



ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA  
INCORPORATED

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2011 – 2015

Version 4.0

Ratified April 2011

## CONTENTS

<i>FOREWORD</i>	3
<i>MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIETY</i>	4
<i>HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT AND REVIEW THIS PLAN</i>	4
<i>SUMMARY OF AIMS AND STRATEGIES</i>	5
<i>DETAILED STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES, TIMELINES</i>	7
<i>APPENDIX 1. ACTIONS ACHIEVED – STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2010</i>	19
<i>APPENDIX 2. OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED</i>	22
<i>APPENDIX 3. WORKING GROUPS 2011</i>	23

### FOREWORD

In 2010 the Ecological Society of Australia celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. From a small Canberra-based club, the society has grown into one of the largest in the discipline of science. Diversification within ecology over 50 years has meant that we have experienced substantial changes in the kinds of questions we research and in the breadth of research that is covered in Australia. The society now includes a significant proportion of practitioners and the mix of researchers and practitioners has led to important networks and research directions. Perhaps the most significant of changes at the operational level has been the development of the internet as a vehicle for communication and information exchange, globally. Boundaries have been overcome, and members now interact globally as easily as they used to locally. So the changes in this Strategic Plan are designed to build on our past activities and to change the way we communicate. This Strategic Plan will form the basis of the activities of the Society for the next five years. It will be tied closely to the Business Plan that will be developed within the year to ensure the planned activities are appropriately supported financially and with volunteers.

Within this strategic plan we have identified five broad aims and a series of strategies and activities that will be implemented to achieve the aims. These are designed to continue to develop a strong and vital society over the five year period and were developed during a workshop held by Council in February 2011.



Prof. Kris French

President 2011

### MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIETY

The broad mission set for the Ecological Society of Australia is:

*to promote the ecological discipline in all its forms, to support the application of the principles developed in ecology to protect and conserve the biosphere, and to promote the exchange of ecological knowledge for educational purposes and cultural development.*

The key objectives and activities of the ESA described below are those in the current Constitution (Amended November 2005):

1. promote the scientific study of all organisms in relation to their natural environment;
2. promote the application of ecological principles to the development, utilisation and conservation of Australian natural resources;
3. advise governmental and other agencies in matters where the application of ecological principles may be of assistance;
4. foster the conservation of biological diversity and the services it provides;
5. facilitate the dissemination, exchange and application of ideas and information on ecological matters both among ecologists and with other professional disciplines; and
6. encourage high professional and ethical standards among our members and other ecologists.

### HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT AND REVIEW THIS PLAN

The ESA Council uses this plan as a guiding document for setting priorities for the year/s ahead. The plan is also used as a tool to check progress against the previous year's activities. The ESA Council members will review this plan at least once per year at the annual planning meeting. The plan does not include normal on-going activities but deals with new initiatives or new directions needed for on-going activities.

The Council membership and the official roles of each councilor are defined in the Constitution and the By-Laws. At present 3 VPs are defined; one each considering strategic directions in research, students and public/membership liaison. For 2011 and onwards, the VP (students) will consider involvement of all early career researchers including undergraduates, postgraduates and early career researchers. For 2011, the VP(public liaison) will focus heavily on ensuring communication amongst

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

---

members is established, rather than strategies associated with outreach. To achieve particular goals in the Strategic Plan, the council develops working groups that have terms of reference to achieve a specific goal within the plan. Working groups are usually chaired by a member of council and often have other councilors, but can also include ESA members as needed. Working groups are developed at each annual planning day and are recorded in the Appendix.

### OVERALL AIMS AND STRATEGIES

The first two aims are particularly concerned with the services the society provides to its members. The next two are key initiatives to enable and improve the ecology that the members are engaged with, while the final aim is related to communicating this information to the wider community. These initiatives are in addition to our normal on-going core business.

