Minutes of the ABACBS AGM

Date: 20th April 2016

1. Meeting opened at 12:00pm

Tony Papenfuss (chair) welcomed everyone to the ABACBS AGM meeting and declared the meeting opened. Tony explained the process of the meeting and asked the floor if there were any concerns or questions.

2. Attendance and Apologies

Attendance: Ramyar Molania, Monther Alhamdoosh, Melissa Davis, David Lovell, Andrew Lonsdale, Zhi-Ping Feng, Torsten Seemann, Gayle Philip, Jovana Maksimovic, Mark Schultz, Ashley Waardenberg, Tony Papenfuss, Terry Speed, Rick Tankard, Scott Ritchie, Philippa Griffin, Paula Andrea Martinez, Liam Fearnley, Jane Hawkey, Vicky Schneider, Momeneh Foroutan, Amit Kumar, Alicia Oshlack, Konsta Duesing, Soroor Hediyeh Zadeh, Alan Rubin, Peter Georgeson, Joshua Ho, Matthew Wakefield, Ismael Vergara, Joe Cursons, Djordje Djordjevic, David Goode, Claire Gorrie, Stephen Watts, David Lynn, David Humphreys, Zoe Dyson, David Powell, Nicola Armstrong, Kim Carter, Peijie Lin, Andreas Schreiber, Terry Bertozzi, John Markham, Michael Troup, Leon Di Stefano, Mirana Ramialison, Matt Ritchie, Ben Goudey, Roxane Legaie, Annette McGrath, Noel Faux.

Apologies: Harriet Dashnow.

3. Proxies received

11 proxies were received and it was declared that all of the members who provided proxies were eligible to vote:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firstname</th>
<th>Lastname</th>
<th>Proxy</th>
<th>Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Bahlo</td>
<td>Returning officer</td>
<td>15/04/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriet</td>
<td>Dashnow</td>
<td>Andrew Lonsdale</td>
<td>18/04/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignatius</td>
<td>Pang</td>
<td>Returning officer</td>
<td>18/04/2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **Appointment of Returning officer**

As proxies were appointed to the returning officer, the returning officer was appointed at this point. David Lovell was appointed as the Returning Officer.

5. **Annual Report of the Management committee**

Reports of the management committee were made available and are attached at the end of these minutes.

Tony Papenfuss read out his President’s report, providing an overview of the association’s activities over the last 18 months since incorporation. Tony asked for questions to be tabled. No questions were tabled.

6. **Acceptance of financial statements**

Melissa gave an overview of the financial position of the association, going into details of the bank account balances, sponsorship etc. as per the reports attached to these minutes. These documents were provided at the meeting for viewing by members. Melissa explained that another member of the committee was required to have seen and signed the report as true and correct and that Tony Papenfuss had done this as per the report documentation tabled. Melissa also explained that this would then need to be signed by another committee member after the acceptance of the report and conclusion of the meeting to indicate that these reports were presented at the meeting.

Tony asked for the financial reports to be accepted.

- Motion: Alicia Oshlack moved to accepted the financial report.
- Seconded.
- Against - 0
- Abstain - 0
- For - unanimous

Tony declared the resolution as passed.

7. **Acceptance of annual report**

Tony asked for the annual reports to be accepted.
- Motion: Jane Hawkey moved to accepted the annual reports.
- Seconded.
  - Against - 0
  - Abstain - 0
  - For - unanimous

Tony declared the resolution as passed.

8. **Setting of Annual Subscription and Joining fee**

Tony explained that no fees will be proposed at this AGM, but may be put to the next AGM.
- Motion: Ashley Waardenberg moved to not set any annual subscription or joining fees at this AGM.
- Seconded.
  - Against - 0
  - Abstain - 0
  - For - unanimous

Tony declared the resolution as passed.

9. **Proposed Resolutions**

1. **Resolution 1:** Include a Student Representative as an ordinary member of the ABACBS committee in accordance with Model Rule 53 (1).
   - Motion: Melissa Davis moved to accept Resolution 1.
   - Seconded.
     - Against - 0
     - Abstain - 0
     - For - unanimous

Tony declared the resolution as passed.

