SA-AARES President’s Report: 2016

It has been my pleasure to serve as President for another year, which by anyone’s standards has been a full one. We have seen many changes with the Association at the federal level with regard to strategic planning, and these will become clearer for all members shortly when a brief document outlining all those is provided to you all. I have enjoyed being a part of that process, although it has been exhausting at times.

One of the biggest changes may be to the staff members of AARES: Annie Hurst has decided to follow along another path as of the end of next year, and we have flagged the short-term employment of a new Development and Promotions manager in an effort to grow AARES in more tangible and beneficial ways for members. While Annie has more often than not been closely tied to the federal Council, this new person will actively engage with members for their interests and outcomes. A key part of their role will also be to generate income to cover their costs, so we hope to make the appointment revenue neutral overall. Again, this will be discussed at length before decisions are finalised.

But our own state branch has also been busy in its own way over the last twelve months, with many exciting things to focus on today. In summary:

- As I was away on leave I unfortunately missed the Annual Christmas Drinks event, which was a blow! But I heard that a good time was had by all, and I look forward to the next event which is now not very far away again. Details to be decided upon today for that event.

- SA was a firm contributor to the organisation, funding and content of the Early Career Event which preceded the annual AARES Conference in February. Approximately 30 researchers attended the event and the overall feedback was extremely positive. The ECR events will now once again feature regularly on the annual conference agenda.

- Our undergraduate prize winner this year was Aleksis Xenophon from the School of Economics at the University of Adelaide. Aleksis was extremely grateful for the chance to attend the Conference in Canberra, where he represented us very well.

- We had another full year of seminars in conjunction with CSIRO, GFAR and UniSA. Topics included the recent free-trade agreement negotiations and their impacts on agriculture, food tourism, stated values of the Kimberley coast, bio-fortification of foods via HarvestPlus, biosecurity issues in economics, the tropical palm oil revolution, and even some genetic plant breeding developments toward salt-tolerant wheat! I extend my sincere thanks to all of our presenters in 2016 and look forward to another year of entertaining talks in 2017.

- We supported two female South Australian-based participants to attend the Women in Economics Retreat, McLaren Vale, SA on the 14-15 July. This excellent event highlighted a range of issues specific to women in the economics profession, together with tools for overcoming any barriers to their development. This has extended toward a SA-based proposal for a joint EcoSoc and AARES supported Women in Economics Network which we will discuss later in the AGM.

- We supported some of the costs for Rohan Yargop to attend the Crawford Fund Conference on the subject of “Waste Not, Want Not: The Circular Economy to Food Security” in Canberra on 29-31 August. Rohan was extremely grateful for this support, and used the event well to further
his connections and knowledge. The outcomes are detailed in a recent News and Views edition if you are interested to know more.

- I have been closely involved in the federal AARES Strategic Planning committee over the last 12 months, which has been quite taxing. But it has been worth it in the end, and I think several innovations for the future have been identified for action at the 2017 AAARES Conference AGM. The SA branch also supported my travel to Nelson in New Zealand to attend the SP meeting there around the NZARES Annual Meeting. I am very grateful for that support.

- I have also been closely involved in a process of bringing two early career members onto the federal Council in concert with Quentin Grafton and David Adamson. In essence, this will see two early career members join the Council on a rotating basis around the current and next annual conference states, with a view to providing them with experience and the opportunity to raise issues for newer members. We hope to have this ratified very soon, and SA will have one new Council member as a consequence.

- The 2018 Conference planning is starting to take shape finally, but there is still plenty of ground to cover. In particular it is necessary to note the good and not-so-good issues associated with that event to date:
  
  o We have appointed Doug Young to be the Chair of the LOC and it has been proposed that we will compensate him for the task. This is fair in my view, and as economists we should know the value of a person’s time and recognise the hard work needed to get the conference up and running.

  o We are currently seeking pre-conference workshop proposals ahead of the 2018 Annual Conference event. We already have two proposals involving wine marketing and development economics, but need at least two more to be fully accommodated. If you have any ideas be sure to raise them soon.

  o If the new Development and Promotion Manager goes ahead then it is hoped that they will be appointed before the 2017 Conference in Brisbane. A large part of their role will be to help us to organise the 2018 Conference, which will be helpful on many fronts.

  o We need to finalise and submit the dates for the 2018 Conference to federal Council by Dec 5th in order to be ready for promotion etc. at the Brisbane event. We must decide on those today if possible.

- Finally, expect a range of Constitutional votes that will be done both offline through email and in person/proxy at the federal AGM next year. There are some changes to the way the Society is being run that will need your thought and voting, so please make sure to keep an eye out for it.

As always, running a society such as AARES at the state branch level is a team effort and I am extremely grateful to the excellent support provided by Alec, Ray and Annie during this year. My thanks also go to Ross Cullen as the immediate Past-President and Wendy Umberger as the incumbent President for all the advice, help and support that they have offered to me in the role.

Adam Loch
President, SA-AARES