<b>AIM 1: Continue to develop and maintain good governance of the Society</b>
<i>a) Keep membership fees indexed annually</i>
<i>b) Maintain and improve our financial management for future sustainability</i>
<b>AIM 2 : Develop the capacity for members to contact each other effectively and communicate with the wider community</b>
<i>a) Develop the webpage and content management system</i>
<i>b) Develop an efficient and informative membership database</i>
<i>c) Identify areas of growth and attrition of membership</i>
<i>d) Improve council's communication to members about the direction and finances of the society</i>
<i>e) Develop a new mechanism for regular communication with members</i>
<i>f) Capture the history of the society through recording governance, highlights and personal contributions</i>

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

---

*from the members*

*g) Develop a mechanism to reward ecologists who contribute to society*

*h) Engage members who are practitioners*

### **AIM 3: Facilitate high quality and relevant research in ecology**

*a) Continue to support and promote research chapters*

*b) Promote ecological science*

*c) Continue to provide high quality journals for communicating ecological research*

*d) Continue to improve the annual conference*

*e) Engage esteemed ecologists in the society to enhance ecological research*

### **AIM 4: Mentor and encourage early career ecologists**

*a) Facilitate early career researchers*

*b) Provide assistance, training and encouragement for research students*

*c) Encourage participation of undergraduate and school students in the society*

### **AIM 5 : Develop and improve external communication and outreach initiatives**

*a) Build skills and resources for public liaison*

*b) Engage with practitioners to enhance incorporation of ecological principles*

*c) Engage with policy makers,*

*d) Engage with the public to build ecological awareness*

*e) Provide opportunities for supporting and increasing participation of Indigenous people in the society*

*f) Engage with other related societies*

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

### DETAILED STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES, TIMELINES

(ACTIVITIES ARE CLASSIFIED AS **OPERATIONAL** WHERE, ONCE SET UP, THERE WILL BE CONTINUED ACTIVITY WHILE **COMPLETED** WILL HAVE NO

FURTHER ACTIONS)

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Component activities</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>completed or operational</u>	<u>Critical personnel</u>	<u>working groups, others</u>	<u>Priority</u>
<b>AIM 1: Continue to develop and maintain good governance of the Society</b>											
<i>a) Keep membership fees indexed annually</i>	Maintaining membership fees in line with CPI growth and review annually							operational	Council		<i>H</i>
<i>b) Maintain and improve our financial management for future sustainability</i>	Develop a financial corporate plan following advice from Perpetual that ensures long-term growth and sustainability	Should develop investment strategy with aims and principles, DGR status, appropriate portfolio						operational	Treasurer, President	Perpetual advice	
	Improve reporting of financial matters in relation to strategic plan through linking finances more closely with plan							operational	Treasurer, President		<i>H</i>
	Improved reporting of finances to membership	Simplify the output to membership so they understand where money is being spent.						operational	Treasurer, President		
	Develop prospectus for donations and bequests. Promote this to philanthropic groups and members.	start exploring option with Perpetual in 2011						operational	EO, VP(public liaison)		<i>L</i>

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

	Develop governance for donations and bequests	Including DGR status in new trust fund (s); searching for both big donations and small cumulative funds						operational	Treasurer, EO	
	Develop priorities for allocation of grants	As funds build, research grants could be allocated but we need a strategy for allocating these.						completed	Council	
<b>AIM 2 : Develop the capacity for members to contact each other effectively and communicate with the wider community</b>										
<i>a) Develop the webpage and content management system</i>	Appoint contractor for webpage and CMS development							operational	VP(members)	WG(e-comm.)
	Employ Web Officer to maintain web pages							operational		WG(e-comm.)
	Develop webpage to include search capacity for member communication and public liaison	Search via region/research area/ name. Descriptions of labs, interests and contacts should form the backbone of the information contained. Template needed						operational	VP(members)	contractor
	Develop webpage to communicate council roles clearly to members	Include better descriptions of councilors and position descriptions.						operational	VP(members), EO	
	Develop a web drop box for members to feed back suggestions to council							operational	VP(members), EO	
<i>H</i>										