2. **Resolution 2:** Include an Early Career Researcher Representative as an ordinary member in the ABACBS committee in accordance with Model Rule 53 (1).
   - Motion: Liam Fearnley moved to accept Resolution 2.
   - Seconded.
Against - 0
- Abstain - 0
- For - unanimous
Tony declared the resolution as passed.

3. **Resolution 3:** Include two additional ordinary members in the ABACBS committee in accordance with Model Rule 53 (1).
   - Motion: Melissa Davis moved to accept Resolution 3.
   - Seconded.
   - Against - 0
   - Abstain - 0
   - For - unanimous
Tony declared the resolution as passed.

Before the Election started, Tony asked if there were any other final questions.

Alicia Oshlack raised that ABACBS might want to consider state representatives as members of the committee in the future, that the AGTA constitution was modelled in this manner. Tony responded that the constitution is something that we are considering reviewing and referred to the report of Ashley Waardenberg tabled at the meeting.

10. **Elections**

Tony declared all offices vacant at 12:35pm.

David Lovell took over as Returning Officer.

For the positions of President, Vice-President and Treasurer, only one nomination was received. David declared Tony Papenfuss as President, Ashley Waardenberg as Vice-President and Melissa Davis as Treasurer.

For the positions of Secretary, ECR Representative, Student Representative and Ordinary Member (2x), more than one nomination was received for each position and David declared that a ballot would be required. Two ballots were prepared.

Whilst the ballots were prepared David opened the floor to discussion. Ashley Waardenberg continued the discussion of membership and the constitution noting that he was hoping to review the current association’s rules over the next term with a view to put a new constitution forward. Tony Papenfuss also discussed membership, stating that equal state representation would present challenges and that he would have a first preference for achieving gender balance on the Executive committee, but that he was open to discussion.
The first ballot for Secretary, ECR Representation and Student Representative was conducted. Whilst the ballots were being counted a meeting break was taken at 1pm, to be resumed at 2pm.

**Ballot 1 results:**

**Secretary Position**
- Joshua Ho - 29 votes
- Richard Edwards - 27 votes
- Abstain - 1 vote

David Lovell declared Joshua Ho as Secretary.

**ECR Representative**
- Liam Fearnley - 29 votes
- Jovana Maksimovic - 25 votes
- Abstained - 3 votes

David Lovell declared Liam Fearnley as ECR Representative.

**Student Representative**
- Paula Martinez - 28 votes
- Harriet Dashnow - 28 votes
- Abstain - 1 vote

David Lovell declared a tie and that the position of Student Representative would be re-balloted together with the ordinary member ballot.

The second ballot for Student Representative (repeat) and Ordinary members was conducted.

Whilst waiting for ballot results Tony Papenfuss started a discussion around membership and membership costs. Torsten Seemann noted that other societies had scales, for example $127 for professionals, $85 for postdocs and $55 students. Tony Papenfuss highlighted that the Australasian Genetics society was around $80. Everyone agreed that we would like to set student rate very low, due to the inequalities for students. Nicola Armstrong highlighted that the statistics society was $20 for students. It was then asked what members would like to see for their membership - discounted membership and workshop registration were discussed.

**Ballot 2 results:**

**Ordinary committee member**
- Nicola Armstrong - 42 votes
- David Lynn - 27 votes
- Jovana Maksimovic - 13 votes
- Richard Edwards - 8 votes
- Terry Bertozzi - 7 votes
- Abstain - 17 votes

David Lovell declared Nicola Armstrong and David Lynn as Ordinary committee members.

Student representative (second ballot)
- Harriet Dashnow - 29 votes
- Paula Martinez - 21 votes
- Abstain - 7 votes

Tony Papenfuss resumed the meeting as Chair, congratulated everyone on their election and closed the Annual General Meeting.

11. **Meeting closed at 2:14pm.**
President’s report

The formation of ABACBS was a long, careful process beginning in 2013. This involved discussions about whether a society was needed, its vision and purpose, and a vote on its name. ABACBS was finally established as an incorporated association in November 2014 by the current executive committee:

- President: Tony Papenfuss
- Vice President: Ashley Waardenberg
- Treasurer: Melissa Davis
- Secretary: David Lovell
- Student Representative: Andrew Lonsdale.

