but that iHEA are getting much better at links with sponsors and the exact level of fundraising would need to be explored in more detail. Denzil Fiebig asked for clarification on whether AHES/CHERE or iHEA financially underwrite the meeting. Jane Hall replied that iHEA play this role.

Jenny Watts asked at what point does the expression of interest become a commitment. Jane Hall replied that this happens three to four years ahead of the Congress. Therefore, the support requested at this AGM is not about making a cast-iron commitment but rather about exploring the possibilities. For example, the negotiation with Beijing has been in process for four to five years. Jenny Watts wondered whether iHEA would then entertain several offers for each Congress. Jane Hall replied that this was sometimes the case, but not always.

Denzil Fiebig moved the motion as submitted (above) with the clarification that this means Jane Hall in collaboration with the AHES Executive will explore the submission. The motion was carried.

Any Other Business

Brett Rogers asked whether the Executive had plans for an online system of payment. Lisa Gold confirmed that there were no plans for this. Jenny Watts stated that to move to an online system would require a change in the Society's banking arrangements. However, the Treasurer is currently exploring different options for the Society's bank accounts and she could add this to the list of things to explore.

The President declared the meeting closed at 7pm.

Appendix: Consideration of a future iHEA conference

Motion: that AHES will join CHERE in submitting an expression of interest to the iHEA Board, and further exploring the feasibility of hosting the iHEA World Congress in Sydney in 2013.

Proposed : Jane Hall

Seconded: Rosalie Viney

What is the iHEA World Congress: this is the major international health economics scientific meeting. Attendance has grown strongly since the first Congress held in Vancouver in 1996 and reached almost 2000 participants in Barcelona. The Conference Program typically involves (a small number of) plenary sessions, organised sessions, proffered paper sessions, pre and/or post conference workshops, and a social program. The main program typically runs from Sunday evening to Wednesday afternoon.

Schedule of iHEA Conferences: these are now held every two years, in July. Future conferences are Copenhagen, 2007; Beijing, 2009; Toronto, 2011. Proposals should be submitted 6 years in advance, with a formal commitment entered into 4 years in advance. Therefore the Board will be considering expressions of interest at its meeting in July, 2007.

What are the advantages: this is an opportunity to showcase developments in health economics in Australia and New Zealand. It draws international attention to what is happening here. It gives us an opportunity to influence the program, particularly the selection of overall themes and plenary speakers. It provides a much greater opportunity for early career researchers and students to attend. It attracts the attention of policy makers.

Previous conferences have been held in Rotterdam, York, San Francisco and Barcelona. This would also emphasise the 'international' part of iHEA as it would be the first conference in the southern hemisphere.

Is there any interest in Australia: there is already an expressed interest at the iHEA Board level and from a number of individual iHEA members. It would also be an advantage to potential attendees in Asia, India, South America, and perhaps South Africa.

Sydney meets the criteria used in selecting a location – appropriate conference facilities, accommodation, weather, international hub for travel.

What is involved in submitting an expression of interest: the Board asks for a 2 page letter from "a health economics research organization". There is detailed guidance on the iHEA website. As well as the criteria on location, the Board looks for a strong, committed local group of health economists. CHERE is willing to take the lead on this; and at this stage we are asking for an indication of AHES support as this will strengthen the bid. We will also welcome the involvement of other Centres and individuals. At this time, we are not committing to hosting the Congress, but to making an expression of interest which will allow us to explore the various issues with the Executive Director and other relevant parties. No commitment is required until four years in advance of the conference, ie some time in 2009.

Further information is available at www.healtheconomics.org/about/guidelines/-guidance-for-organizers-of-ihea-co.html