

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA**

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Interest in forming a scientific society for nutritionists in Australia began to grow in the early 1970's. Australian scientists had long been recognised in animal nutrition and there was increasing interest in the science of human nutrition. The first step was taken by a small group of scientists in Melbourne who convened a meeting in March, 1974, to form the Melbourne Group of a proposed Nutrition Society of Australia. Its secretary, Dr R. S. D. Read, contacted scientists around Australia who then canvassed support for the idea in their own regions. Meetings were convened later in 1974 by Dr J. H. Ternouth (Brisbane), Dr J. L. Corbett (Armidale), Dr G. J. Faichney (Sydney), Dr M. Freer (Canberra), Dr A. R. Egan (Adelaide) and Dr Cohen (Perth) to form local groups as a preliminary to an inaugural national meeting. This meeting was held in Canberra on 23 January 1975 as part of the 46th ANZAAS Congress and was organised by Dr Read with the assistance of Dr F. W. Peters, who was convenor of the Nutrition Section of the Congress.

The meeting decided to constitute the Nutrition Society of Australia with the foundation membership being those present who signed the attendance register together with those who were members of Regional Groups previously formed. The Society was to be broadly similar to the Nutrition Society (UK) in that its function was to provide a common meeting place for workers in the various fields of nutrition (eg, physiological, biochemical, agricultural, medical, sociological, economic and public health) with its aim being the advancement of the scientific study of nutrition and its application to the maintenance of human and animal health and productivity. An interim council was elected to oversee the establishment of the Society: its president was Professor F. W. Clements, University of Sydney (who was president of the Food Science and Nutrition Section of the 46th ANZAAS Congress) and the vice-presidents were Dr I. W. McDonald, CSIRO Division of Animal Physiology, and Professor E. J. Underwood, University of WA, with Dr Read as secretary and Ms D. Flint as treasurer, both of the then Gordon Institute of Technology (now Deakin University). The Regional Groups were each to appoint a representative.

The main tasks of the interim council were to draft a constitution and organise the first scientific meeting at which the constitution could be adopted and members could present papers. Dr McDonald, with the assistance of Dr Faichney and Dr J. P. Hogan, prepared a draft constitution and Dr Read and his local committee organised the meeting which was held at the University of Melbourne in August 1976. The Society has held a scientific meeting each year since then (that for 1993 being subsumed by the 15th International Congress of Nutrition in Adelaide). The constitution was adopted with minor modifications and the first Council under the constitution was elected, consisting of Dr McDonald (President), Professor Underwood (Vice-president), Dr J. L. Black (Secretary) and Mr J. R. Lindsay (Treasurer).

It was intended that the Society be a national one, with the Council responsible for finance, membership, publications and the scientific program of the annual scientific meeting and the Regional Groups responsible for local meetings to meet local needs and, in turn, for making the local arrangements for National meetings on behalf of the Council. It was intended that, in due course, elections for office bearers would be offset so as to ensure continuity of the Council. It is not necessary for members to belong to a Regional Group but most do so; members may affiliate

with the Group of their choice even though distance may prevent regular attendance at Group meetings. With increasing membership in the greater Sydney region and Tasmania, Groups have been formed in Newcastle, Wollongong and the Tasmanian Region. Decreasing membership in northern NSW has seen the Armidale Group cease local activities.

The Society has seen an increasing proportion of its membership drawn from the field of human nutrition during the last decade. This development reflects not only the continued interest of Australians in all aspects of human nutrition but also substantial reductions in funding for research and teaching in animal nutrition. These changes have, if anything, made more important the role of the Society in providing a forum in which human and animal nutritionists can meet and expose themselves to different points of view. The Society is fortunate to have received increasing support in recent years from industry organisations and companies who have understood the need for an independent scientific society in which matters of scientific interest or dispute can be discussed without fear of untoward consequences.