Following this, there was much work to get ABACBS up and running. This involved a lot of focus on small details, which may seem boring, but were essential to operating a society. These included things like an Australian Business Number, a bank account, public and professional liability insurance, and event insurance, and running an election within 18 months of incorporation.

A number of major things have also been achieved:

**Annual conference**

An important milestone for the society in 2015 was the first annual ABACBS conference. This generated terrific feedback from attendees, and several speakers commented on the great vibe at the conference. This was due to the hard work of the organizing committee, who deserve our thanks.

The 2015 conference also taught us many lessons about how to improve. Mirana Ramialison, who was a member of the 2015 organizing committee, has been appointed as National Conference Coordinator to assemble materials and wisdom to be passed on to each conference organizing committee to aid the running and continual improvement of the conference.

The 2016 conference will be held in Brisbane at QUT and the 2017 conference will be in South Australia. To help with organization and transmission of acquired knowledge, the National Conference Coordinator joins Organizing Committee conference calls; and in preparation for next year, Katherine Pillman from South Australia is also a member of Organising Committee.

**Gender equity**

Early in 2015 the executive adopted strong stances on gender equity. We agreed that the ABACBS annual conference should have 50% female invited speakers and aim for 50% female participation across other areas including organizing committees, and contributed talks. We did not publicize this policy, but many recognized the terrific outcome. Of course, there is room to improve policies in this area and their implementation. We are currently developing gender equity policies connected to sponsorship of other events, like Bioinfosummer and the Winter School.
Students

The executive has also gone to great lengths to support students. We have taken in the COMBINE student group and provided it with a legal identity as a sub-committee of ABACBS. This provided the COMBINE committee with the protection of limited liability, and insurance for events it runs. The other form of support is through student bursaries. At ABACBS-2015, we offered $6850 in student bursaries and prizes. We hope to maintain this into the future and develop more support for ECRs.

Sub-committee and coordinator roles

To help with operation and activities of ABACBS, a number of sub-committees have been established:

- **Education and Training Sub-committee.** This committee is chaired by Annette Mcgrath and was created as a merger between the Bioplatforms Australia training consultation and a group of interested ABACBS members. Its role is to help enhance coordination, cooperation and communication between groups and individuals involved in training and teaching.

- **Web Sub-committee.** This committee is chaired by Torsten Seemann. Its role is to provide advice on the development of our web site and communications strategies. This will include the development of proper web-based membership management facilities.

and two Conference Organising Committees, as well as the previously mentioned **COMBINE Student Sub-committee** and **National Conference Coordinator.** It is expected more roles will be needed over time. A number of members have volunteered us previously, and we will be in touch as appropriate roles as they come up. If there are roles you are interested in, please contact us to discuss.

External relationships

ABACBS is a bronze member of GOBLET—the Global Organisation of Bioinformatics Learning, Education & Training. This provides members access to a global, sustainable support and networking structure for bioinformatics trainers and trainees (including a training portal for sharing materials, tools, tips and techniques; guidelines and best practice documents; facilities to help train the trainers; and offering different learning pathways for different types of learner). Annette Mcgrath also won the bid to host the 2016 GOBLET Annual Workshop and AGM, which will be run following ABACBS-2016.

I have had several discussions with Geoff Prince, the director of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, about reciprocal organizational membership between our two organisations. A membership agreement is currently being drafted. Our plan is to review these external agreements with members each year at the AGM.

Some preliminary discussions have also taken place with the NHMRC.

Our first AGM & election

Due to timing, our first AGM is being run via teleconference, using an email-based voting system to deal with ballots. This is far from ideal, but was necessary to deal the issues thrown up by our constitution (actually the model rules generally used by associations incorporated in Victoria). Our plan going forward is to align AGMs with the annual conference to better facilitate
a real conversation. Additionally, we will be looking at replacing the model rules with a real constitution that better aligns with the needs of a national scientific society.

The next term

A major focus during the term until our next AGM is to develop the level of communication within the society and especially from the executive to members. This has started with the appointment of a Web Development Sub-committee, but may also involve specific roles to help with communication, including more regular newsletters. We are also interested in establishing prizes and awards.