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

	Develop the capacity to provide 'webinars' to members	This might be particularly good when members miss conferences and would like to hear the plenary sessions or other important talks.						operational	web-officer	
	Develop the capacity to inform members about upcoming conferences and workshops globally							operational	web-officer	
	Develop the society's capacity for social networking	This is particularly important for main events such as conferences and photo competitions and provides a continued presence for those who use the social network capacity, e.g. students, ECRs						operational	web-officer	
	Develop outreach aspects of website							operational	web-officer	
	Develop the capacity for research chapters to communicate effectively amongst each other and to the wider society.	web template for each chapter						operational	web-officer, EO	WG(e-comm.)
	Develop a portal for the sale of ESA merchandise and other useful materials for researchers							operational	web-officer, EO	
<i>b) Develop an efficient and informative membership database</i>	Develop an improved membership database incorporating fields to facilitate councils understanding of its membership	This will enable council to facilitate linkages, analyse membership and improve communication						completed	Membership Officer, Web Officer, EO and VP(members)	

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

	Develop the membership application form to collect important data:	Enable council to assess demography, expertise and area of interest, identify gaps and the areas where loss is occurring. Develop a 2-stage collection to develop research profiles of people and labs to enhance networking area of the website.						completed	Membership Officer, Web Officer	WG(e-comm.)	H
	Develop an automatic payment option							operational	Finance Officer		
<i>c) Identify areas of growth and attrition of membership</i>	Undertake a membership drive to encourage people who have left to rejoin.	capture loss - why are they leaving? Overall aim is to sustain or increase membership at 2011 levels						completed	Membership Officer, EO	WG(membership)	H
	Survey demographics of society regularly	every 3 years. Review in terms of strategic direction.						completed	Membership Officer		
	Investigate areas of possible expansion of membership to target growth	potential expansion into undergraduates, southern hemisphere and international membership						completed	Council		
<i>d) Improve council's communication to members about the direction and finances of the society</i>	Improve the branding of our activities through colour coding our roles on council with strategies, associated budget and other outputs.	Here link positions to strategic plan and finances through colours: Green: research; purple - ecr; blue – public liaison; yellow – membership communication; Orange - governance						operational	President, EO		H
	Develop new descriptions that link with strategic plan							operational	Finance Officer, EO		

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

<i>e) Develop a new mechanism for regular communication with members</i>	Develop a strategy to phase out the current 'Bulletin' and replace with electronic communication tool.	Constitutional change may be needed here – roles of individuals will need to be worked out						completed	bulletin editor, EO, Web Officer		<i>M</i>
	Update the e-news as the chief communication of news to members							operational	bulletin editor, EO, Web Officer		<i>H</i>
<i>f) Capture the history of the society through both recording governance, highlights and personal contributions from the members</i>	Develop the cameo perspective and the 50 year symposium from ESA10 into a permanent and accessible record							completed	Past-president		<i>L</i>
<i>g) Develop a mechanism to reward ecologists who contribute to society</i>	Consider the value of a grant programme to reward ESA members	For those assisting ESA as volunteer - go into 'pot' and get money to contribute to research e.g. established researcher grant or community engagement grant.						completed	VP(members)		<i>L</i>
<i>h) Engage members who are practitioners</i>	Investigate the capacity to provide support for practitioners	Consider alternatives and options. Perhaps a practitioner's prize such as that given by NZES?						completed	VP(members)		<i>L</i>
<b>AIM 3: Facilitate high quality and relevant research in ecology</b>											
<i>a) Continue to support and promote</i>	Finalise policy documents, financial and governance							completed	VP(research)	WG(research)	<i>H</i>

