

*ASSOCIATION OF GEOTECHNICAL
TESTING AUTHORITIES (QLD) INC*

NEWSLETTER



*THE ASSOCIATION OF
GEOTECHNICAL TESTING
AUTHORITIES (QLD) INC.*



*PO Box 2127
STRATHPINE QLD 4500
PHONE: (07) 3881-1316
FAX: (07) 3881-3513*

*AGTA 2004
Committee Officers*

Chairman

Peter Davis
Ph: 07 3870 0291
Fax. 07 3870 5980

Deputy Chairman

Paul Coker
Ph: 07 3810 6874

Secretary

James Dick
Ph: 07 5524 6199
Fax. 07 5524 6533

Treasurer

Chris Thurley
Ph: 07 3881 3511
Fax. 07 3881 3513

Deputy Secretary

Ron Richards
Ph: 07 5495 1633
Fax. 07 5495 1733

Non Executive

Beatrice Booth
Ph: 07 4031 1122
Fax: 07 4051 9480

Greg Gibson
Ph: 07 3801 3233
Fax: 07 3801 3633

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A Note from the Chairman

Is it that I am getting old or am just badly organised, but each successive year passes more quickly. This year has been no exception. Looking back, it is hard to see what the committee has achieved, but I guess two General Meetings and a Newsletter don't get put to bed without someone doing the hard yards. We have also had representation on Australian Standard Committees CE/09 and CE/12, maintained a sound working relationship with NATA (and there have been a lot of changes there), and generally kept a finger on the industry pulse. For all this hard work, I'd like to thank the committee members and the admin staff who have all carried a share of the load.

There has been good, solid workload back at the fort for most of us this year. While one benefit has been a rewarding lack of price cutting, there are too many stories of industry operators taking short cuts in order to get the work done for some of it not to be true. I'd like to remind everyone that AGTA has a Code of Ethics. The committee will take action against anyone found breaching it.

From what I can see, next year is going to be just as hectic. Not only are there many big projects already up and running, but there are many more about to come on stream. Even if you do not operate at the "big end of town", there are plenty of flow-on effects to the smaller operators. This gives us the opportunity we need to employ trainees and to show youngsters that there is a good career to be had in the construction testing industry. If we can just get these trainees into the system and give them a good grounding, it may give us old fellas a bit of breathing space so we can think constructively about retirement!

Have a good Christmas break. I look forward to hearing from you in the New Year.

PETER DAVIS

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Government subsidised training at Certificate III and Certificate IV levels for new and existing workers (eligibility conditions apply)

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News from NATA

Dom Meadley, Acting Manager Construction Materials Testing

1. CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TESTING ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NATA's Construction Materials Testing Advisory Committee (CMT AAC) met on 23 July 2004 in Melbourne.

Items of particular interest to member laboratories included:

- The role of NATA as a member organization in light of the adoption of ISO 17011 and its restrictions concerning "consulting" by accreditation bodies.
- Problems associated with the large number of test methods, particularly the state road authority methods which are similar to AS methods. NATA has been asked to consult with the state road authorities on this.
- Establishing criteria for competency standards for signatories and the need for formal training of laboratory staff.
- Proficiency testing, inter-laboratory testing, NATA's involvement and the need for increased proficiency testing and measurement of competence.
- Revision of the Annex Laboratory Policy (Policy Circular #6).
- Revision of Technical Circular # 3 concerning Measurement Uncertainty
 - Policy to cover requirements concerning statements of compliance;
 - Requirement concerning the number of significant figures required for reporting and whether this matches the measurement uncertainty of the test (this is often a problem with some state road authority methods)

2. NATA STAFF

Recently, there has been a number changes to NATA Construction materials Testing staff. Peter Young, the Manager for Construction Materials Testing resigned from NATA in October to take up a more relaxed lifestyle in rural Victoria. Amanda MacFarlane, the Regional Manager for Queensland resigned to take up part-time work and also have a more relaxed lifestyle.

Bettina Poxleitner will take up the role of Manager for Construction Materials Testing in Melbourne from early December 2004. A decision concerning replacement of Amanda will be made early next year. In the meantime, Jan Findlay will be the focal point for laboratories in Queensland. However, feel free to contact Craig Smith or Shane Clements in the NATA Brisbane office or Bettina in the Melbourne office if the need arises.

