

Minutes of the Australian Health Economists' Society
Annual General Meeting
5.45pm, 27 September 2007
CUSTOMS HOUSE, BRISBANE

(Subject to ratification at 2008 AGM)

The President of the Society, Denzil Fiebig, declared the meeting open at 5.45pm.

Present: Jenny Watts, Denzil Fiebig, Lisa Gold, Mike Shields, Luke Connelly, Elizabeth Savage, Glenn Jones, Jane Hall, Henry Cutler, Leonie Segal, Terri Jackson, Kim Dalziel, Philip Clarke, Tony Scott, Arnold Kihuale, Richard Milne, Bronwyn Crosson, Anthony Harris, Mai Pham, Yuhua Shi, Terence Cheng, David Rowell, Son Nghiem, Mohammed Hajizadeh

Apologies: Rosalie Viney

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was moved by Jane Hall 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.

The annual conference is the main activity of the Society and conference issues will be discussed later in the agenda.

The other significant activity for AHES in 2007 is the proposal to jointly host iHEA 2013, and discussion of this item will be held later in the agenda.

The President expressed special thanks to:

- Pfizer Australia and the University of Queensland – who have kindly provided sponsorship for the 2007 AHES conference
- The AHES Executive - Mike, Lisa and Jenny – who have helped everything move along smoothly this year
- Luke Connelly - for local organization of the 2007 conference and in particular for organizing sponsorship of the conference from University of Queensland

The votes of thanks were supported by acclamation.

Treasurer's Report

Jenny Watts tabled the 2005/06 financial report and presented the 2007 Treasurer's report. The current balance stood at a healthy looking \$79,000. The conference budget was also presented in the financial report since this is the main financial activity of the Society. For the 2006 conference, revenue from conference delegates covered the costs of the conference and sponsorship revenue covered the costs of the keynote speakers. The same outcomes are expected from the 2007 conference.

The 2007 conference had 98 registrants over the two days of the conference and 66 attendees at the conference dinner.

The President called for questions. There was some discussion of the relative costs of different venue types for hosting an AHES conference. Luke Connelly noted that the costs of venue hire did not differ much between venues and this is why the Customs House was chosen as the best venue and in the absence of more competitive quotes from hotels. The quality of the venue was appreciated by several members.

Leonie Segal questioned whether the healthy surplus of the Society was an objective or simply the result of high attendances at recent conferences. The Treasurer noted that the surplus was more accidental than intentional and that the Society has several options for use of the surplus. This year, two travel scholarships have been awarded and a contribution was made to the Alan Williams Foundation. Jane Hall noted that the surplus is healthy but not large and that it would be wise to maintain some surplus to cover the costs associated with failing to find conference sponsorship in future years. Student scholarships were seen as a good use of Society funds and the concept of a pre-conference workshop (also targeted at students and early career researchers) was raised as another possible use of funds. The President confirmed that the Executive are always open to new initiatives, especially if they do not involve an ongoing commitment of Society funds. Interested members should contact any member of the Executive with their ideas.

Election of Office-Bearers

Nominations for candidates for election as officer-bearers of the Society were called for in the second issue of the 2007 newsletter. By the due date of 20th September 2007, the following nominations had been received by the Secretary:

- President: Denzil Fiebig
- Secretary: Lisa Gold
- Treasurer: Jenny Watts

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

The following two nominations were received by the Secretary after the due date:

- Vice-President: Mike Shields
- Public Officer: Henry Cutler

Further nominations were called for these positions at the AGM but none were received. According to the rules of the Society, these positions were declared elected.

This left three vacant posts on the General Committee. Nominations were called for these positions at the AGM. The following three nominations were received:

- General Committee: Leonie Segal. Nominated by Lisa Gold, seconded by Jane Hall.

- General Committee: David Rowell. Nominated by Lisa Gold, seconded by Jane Hall.
- General Committee: Bronwyn Crosson. Nominated by Mike Shields, seconded by Elizabeth Savage.

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

AHES Travel Scholarships

Mike Shields reported that four submissions were made for the 2007 AHES Travel Scholarships. The submitted papers were independently rated by three of the four members of the AHES Executive (one member was excluded due to conflict of interest) and two scholarships were awarded: to Abdillah Ahsan of the University of Indonesia and Meliyanni Johar of the University of New South Wales. Scholarships were awarded to reimburse up to \$1500 for travel and accommodation expenses related to attending the 2006 conference.