Final remarks

The executive committee has been an absolute pleasure to work with. Our regular teleconferences are sessions of deep discussion and occasional argument, but they are also fun. Remarkably, and unintentionally, nearly every decision we have made has been by consensus. The executive is strongly committed to building a scientific and professional society for bioinformatics and computational biology that is collegial, supportive and sustainable. The workload has been high, so I am hopeful that society members will support the resolutions to expand the executive with ordinary member positions, add an ECR representative and formalize the student representative position.

David Lovell played an essential role in facilitating the establishment of the society and has held the position of Secretary since then. In late 2014, he took up the position of Head of the School of Engineering at QUT, which has kept him extremely busy. It was understandable when he decided to step down from the executive committee. I was saddened when he told us. David has been a wonderful colleague on the committee. I will miss his humor and wisdom in meetings. But, as David himself says, this is an opportunity for renewal of the executive committee.

The committee welcomes feedback and your thoughts on any issues relevant to the bioinformatics and computational biology communities. Please feel free to email us on committee@abacbs.org at any time.

Tony Papenfuss
ABACBS President
Vice President’s report

One of the greatest things we can do for our field is to work together as a professional community. At the end of 2014 Tony Papenfuss, Melissa Davis, David Lovell, Andrew Lonsdale, and I were tasked with forming ABACBS as an incorporated entity. This has been no small feat, but through working together we have progressed from inklings of society formation to a registered incorporated association. Much of this wouldn’t have been possible without the early drive and calls from David Lovell to form a society and the generous as well as ongoing financial support of EMBL Australia - for that I am certain I can speak for many in thanking you!

This has, however, been a period of administration instrumentation - instrumenting administration. This has meant focusing on the details, providing little opportunities to represent the broader needs of our community whilst focusing on raising the platform. Throughout this founding period I was able to bring my administrative experiences from executive roles in other not-for-profit organisations and put them to some use. Some of my contributions over this term has been the negotiation of insurances, assisting in the establishment of terms of references for committees, establishing our online stripe transaction account and connecting to our website for payment processing/receipting as well as registrations, representing ABACBS at BioPlatforms Australia consultations, standing in for Tony and opening the ABACBS 2015 Conference (not a biased view of course, but certainly one of the best conferences I’ve been to in a while!), reporting on the activities of ABACBS at the ABACBS Conference, BioInfoSummer, EMBL Australia and working together to join forces with the excellent community being COMBINE. As I alluded to previously, policy and constitution are areas that require attention as we continue to grow and move into the next term of ABACBS.

It has been obvious for some time that we needed to expand our committee to be able to start achieving some of the bigger goals of our society. Our approach to making progress was to further involve our community through the formation of sub-committees. I am very pleased that we started to push this forward by forming a web sub-committee, chaired by Torsten Seemann, to review our web presence/instrument a much needed membership management system and an Education/Training sub-committee chaired by Annette McGrath to tackle some big issues in this area. Mirana Ramialison also joined us as the National Conference Coordinator. I am looking forward to a favourable outcome of the proposed resolutions to expand the committee to include additional members, including an ECR and student representative as well as providing more opportunities for involvement in our society.

In closing, this has been a significant period for our professional community and I have thoroughly enjoyed working together with my fellow colleagues to get us this far.
Treasurer’s report

This year, we have begun the somewhat complex process of establishing the society financially. This has involved registration of ABACBS with the Australian Government Business Register to secure an ABN, opening a bank account, designing invoices, working to establish financial management processes and policies, and navigating the Victorian State legislation we are incorporated under to ensure that the society meets its financial and regulatory obligations. None of that sounds particularly exciting, but it is all essential for us to maintain a functioning society that serves the interests of its members. In all these tasks, I have benefited from the support and assistance of my colleagues on the executive.

First and foremost, my most sincere thanks to all those who actively chased sponsorship and were engaged in fundraising for the society this year. Without those efforts, the events hosted by the society would not have been possible. Thank you also to those who organised and hosted ABACBS events; in particular, thank you for your patience as I have worked with my colleagues in the executive to create financial systems and policies, and for your forbearance as we have collectively learned from both frustrating and successful attempts to create smoothly functioning systems. My official financial statement to the society at this AGM presents the financial records and statement of the society in the 2014-2015 Financial Year (which is the same as the society's financial year). Given the elapsed time however, and the fact that this is the first AGM for the society, I thought it would be good to comment in this report on the activities of the society since its inception, and a draft statement of our position to date in the FYE2016 has been prepared to be presented informally for the information of our members. The formal statement for FYE2016 will be presented at the AGM in November.