As a result of these changes, there may be some delays in meeting your requests for variations to the scope of accreditation, signatories and annex laboratories. It is hoped that NATA can continue to meet its Charter of Service but urgent requests are going to be difficult to meet in the short term. Please let NATA know as soon as you know about any required changes so that we can try to make them meet your requirements.

3. MEASUREMENT UNCERTAINTY

At each reassessment, laboratories need to have assessed whether the test methods they use continue meet all the requirements ISO/IEC 17025 and NATA Technical Circular #3.

As can be seen from the issues raised at the Construction Materials Testing Accreditation Advisory Committee Meeting, Note 2 is not the only requirement that needs to be met.

Measurement Uncertainty needs to be estimated when the reporting required by the test method is not consistent with the uncertainty of measurement of the test result and when statements of compliance are required by the client.

NATA Technical Circular #3 has listed Australian Standards which have been reviewed and are considered to meet Note 2 of Clause 5.4.6.2 of ISO/IEC 17025. When another method states that it is similar to the Australian Standard, laboratories need to consider the differences between the methods to determine if the method which refers to the AS method meets Note 2 as well.

All methods which are not listed in the NATA Technical Circular #3 need to be reviewed against ISO/IEC 17025. Laboratories need to document what the review has involved and, if required, justify their decision about the method meeting Note 2 and other requirements of ISO/IEC 17025.

Prior to 30 April 2005, laboratories need to have documented the sources of uncertainty and to provide a schedule of when the estimates are to be completed. From 30 April 2005, all methods that do not meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 need to have Measurement Uncertainty estimates available at the reassessment.

4. ESTABLISHING ANNEX LABORATORIES

If you are required to establish annex laboratories on a regular basis, it is worthwhile considering becoming accredited to establish annex laboratories. The requirements are detailed in NATA's Policy Circular #6. It is important that once a suitable procedure has been established, NATA will need to assess the actual establishment of an annex laboratory to ensure that the procedure is followed and NATA's requirements are being met.

5. CORPORATE ACCREDITATION

NATA's system of corporate accreditation (see details in NATA's Circular #1):

- removes duplication of system assessments
- permits recognition of multiple signatories at multiple sites
- provides management of the company with an organizational view of their operations
- provides a NATA client manager for a single point of contact.

Currently a number of companies are introducing standard quality systems throughout their organizations and are requesting multiple signatory approvals across multiple laboratories, single assessments of quality system documentation and a central notification person.

The above can only be provided under the corporate accreditation system within NATA. Non corporate accredited laboratories are covered, accreditation by accreditation.

Please contact your local NATA office or look at the Policy Circular #1 on our web site.

6. THE REASSESSMENT PROCESS

Those laboratories that have been reassessed recently will have become aware of the new process of reporting and notification by NATA. This process is detailed below:

- An interim Report on Assessment will usually be issued at the exit meeting at the end of the assessment visit;
- A confirmation letter will be sent to the laboratory with the Report on Assessment as soon as possible after the visit. This report is reviewed by the Chairman of the Accreditation Committee prior to the confirmation letter being sent. It can be expected that a few changes will be made in the report. However, laboratories should commence corrective action based on the interim report so that they can meet the agreed response date. You will be advised by telephone if significant changes are to be made to this report.
- Laboratories are expected to provide a complete response to all conditions and minor conditions by the agreed response date. If a response is not received by that date, a reminder letter is sent to the laboratory indicating that accreditation cannot be continued if a response is not received by the date indicated in the letter.
- If a response is not received by the final date, NATA will take action to suspend the accreditation.
- A satisfactory response to all conditions and minor conditions is required prior to a final report being prepared and sent to NATA's board representative to recommend continued accreditation or addition of signatories and tests.
 - **Please note: any additions to the scope of accreditation and signatories cannot be recommended until this is complete.**
- A notification letter confirming continued accreditation and additions to the scope of accreditation and signatory list will be sent when the report is approved by NATA's board representative.
- The times concerning NATA's response to each parts of this process are included in its Charter of Service.

If you need further details, please request them from the NATA staff at the entry/exit meeting at the reassessment.

PROBLEM CORNER

Since the last Newsletter, the following issues have been raised by various members as being industry “problems”. Members could consider just how much of a problem these issues are, with a view to determining whether AGTA should seek clarification or resolutions. Some discussion at the forthcoming AGM (6 December) may provide some beneficial briefing for the new committee.