The President stated that the process will be repeated for 2008.

Keynote speakers

Philip Clarke proposed that at the next conference we have a plenary speaker who is an Australian or New Zealand speaker under the age of 40. The intention would be to build the capacity of the individual as an invited speaker at a national conference and to give conference delegates the opportunity to see people who are up and coming in the local research community. The proposal was to trial this at the 2008 conference and, if it was seen to work, to repeat for all future meetings.

Jane Hall disagreed with the proposal. The number of plenary sessions at the conference was limited and should be filled with the best people, without age barriers. Affirmative action as proposed would help people get NHMRC fellowships but that is not enough reason to have this policy.

Elizabeth Savage argued that it would be refreshing to have someone new to talk, and that new people are coming into the region each year. Luke Connelly agreed with the concept but preferred not to have an explicit agreement to allocate one speaker place to this category of speaker.

The President asked for clarification over whether the restriction would be age-based or for Early Career Researchers. Philip Clarke replied that he was thinking of ECRs.

Tony Scott asked whether this could be awarded on the basis of submitted abstracts, more akin to a prize. Elizabeth Savage agreed that this would be a good way to recognize younger people in our area and for this reason she supported the idea of a prize. Jane Hall agreed that it would be better to recognize early career researchers through a prize for best presentation or similar than as a specific agreement to have one keynote place allocated to an ECR. Leonie Segal agreed that plenaries are an important part of the conference and that it was important to attract people at the top of the profession to these sessions. However, it would be good to be more innovative in terms of who is invited to speak at the AHES conference. She also supported the idea of an award for best presentation and this could be carried out alongside a more innovative approach to choice of keynote speakers. David Rowell asked whether the conference could add a special half-hour slot for ECRs. The President countered that this would raise programming issues.

Glenn Jones called for clarification on the motion being debated and Terri Jackson called that the motion be put. The President first noted that one of the lures for local conference organizers was their sizable input into the choice of keynote speakers. Philip Clarke suggested that the motion could be that it is suggested to local conference organizers that an ECR plenary is a way of conference attendees to hear about good research going on in Australia and New Zealand. The President countered that a motion should not be a suggestion.

The motion was put that the 2008 AHES conference include a plenary from an early career researcher, up to 10 years post PhD. Proposed by Philip Clarke, Seconded by Mike Shields. Votes for: 3 Votes against: 10. The motion was defeated.

Conference 2008

Leonie Segal announced that she had been approached by the Executive to host the 2008 AHES conference in Adelaide. She was happy to have Adelaide as a venue and noted that the Department of Health, South Australia are supportive of the AHES 2008 conference and that both the Department of Health and the local universities are keen to build health economics in the State.

AHES support for Sydney bid for iHEA 2013

The President reported on progress made on the joint hosting of iHEA 2013 by AHES and CHERE. Representatives of AHES and CHERE met with Bill Swan and Tom Getzen at the 2007 iHEA meeting in Copenhagen and both the AHES Executive and CHERE remain supportive of a joint bid to host the 2013 iHEA in Sydney. An update had been circulated to all members in advance of the conference and the Executive had welcomed all comments and queries on this issue, although none were received in advance of the AGM.

The President noted that the motion posed in the agenda would, if passed, lead to further action over the next few months that would end in a formal agreement with iHEA. Lisa Gold noted that the reason this motion was important to the AHES membership was that the commitment had to be made by the Society as a whole as the Executive membership would change between now and 2011-2013 when the real work would occur. Tony Scott asked for clarification of the risks to AHES and the President noted that this was the main question raised on this issue. Tom Getzen had confirmed in writing that all the down-side financial risk is borne by iHEA. AHES is expected to contribute significantly to the sponsorship-raising effort and any financial surplus would be split 50:50 between iHEA and the local organizers (i.e., AHES and CHERE). The President confirmed that AHES would not sign on to any agreement that was not consistent with these risk-bearing arrangements.

Jane Hall noted that expressions of interest had been garnered in the last few months from NSW Department of Health, NSW Treasury and the Australian Government Department of Health and Aging. Bronwyn Croxson asked why there was pressure to host iHEA in Australia and Jane Hall replied that both the iHEA Board and iHEA membership were keen to have an Australian conference. Terri Jackson moved that the motion be put.