ABACBS has benefited tremendously from the support of our main sponsor, EMBL Australia, as well as from a large number of other sponsors who supported particular events. Support from EMBL Australia enabled us to continue the Australian Bioinformatics Network’s role in supporting the Winter School in Mathematical and Computational Biology, held in Brisbane in mid 2015, and BiolInfoSummer, held in Sydney in late 2015. Other sponsors who supported specific events include (among many others) The University of Sydney Charles Perkins Centre, The University of New South Wales, The Australian National University, the Victorian Life Sciences Computation Initiative and the CSIRO. The society has also helped to fund its activities and events through registrations, however we have always attempted to keep these registrations affordable. If we consider the annual conference, which will continue to be ABACBS’s flagship event each year, sponsorship covered only a third of the cost of running the conference, with the rest of the cost covered from registrations and support provided by the society (enabled by the generous EMBL Australia donation).
Running a conference is an expensive event, and our 2015 conference cost just over $26,000 to run. As we benefited from a surplus from the preceding conference, so we hope that each ABACBS conference will continue to grow this surplus to ensure the sustainability of future conferences, and provide a buffer in years where raising sponsorship from industry and government proves difficult. It is a difficult balance to strike, as we do not run the conference to make a profit, however leaving each subsequent conference in a better and stronger position than the preceding year is an important goal for us in running this event sustainably.

The society has other ongoing expenses, specifically insurance, public liability insurance, and in the future as the society grows and our financial reporting obligations increase, costs for financial management, bookkeeping, and auditing. There will also be costs associated with maintaining a web presence, and the associated software required for managing our association for a geographically distributed community. While we benefit at the moment from the generosity of EMBL Australia in funding the early years of the society, these ongoing expenses will exist for the lifetime of the society, and are only likely to grow as the society grows and becomes more active across Australia. While we are currently in a position to offer membership without fees, this is likely to change in the future, and as members of the society we will need to consider the value of our professional association, and the value of contributing to its sustainability. We will, collectively, need to have a conversation around how we meet the ongoing costs of maintaining the society, while keeping membership as low and affordable as possible to encourage participation. In the next six months, I hope this is a conversation that many of you will join in between now and the next AGM in November.

In conclusion, this has been an exciting period for the society, as we have worked to get things set up, while simultaneously doing the very things we needed to be set up to do – run events, a very successful conference, insure those events, and meet our obligations as an association; we are doing it all live, and that has been both scary and exhilarating. Due to the hard work of our members and contributions from numerous supporters, the society is in a healthy financial position, and well placed to establish itself as a sustainable association that is able to meet the needs of its members into the future. Thank you all most sincerely for your support, encouragement, and the goodwill that has always defined our society.

Melissa Davis
ABACBS Treasurer
Secretary’s report

“A secretary is responsible for the documentation and communication of the activities of a Committee... Amongst the Secretary’s tasks are to prepare agendas, prepare and distribute minutes, receive and disseminate correspondence to and from the club etc.” [http://www.clubhelp.org.au/governance/committee-positions-and-role-descriptions]

Since the inception of ABACBS, I have enjoyed wrangling the agendas and minutes (via Google Documents like this) for the regular and irregular meetings of the Executive and also for meetings of the AB³CBS Organising Committee. I am grateful to my fellow Executive members for maintaining high-quality agendas and minutes in my absence from time to time.

Membership report

ABACBS' membership stands at approximately 390. A new membership is registered each time someone submits this form. We are in the process of looking for more advanced membership management software so this number is best seen as indicative, rather than definitive.

Other communication

ABACBS has evolved from the Australian Bioinformatics Network and the past year or so this has involved a lot of work to establish ABACBS as incorporated professional association. While this has been happening, I have maintained the ABACBS: Australian Bioinformatics Network site with significant assistance from Dr Dimitri Perrin who has worked hard to ensure jobs and events are posted. The site currently garners around 3500 page views and 1000 unique visitors per month.