- “Part time” Level 1 earthworks supervision is reported as still being undertaken.
- The BSA Subsidence Policy requires (refer Page 6) “Certification by RPEQ of compaction tests carried out on controlled fill”, effectively preventing Geotechnical Testing Authorities without RPEQ capability from undertaking control of filling to AS 3798.
- Plasticity characteristics continue to be used to classify sites, reportedly in accordance with AS 2870 and the BSA Subsidence Policy.
- Site classifications are reportedly still being undertaken by classifiers who do not hold a Site Classifier’s licence or are not covered by RPEQ provisions.
- Standpipes and piezometers are reportedly being installed to depths greater than 6m by drillers who do not hold the appropriate Water Borer’s licence.
- On site effluent disposal designs to AS 1547 are reportedly being undertaken by plumbers.
- The requirement by NATA for laboratories to prepare estimates of Measurement Uncertainty for test methods not covered by Note 2 of ISO 17025 Clause 5.4.6.2.

There may be other problems out there that the committee has not been advised of. Bring them along to the AGM and we can discuss them.

Taking the sting out of **Measurement Uncertainty**

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JUST A REMINDER.....

AGTA HAS EMAIL!!

*As a member of AGTA, you are entitled
access to AGTA's yahoo email account.*

The minutes of every meeting - be it committee or general - are always posted to this website, so if you are not on the committee, or cannot make the general meeting this website is the perfect way to keep in touch with latest movements of AGTA.



**For all usernames and passwords, please
contact AGTA administration on (07) 3881 1316
or email cqa@bigpond.com**

ECLA Update

1. New President

At the AGM in July this year, ECLA voted in a new President after it's former President of eight years stepped aside.

The new President is Mr Stephen Thorley – Manager/Director of Network Geotechnics Pty Ltd. Steve runs his company's Wollongong office and has spent his life in the industry, thus bringing a wealth of experience to the position.

2. ECLA Website

ECLA is developing a website which should hopefully be online by the New Year. It is envisaged this will create a focal point for all Association issues and be of obvious benefit to the many remote ECLA members who cannot regularly attend meetings.

The intention from the outset is that this site not only be about just ECLA, but a forum for our industry and other interested parties. However, only members will gain access to the full Association business such as minutes of meetings etc.

3. Membership

ECLA was originally formed as a collective representation of “independent” operators of NATA Accredited Construction Materials laboratories. To this end membership was only open to such companies, albeit any and all associated bodies and groups were welcomed at meetings and events.

Furthermore, ECLA membership is in conjunction with membership of Australian Business Limited – an employers business chamber that complemented individual companies with a comprehensive range of workplace advocacy and support.

Following significant interest from other parties, statutory bodies and councils etc. a motion was passed at the recent meeting in October to alter the constitution and allow a second category “Associate” membership as follows –

“2. Associate Member

Available to any interested party not eligible for full membership.

Membership Rights

- right to attend, speak and vote at meetings excluding the election of office bearers
- right to use the Association logo
- right to represent that they are an associate member of the Association
- not eligible to hold office in the Association
- not eligible to conjunct membership of Australian Business Limited through the Association”

The Constitution is currently being amended to reflect the changes and a nominal fee is to be set. Application will be available through the ECLA website in the New Year.

4. Associations in other States

ECLA has had recent contact with similar developing groups in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

Whilst still very much in their infancy, ECLA has assigned one of its Committee members to liaise with and offer full support to the development of these Associations.

5. Roads and Traffic Authority (NSW) Working Parties

In 2002 the RTA invited ECLA and NATA to a workshop to exchange information on the practices and inherent culture of its projects constructed under quality assurance. The RTA noted that laboratories provide the only systematic and quantitative evidence to both the properties of the materials used and the means by which they are incorporated into the works. From this workshop two working parties were formed – the “Laboratory Relationships” working party and the “Laboratory Proficiency & Training” working party.

These were to review proposed changes to specifications, quality systems procedures, and to formulate a working shell for industry training and subsequent technical competency.

Both parties had great impetus for the first twelve months but seemingly have died an indignant death. In fact neither has met this year. This is apparently due to the redeploying of several contributing RTA staff to other positions and a few retirements. Unfortunately, with much still to be considered Government bureaucracy has left both parties squandering in an indefinite limbo.