The motion was put that the AHES Executive, in conjunction with CHERE, continue deliberations with iHEA with a view to coming to a formal agreement to host iHEA 2013 in Sydney as an AHES/CHERE initiative. Proposed; Denzil Fiebig Seconded: Lisa Gold. Votes for: 17 Votes against: 0. The motion was carried.

The President confirmed that the AHES membership would be kept informed of progress on this topic via the newsletter.

iHEA Regional Council Update

Jane Hall summarised the reasons behind an iHEA Regional Council and progress on this topic. There had been quite a lot of criticism of iHEA that it is not truly international but rather a Euro-US focused organization. Therefore the iHEA Board aims to increase the international perspective of iHEA. The first meeting of an interim regional council was held at the 2007 iHEA conference in Copenhagen as a way to get people from different regions together. There are tensions within iHEA between how much it is proactive in developing health economics and how much it is reactive, as there is a lot of variation between countries in terms of where health economics is at within the country or region.

The last iHEA Board meeting voted to establish a regional council as an advisory committee to the iHEA Board. There will be a meeting every two years alongside the iHEA conference. Groups will be invited to apply to iHEA for recognition as a member of the regional council. There are sensitivities around what constitutes a country (for example, both China and Taiwan have health economics groups) so the definition will be at a group level. Requirements are that the objectives of the group are consistent with the objectives of iHEA, that a group consists of more than one person (with no other numerical limit) and that the group representative (but not all group members) be both an iHEA member and a valid representative of that group.

The first meeting has been held and this succeeded in bringing people together. Many issues were raised, some easy to address and other not so easy to address (such as the language of iHEA). Jane Hall is happy to discuss the details of the first meeting further with any interested AHES members.

The President noted that participation in this council was a lot easier for AHES than for other groups. AHES needs to be a part of this council but this is less for the reason that there are positive things for us to get out of it than for the altruistic notion that other groups can benefit from such a council and AHES should be part of it for that reason.

Leonie Segal asked whether there was a way to feed back comments to iHEA. Jane Hall replied that the Board meeting at the iHEA 2007 conference was a success in this respect in terms of feedback from members and lots of active discussion. However, iHEA recognizes that the iHEA membership do not always know who the Board are and that they don't contact Board members, so there are real problems about the iHEA Board being distanced from the membership and the Board are trying to address this problem, for example by increasing the term of Board memberships to 4 years and by actively preparing incoming Board members more for their role.

The President thanked Jane Hall for her contribution and noted that no motion was required on this update item.

AHES draft policy on conference sponsorship and conflicts of interest

The Secretary noted that the final item arising from the 2006 AGM yet to be addressed was the need for AHES to have a policy on sponsorship and on conflicts of interest. Documents from iHEA and from leading medical journals had been compiled alongside notes on previous discussions on these topics at earlier AHES AGMs. Jane Hall pointed out that the policy was to cover not just conference sponsorship.

The motion was put that the AHES General Committee members turn the collated documents into a policy for AHES on sponsorship and conflicts of interest, to be presented to the 2008 AGM. Proposed: Lisa Gold Seconded: Jane Hall. Votes for: 17 Votes against: 0. The motion was carried.

Any Other Business

Mike Shields proposed that AHES introduce prizes. The exact choice of prize was always difficult but options included “best paper presented at the conference”; “best paper presented by an early career researcher at the conference”; and “best paper published by an Australia/New Zealand-based author”. The President noted that there were two issues here and asked first for discussion on the conference prize. Elizabeth Savage noted that most conference prizes were not linked to an actual paper and Mike Shields replied that any ECRs interested in being considered for the prize would have to submit their paper in advance of the conference. Denzil Fiebig raised an alternative of two prizes: one for any paper and one for a paper by an ECR author. Elizabeth Savage argued that there should be a special committee to decide on the prize.

The President noted that the feeling in the room was generally supportive of the idea of prizes and of the idea of a specific Early Career Researcher prize, and that therefore there was support for AHES to initiate two prizes. Details were requested. The agreement in the room was for one prize for a peer-reviewed publication from an Australia/New Zealand-based researcher and a second prize for a paper submitted to the AHES conference by an Early Career Researcher. Each prize would take the form of a certificate and a money amount. The details were to be left to the AHES Executive and the AHES General Committee members to determine and to implement for 2008, with a motion to be put in the 2008 AGM as to whether the prizes should be continued.

The President declared the meeting closed at 7.10pm.