Final remarks

Since taking up my current role at QUT, I have found it increasingly difficult to devote time to my role as Secretary. I am sad to be stepping down, but absolutely delighted to see the calibre and energy of people stepping forward for this and other roles in ABACBS. It is great to see the Australian Bioinformatics and Computational Biology community growing stronger and even more connected over this first year of ABACBS’ existence. I thank my fellow Executive Committee members for their part in encouraging this, and for their camaraderie and positive energy. I thank also the many members, sponsors and friends of ABACBS for support, especially our main sponsor, EMBL Australia whose sustained commitment to Australian bioinformatics and computational biology continues to have a profound impact. I look forward to being a very active member of our Society and Community henceforth!

David Lovell (ABACBS Secretary)
Student Representative report

Firstly, I’d like to thank the rest of the committee for their support, trust and respect towards the student representative role. Since before the society even began, the inclusion of students in the discussions boded well and everything that has happened since has confirmed to me that this was not an isolated occurrence. From the moment the caretaker committee formed, the others members have treated the student rep role as a regular position on the executive which I am grateful for. I never felt like ‘just’ a student. The limitations of the model rules have meant that this equality and inclusiveness has been largely driven by the attitudes of the current committee. I am very pleased there is a resolution in today’s AGM to make this role and attitude permanent.

The second major activity relevant to students has been the inclusion of COMBINE within ABACBS. As President of COMBINE at the time of ABACBS’s forming, serving roles in both ABACBS and COMBINE at its inception was a great way to begin the relationship between the two, and act as a liaison/double-agent between both groups. Some kind of formal arrangement was obvious to all, but it should not be taken for granted that it was simply a matter of changing a logo or putting a link on a website. COMBINE has always been a fiercely independent group driven by students’ ability to generate massive amounts of enthusiasm and activity when faced with the dreaded alternative of doing actual research. Finding a workable relationship that provided the benefit of legal and financial support whilst still allowing for the autonomy that COMBINE thrives on took several rounds of negotiations and document revisions. Thanks in particular to Tony and Ash for their guidance on this, and from COMBINE, Harriet Dashnow who was instrumental. It shouldn’t be forgotten that this relationship greatly benefits ABACBS too. Strongly engaged students provides the society with long term members, and a pathway for future leadership. The alignment of the COMBINE symposium with ABACBS in 2015 was also tremendous success, and the continuation of that arrangement in 2016 and beyond should prove equally successful.

As mentioned in the initial announcements for this AGM, I’ve not sought the student position again. I think rotating this position regularly is a great way to increase the number of students exposed to the inner workings of the society, plus it’s high time I devoted more time to my PhD research (hello to my supervisors if you are reading this; I’ll have that draft ready for you soon).

Being a part of the ABACBS committee has been a highlight of my research career so far, and it has been a great pleasure to meet so many of the community. Even though ABACBS is less than two years old, it has the makings of an incredible organisation. The future of any society can be seen in the present by its attitude and commitment to its students members. By that measure, I think the success of ABACBS is assured.

Andrew Lonsdale
ABACBS 2016

Financial Reports
Financial Statement for the Australian Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Society Inc. (ABACBS)

Statement of income and expenditure:
For the association’s financial year ending 30 June 2015
Total Revenue: $5297.30
Total Expenditure: $19.20

Final position: $5278.10

Break down of revenue:

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Break down of expenditure:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRIPE Fees</td>
<td>$19.20</td>
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Statement of assets and liabilities
For the association’s financial year ending 30 June 2015
Value of assets held by ABACBS: $5,278.00 cash
Outstanding invoices as of 30 June 2015: $52,000.00
Liabilities: nil

Attachments:
Bank statements (covering the period July 14 – June 15)
Invoices (issued in FY ending June 15)
Schedule 1
Regulation 15
Form 1

Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012
Sections 94 (2)(b), 97 (2)(b) and 100 (2)(b)

Annual statements give a true and fair view of financial performance and position of incorporated association

We Melissa Davis and Anthony Papenfuss, being members of the committee of the Australian Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Society Inc. certify that –

“The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial performance and position of the above named association during and at the end of the financial year of the association ending 30th June, 2015.”

Signed:  

Date: 19/04/2016

Signed:  

Date: 19/4/2016