Finally, greetings to our counterparts - AGTA members in Queensland. Please continue to support your Association. As your State representation, AGTA has already had significant success but ultimately, like any Association, the expediency of achievement is dependant on the input and support of members.

Even the compilation of a newsletter such as this is the result of great sacrifice of personal time and resource, all too often by only a handful of people.

Anyone who undertakes NATA Assessments will undoubtedly have come across much whinging with the system and alarm at sections of our industry at each of the laboratories they visit. From personal experience if everyone of these made the effort to bring their ideas into the Association forum, significant change would have already been realised.

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THE OPTIMAL PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS FOR GEOTECHNICAL LABORATORIES

Training Update

State Government contributing to existing worker training.

Through its **SmartVET-Skilling for the Smart State** initiative, the Queensland Government has provided funding to assist existing laboratory workers to develop their technical skills and qualifications to Certificate III and Certificate IV levels.

The Minister for Employment and Training announced in Parliament on 29th September that Alan Bartlett Consulting had been awarded a three-year contract for upskilling laboratory and manufacturing workers through the Industry Training Partnerships program.

Under the program, the Department of Employment and Training pays dollar-for-dollar with the employer to purchase the training through the existing worker traineeship system. Where the employer is eligible for Commonwealth incentive payments, these can be used to pay the employer's contribution, making the training cost-neutral to the employer.

Currently discussions are underway to extend the program to include the Diploma of Laboratory Technology in the program, with the possibility of current Certificate III and IV holders being eligible for subsidies to progress to the Diploma qualification. Details of this are yet to be finalised.

For further information on existing worker traineeships contact a New Apprenticeship Centre in your local area. The names and contact details of New Apprenticeship Centres can be found at <http://www.newapprenticeships.gov.au/locationsearch/NACSearch.asp>.

Revised Laboratory Operations Training Package

The new and improved Laboratory Operations Training Package PML04 was recently endorsed (October) by the Federal, State and Territory ministers for training. The main changes of interest to the geotechnical and construction materials industries include:

- Fewer core units, allowing greater choice of electives.
- Inclusion of a Certificate II qualification.
- An entry level (induction) unit on working in a scientific/technical environment.
- Less emphasis on "wet chemistry" skills and knowledge in the generic competency units.
- An entry level unit on taking basic field measurements (eg. water levels).
- Entry level sampling and sample preparation units.
- Separation of the data recording and processing functions as discrete competencies.
- Additional testing competencies in physical, mechanical and chemical testing.
- A diploma-level testing competency on measuring the engineering properties of materials (eg. shear strength, consolidation, permeability).
- A unit on providing input to production trials.
- A unit on evaluating the quality of test results (ie. analysis of proficiency testing results).
- New higher level calibration units.
- Competencies in environmental monitoring.
- New and revised competencies in OHS.

DON'T FORGET!!

The AGTA Annual General Meeting is coming up!

This years' AGM is fast approaching, so come along and have your say!

***WHEN:** Thursday December 9, 2004*

***WHERE:** Hawken Auditorium
Engineers Australia Building
447 Upper Edward Street, Spring Hill*

TIME

***GM:** 6.00pm for a 6.30pm start*

***AGM:** approximately 7.30-7.45pm*

Topics and speakers include:

- * Radiation Health*
- * Industry Training*



REMEMBER!

If you plan on coming, please fill out your attendance form and return to Civil Quality Assurance (Qld) Pty Ltd by Thursday December 4 so we cater for you. If you can't make it, be sure to return your proxy nomination form before the meeting so you can still have your say! (Forms are provided for you in this newsletter).



LIGHTEN UP!

The Lone Ranger and Tonto went camping in the desert. After they got their tent set up, they fell asleep.

Some hours later, Tonto wakes the Lone Ranger and says, "Kemo Sabe, look towards sky, what you see?"

The Lone Ranger replies, "I see millions of stars."

"What that tell you?" asked Tonto.

The Lone Ranger ponders for a minute and then says, "Astronomically speaking, it tells me there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Time wise, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three in the morning. Theologically, its evident the Lord is all-powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What's it tell you, Tonto?"

Tonto is silent for a moment, then says, "Kemo Sabe, you dumb ass. Someone stole the tent!"

