

Queensland Academy of Arts & Sciences

President's Report 2024-2025 to the Annual General Meeting

It has been a busy year again on the QAAS agenda as we renewed our strategy, held a series of events in person and online to keep members connected and showcase the work of our Fellows. We also continued to consolidate our financial position, policies and procedures to ensure the Academy remains on solid ground for many years to come.

At the start I would like to thank all the members of Council for their tireless work during the year and in particular the Executive:

Company Secretary: Emeritus Professor Alan Lawson

Treasurer: Emeritus Professor Fred D'Agostino

Vice-President (People and Culture): Emeritus Professor Fred D'Agostino

Vice-President (Digital Engagement): Emeritus Professor Roly Sussex

Vice-President (Regional): Emeritus Professor Roger Stone

We also thank Her Excellency, the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young, PSM, Governor of Queensland for her continued support as our Patron.

We held 6 meetings of the Academy Council during the year in addition to 5 meetings of the Academy Executive. This ensured Academy work could progress in a timely fashion.

Emeritus Professor Helen Chenery resigned from Council in August 2024 after many years of service to the Academy. Professor Lee-Anne Perry joined Council in August 2024 to fill the casual vacancy arising from Helen's resignation under clause 24 of the Constitution.

Financial stability is important to any organisation and I am pleased to report that the Academy through the actions of past and current councils has now achieved a financially sound position which our Treasurer, Emeritus Prof Fred D'Agostino will outline further under Agenda item 8. I thank Fred for the diligence with which he performs this very important role.

We now have 252 members with 21 added to June 2025. Emeritus Professor Peter Andrews AO was confirmed as a Companion of the QAAS for his longstanding service, the seventh Companion for the Academy. We also have nine Honorary Fellows.

Vice-President People and Culture, Emeritus Professor Fred D'Agostino continues to lead the membership nomination process, ably assisted by Council. If you are interested in nominating someone, please reach out to Fred.

Further discussion related to membership will be presented under Agenda item 7.

In 2025, Council updated its Strategic Plan 2025 – 2029 to focus on three central themes: Influence, Reach, Refresh. This has been included in the papers for this meeting. The plan builds on the work of our previous three-year strategy ensuring a stronger focus on member engagement and State-wide presence. We will continue to host events either solely or in conjunction with others both in person and online. We saw at our most recent event the camaraderie that exists in the Academy and the enjoyment that comes from being together to share experiences and stories with new and longstanding members. We are also proposing the

introduction of a signature annual essay initiative to highlight our mission in arts and sciences and raise the profile of the Academy outside our membership base. We will share more details of this initiative with members next year and invite those most interested to join us in its development. The strategy adds a level of activity from our current plan, although still recognising that we are an Academy of volunteers, so it is best to focus on quality rather than quantity when it comes to our engagement plan.

An amendment to the Constitution is being presented today to update the Academy Objects. We had been planning to bring this forward as part of wider constitutional reform, but revised ACNC guidelines for charities like ours were published quite late in the year, so today we will only be addressing the updating of the Objects. Like all institutions, it is important that we continue to reflect the interests of our members and the environment in which we operate. Thank you to our Company Secretary, Emeritus Professor Alan Lawson, Councillor the Hon Margaret White, and newly appointed Councillor, Professor Lee-Anne Perry, for their work in this space.

At last year's Annual General Meeting, I advised that 2025 would be the year of website reform and it certainly has been. While our earlier webmaster, Associate Professor Michael Cowling resigned his post in late 2024 to take up a new opportunity interstate, Vice-President (Digital Engagement) Emeritus Professor Roly Sussex picked up the challenge and has worked tirelessly all year to rebuild the website and ensure updated material is available to our members. This has been a marathon effort, some visible and some invisible to our members and I want to thank Roly most sincerely for this work to date. We have more to do but there is now an appropriate frame on which we can build in 2026.

QAAS continued its successful relationship with the QUT Centre for Data Science webinar series, this year hosting three highly topical webinars featuring a number of our Fellows and Council members (two already and one to come).

Our first webinar was in May, moderated by QAAS Fellow, Professor Sandra Capra on the topic of "After the COVID-19 pandemic – the good, the bad and the ugly?", as a follow-up to our thought leadership report on *Voices from the Pandemic*, available on our website.

This was followed in September by a webinar on "Citizen science and consumer engagement – are they the same?", moderated by QAAS Council member, Professor Brenda Gannon.

Our final webinar will be held on November 28, moderated by QAAS Fellow, Professor John Quiggin on the topic of "Trade in a Trumpian world".

On the same day as our 2024 AGM, we held an event in Townsville on Rebalancing Regional and Remote Australia, led by QAAS Vice-President, Emeritus Professor Roger Stone in conjunction with James Cook University and featuring QAAS Vice-President Roly Sussex as moderator. The report from this event is on our website.

Our annual members' event to welcome new members was held recently on 16th October at Queensland Museum Kurilpa with the support of Queensland Museum Network. I would like to thank Councillor Dr Jim Thompson for his support with this event again this year. Attendees had the opportunity to meet our new members as well as catch up with longstanding ones and explore some of the Museum displays with many staying on well after the event had closed. The presentations from this event are on our website.

QAAS Treasurer and Vice-President, Emeritus Professor Fred D'Agostino continued his highly popular email series 'Food for Thought' featuring QAAS members who are in the news either through their research and publications or being featured at events and conferences. 9 member distributions were made during the year in review. This is a significant tool in facilitating engagement and communication among members and the feedback from our members remains very positive.

We continued to support events held by partner organisations including LabNorth at JCU where we hosted a joint webinar on Creative Futures in the North on 16th September, moderated by QAAS Fellow, Associate Professor Victoria Kuttainen, Director of the Roderick Centre for Australian Literature and Creative Writing at JCU. If you have ideas for these collaborations, please let us know.

This Annual General Meeting will bring change to our Council with a number of vacancies to be filled by new or returning members.

I would like to propose a special thank you to Emeritus Professor Alan Lawson who retires from QAAS Council and his role as Company Secretary at this meeting, having served his full term. Alan has always provided wise counsel to our Academy's directors and is a highly knowledgeable source of information on the Academy's practices, past and present. On behalf of the Council and members, I presented Alan with a gift at our new members event and he reflected on the changes within the Academy in a short response, also paying tribute to founding member, Hamish Bain. We will miss his input and wish him all the best.

I would like to thank Vice-President (Regional), Emeritus Professor Roger Stone for his important work in expanding the regional agenda for the Academy and hosting a number of key events during his time on the Executive. Roger has never been short of ideas for expanding our reach and we now have a special section on the website for Regional and Remote Queensland news and at least one annual event in the regions.

I would also like to thank retiring Council member, Professor Susan Kinnear who has ably supported Council during her recent term and has been a strong supporter of member engagement and regional initiatives and assisted with the development of new initiatives for the next strategic plan.

Council remains very appreciative of the support Amara Nazim has provided to our work this year which has helped us to continue to function effectively with a volunteer Council and progress a number of key initiatives.

It has been an honour to serve as President of the QAAS for the last two years and to watch the reach of our Academy grow and members engaging in our thought leadership series and events, in person and online. I look forward to working with the new Council in my second and final term. Thank you all for your support and ongoing engagement.

Professor Robina Xavier | PhD, FQA, SFFin, CPRA
President | Queensland Academy of Arts and Sciences