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

<i>research chapters</i>	arrangements										
	Develop more chapters							operational	VP(research)	WG(research)	
	Articulate and advertise the benefits and structure of research chapters	Such as mentoring, links to other societies, collaboration, grants, recruiting new members, retention, symposia at conferences, small conferences/workshops, special issues/review in journals						operational	VP(research)	WG(research)	
	Develop a booklet for small conferences	Chapter symposia by 2012 conf Will need updating every 3 years						operational	WG(conference guidelines)	WG(research), ConLog	<i>M</i>
	Provide support for chapters	Develop network opportunities at annual conferences and other activities for chapters; facilitate workshops, communication tools, and initial financial help.						operational	VP(research)		<i>H</i>
	Review established chapters regularly	Review each chapter after 1 year and then at defined time periods after this to ensure equity and viability						operational	VP(research)		
<i>b) Promote ecological science</i>	Prepare a Vision for Australian Ecology to review and assess current trajectory	Working group will develop the process, select the authors (esteemed ecologists), needs to involve membership;						completed	VP(research)	WG(Vision)	<i>H</i>
	Use the 'Vision For Australian Ecology' to prepare a vision statement for the ESA	This will include some recommended actions for ESA.						completed	VP(research)	council	

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

	Develop guidelines for evidence-based syntheses of hot topics and implement	Working group needed to develop guidelines and process; may be directed through relevant research chpts; peer review, publishable; 2 possible routes - membership or RG driven, priorities from other organisation (eg Wentworth), or ESA committee decides on critical issues						operational	VP(research)	WG(research)	
<i>c) Continue to provide high quality journals for communicating ecological research</i>	Maintain or increase the impact and relevancy of the journals	Advice acted upon as given by publisher						operational	AE and EMR chairs		H
	Decrease publication time where possible							operational	AE and EMR chairs		M
	Work towards getting EMR ISI listed							completed	EMR chair	Editorial Board	H
	Maintain or increase the income to the society from the journals							operational	AE and EMR chairs		M
	Consider new initiatives	Consider a range of new options such as a new journal, open access, Asia/Pacific opportunities and supporting established journals published by other groups such as Cunninghamia; start process in 2011						completed	council		L
<i>d) Continue to improve the annual conference</i>	Develop a conference booklet for LOCS	Incorporate all policies to date - hints, timelines, etc. Old guidelines Include consideration of policies on selection process for symposia, considerations for research						completed	WG(conference guidelines)	ConLog	H

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

		chapters,									
	Review awards	Develop a mechanism to streamline the ceremony; and options to represent best talk. Explore a 'people's choice award'						completed	LOC, VP(students)	WG(conference guidelines)	
	Continue to support an indigenous ecology forum	see Aim 5						operational	LOC	WG(conference guidelines)	
	Investigate structured discussion sections to enhance networking and discussion							operational	LOC	WG(conference guidelines)	
	Continue to maintain NZ joint conferences							operational	LOC	WG(conference guidelines)	
	Explore the options for contributing to Intecol 2013							completed	council		M
	Explore potential links with Asia/Pacific Societies							completed	council		
e) <i>Engage esteemed ecologists in the society to enhance ecological research</i>	Develop a mechanism to engage esteemed ecologists in the development of the society and ecological research	Including consultation and recommendations for opportunities that could be developed						operational	VP(research)	WG(research)	L

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

AIM 4: Mentor and encourage early career ecologists											
<i>a) Facilitate early career researchers</i>	Develop strategies to engage and improve services for early career researchers							operational	WG(ECR)		<i>H</i>
	Develop and maintain regular dedicated ECR workshop at ESA meetings							operational	LOC / chair or driver		
<i>b) Provide assistance, training and encouragement for research students</i>	Ensure all student grants are funded at an appropriate level and indexed annually	set an appropriate time of year for review (e.g. planning day)						completed	VP(ECR)	WG(students)	<i>H</i>
	Continue to provide support for postgraduate days							operational	VP(ECR)	WG(students)	
	Ensure that promotion of grants and awards is appropriate for current technology and clearly identifies projects that are targeted	identifying projects includes description of range of activities that will be funded							completed	VP(ECR)	
	Investigate the possibility of implementing a new pure/ theoretical ecology research grant funded by ESA	along lines of JLTF; consider setting trust fund (DGR) in the long term / consider possible link to Austral Ecology							completed	VP(ECR)	WG(students)

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

	Develop an effective student network	run by students; talk about things other than research - facebook; role of student networks; webpage; reporting to council						operational	WG(students), Web Officer		M
c) <i>Encourage participation of undergraduate and school students in the society</i>	Consider the possibilities for undergraduate membership to the society, and develop if recommended	member driven / local contact / depends on web / includes web resources such as jobs / volunteer opportunities / links to research labs, encouraging earlier membership / fostering interest in ESA and careers in ecology / cheap membership (\$20)						operational	VP(ECR)	WG(students)	M
	Develop opportunities for engagement of high school students and science educators in ecology	high school conference visit - offering small high school group one day free at annual conference - include web page with links to undergraduate courses in ecology / review each year						operational	VP(ECR)	WG(students)	M
<b>AIM 5 : Develop and improve external communication and outreach initiatives</b>											
a) <i>Build skills and resources for public liaison</i>	Employ a Public Liaison Officer							completed	council		H
	Consider incorporating a new VP into council to provide both public liaison and members roles	Increasing VPs will need constitutional change						completed	council		

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

<p><i>b) Engage with practitioners to enhance incorporation of ecological principles</i></p>	<p>Build the EMR web presence as a gateway to engage practitioners</p>	<p>develop mechanisms to build relationships, develop media links</p>						operational	EMR chair	EMR board	H
<p><i>c) Engage with policy makers,</i></p>	<p>Target ministerial policy advisers and senior bureaucrats in a timely fashion on specific issues via media and direct communication</p>	<p>Requires a members database with experience and contact details</p>						operational	VP(public liaison), Public Liaison officer	WG(public liaison)	M
<p><i>d) Engage with the public to build ecological awareness</i></p>	<p>Investigate the possibility of corporate membership to engage businesses</p>							completed	VP(public liaison), Public Liaison officer		L
<p><i>e) Provide opportunities for supporting and increasing participation of Indigenous people in the society</i></p>	<p>Develop a support network and opportunities for engagement</p>	<p>Traditional ecological knowledge; Indigenous land management; Indigenous training and education in ecology - define ESA role, how to implement effectively</p>						operational	WG(indigenous affairs),		H
	<p>Develop opportunities for engagement at the annual conference</p>	<p>at each conference for next five years have session devoted to ecology and management issues that relate to indigenous Australians - forum must be flexible in terms of presentation form / timing / media</p>						completed	WG(indigenous affairs), LOC		M
<p><i>f) Engage with other related societies</i></p>	<p>Undertake a review of the advantages of maintaining membership of FASTS</p>							completed	Past president	WG(FASTS)	M

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

---

	Explore links with Australian/Asian/NZ Societies	<i>Joint conferences ; sponsorships; prizes</i>						operational	VP(public liaison), Public Liaison officer	L
--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	-------------	--	---

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

---

### APPENDIX 1. ACTIONS ACHIEVED – STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2010

Aims & Strategies	Success as at 2011
<b>#1 Provide a range of membership events and communication activities that are highly valued by members.</b>	
1a. Annual Conferences	Ongoing and successful
1b. Thematic meetings associated with release of Position Papers	Little achieved. New approach needed
1c. Promote Council members to membership	Webpage and conference name tags were implemented
1d. Publication of Journals	Continued to improve
1e. Bulletin (hard copy and electronic)	Has lost readership and communication capacity with changing global communication patterns  But has been produced in a timely fashion
1f. Provide appropriate and well-supported member services for regions throughout Australia.	Regional meetings only working in some of the smaller states where they are an important activity. Logistic difficulties with larger states.  Help with travel for Council members to attend planning day.  Networking opportunities beginning but a lot more work needed
<b>#2. Develop and improve external communication and outreach initiatives.</b>	
2a. To develop a media strategy that maximises opportunities to build the profile of the ESA.	Outreach communications portfolio for VP  Outreach only partially successful through lack of adequate facilities to achieve this
2b. Ensure effective use of Society's position	Position papers no longer used or

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

papers.	particularly relevant
2c. Increase engagement with politicians	FASTS interaction only partially successful Links poorly developed
2d. Increase exposure of ESA to general public	Some activities, e.g. photographic competition have been successful. More work to do to develop this aspect
2e. Improve service and accessibility to students	Students more involved in council. Indigenous scholarships developed Other aspects hampered by inadequate electronic facilities for communication
2f. Increase exposure of ESA to Industry and Community Groups	Thematic symposia at conferences of relevance to industry, government and NGOs. Extra workshops developed to involve Industry, policy makers and community groups
<b>#3. Maintain membership strength</b>	
3a. Ensure new members are welcomed to the Society and given introductory and induction material	Some material developed for distribution at conferences etc. Some material available to new members Some information provided to new councilors but requires ongoing development
3b. Increase the diversity of membership with respect to ecological sub-disciplines	Untested but unlikely to have been improved – hampered by inadequate membership database.
3c. Reward and recognise member service to the Society	Service Awards implemented
3d. Increase student membership	Untested but unlikely to have changed

## ESA Strategic Plan 2011-2015

---

3e. Value and utilize our retired members and prominent ecologists	Undeveloped
3f. Maintain history of ESA membership and ESA activities	Ongoing
<b>#4. Continue to develop and maintain good Governance of the Society</b>	
4a. Clearly-stated and purposeful Council roles	<p>Council roles not yet developed</p> <p>Planning Day is a regular activity of council</p> <p>Financial benefits provided to council members includes free membership and travel to ESA planning day (this often coincides with the ESA annual conference)</p>
4b. Reward structures for volunteers and employees	<p>Volunteers developed</p> <p>Employee structures undeveloped.</p>
4c. Succession planning and execution	A regular part of council activities
4d. Excellence in financial management.	<p>Investment of 150% of annual expenditure has been achieved or exceeded every year.</p> <p>Improved delivery of financial information to council</p>
4e. Ensure longevity of Society through an active Bequest Strategy	Not developed yet

APPENDIX 2. OTHER ACTIVITIES COMPLETED

Research Chapters developed and launched in Dec 2011

Photographic Competition run in 2010

New Conference Organiser contracted 2010

AERA Awards developed to acknowledge contributions by researchers 2008

Regional Events:

ESA South Australia Ecology Day. This single day event ran in 2009 and 2010 and attracted sponsorship, 2 key note speakers, up to 15 speakers and 20 poster presenters and up to 100 registrants from a variety of backgrounds to each event. A new award, the 'ESA Best Student Communicator Award' (judged: free membership for a year) and two people's choice awards (vote-based: sponsored book prizes) were also presented each year.

APPENDIX 3. WORKING GROUPS 2011 (DRAFT)

<u>WORKING GROUP</u>	<u>CONVENOR</u>
1. VISION FOR AUSTRALIAN ECOLOGY	GLENDA WARDLE
2. RESEARCH CHAPTERS	GLENDA WARDLE
3. CRITICAL TOPICS	GLENDA WARDLE
4. CONFERENCE GUIDELINES	EDDIE VAN-ETEN
5. STUDENT AFFAIRS	IAN WILLIAMSON
6. EARLY CAREER SUPPORT	ANDREW HAYES
7. PUBLIC LIAISON	
8. WEB/E-COMMUNICATIONS	LIZ TASKER
9. FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE	NIGEL ANDREWS
10. MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY	GAIL SPINA
11. AERA	GLENDA WARDLE
12. INDIGENOUS SUPPORT	CHRISTINE SCHLESINGER
13. FASTS REVIEW	CARLA CATTERALL