Notable & Quotables

- * A wise man turns chance into good fortune.

Thomas Fuller

- * A guilty conscience needs no accuser.

English Proverb

- * The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers.

Thomas Jefferson

- * Friendship is like money, easier made than kept.

Samuel Butler

- * If Noah had been truly wise, he would have swatted those two flies.

Helen Castle

- * The more you say, the less people remember.

Anatole France

STAY SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



PEOPLE IN PROFILE

Name & current status?

Chris Bloxsom – Roadtest Chief Technician & Geotechnical Group Manager.

How did you get involved in the industry?

After graduating from CIAE in 1980, I started work for an engineering consultancy which had a small soils lab. Only a small part of my duties but it is where it all began.

How long have you worked in the industry?

Since November 1980.

Have you gained any qualifications in this time?

Associate Diploma in Civil Engineering (1979 – 1980)

Thoughts on the industry in general – the past and future.

The industry has had to become much more efficient and lean as with most areas of enterprise these days. The lack of professionalism & quality brought about by low margins and poor training is our biggest challenge for the future. We have to lift margins, training, quality and professionalism.

What are your hobbies/interests?

I love soccer (playing & watching), bush camping, 4WD touring and just being with my wife Jen and two great teenage sons.

What was one of the best decisions you have made?

Being part of the creation of Roadtest back in 1985.

What is one of the worst decisions you have made?

Can't recall anything of note.

What do you consider are your strengths?

Not afraid of hard work, my sense of humour and being able to get on with most people.

What do you consider are your weaknesses?

A tendency to procrastinate.

What / who inspires you and why?

My wife is a state school primary teacher and I am constantly in awe of what she and her colleagues have to deal with and yet continue to turn out kids who, despite their setbacks, enjoy their schooling.

What is the strangest thing that has happened to you while in the industry?

Nothing really!! More evidence of the mostly uneventful life I lead.

What annoys you?

MRD's decision to call their labs ROADTEK.

Where would you like to be in ten years time?

Happy enough to be doing pretty much the same as now, but with a larger and more rewarding market share with good quality & training outcomes for our people.

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REPORT FROM CHRIS BLOXSOM, OUR CENTRAL QUEENSLAND CORRESPONDENT

The Central Queensland region continues on a plain of optimism, with most Geotechnical Testing Authorities enjoying good workload, the likes of which have not been seen since the early 80's.

The domestic construction market remains buoyant (don't believe what the southern papers say), with new residential subdivisions and associated infrastructure creating a high work demand. They are even building houses on the subdivisions! The introduction of the new BSA Subsidence Policy has certainly created extra work for those involved in AS 2870 site classifications and the engineering design of buildings, footings and slabs.

On the industrial development front, Gladstone has been "steady as she goes", despite the hiatus with the Aldoga Aluminium Smelter, which sent a shiver through the camp. The project promised to provide a huge boost to Gladstone's ongoing industrial development, and it was a great local disappointment when it was mothballed. Recent rumour is that the project may get back on track again soon.

Mining development in the Bowen Basin continues to progress and provide work for construction contractors. Haul roads, railway lines, industrial buildings and mining infrastructure are all on the move.

Your local correspondent has a vested interest in hoping that the present economic climate continues and that, if it is to abate, the let down is slow and gradual, and not like hitting a brick wall, as has happened in the past.

Keep up the good work, AGTA!

**ASSOCIATION
OF
GEOTECHNICAL TESTING AUTHORITIES (QLD)**



**APPLICATION
FOR
MEMBERSHIP**



ASSOCIATION OF GEOTECHNICAL TESTING AUTHORITIES (QLD)
MEMBERSHIP GRADES AND FEES
2004

MEMBERSHIP GRADE

FEES
\$

Members

Industry individuals or industry-associated individuals \$ 50

Corporate Member

Construction materials testing laboratories, or industry associated company, business,
partnership, group, department or body \$150

Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (Qld)
PO Box 2127
Strathpine Q 4500
Telephone (07) 3881 1316
Facsimile (07) 3881 3513



1 For completion by INDIVIDUAL applicants only

Details of Individual

Name

Residential Address

.....

Telephone Fax

Details of Company

Name of Company

Position

Address

.....

Telephone Fax

2 For completion by CORPORATE applicants only

Details of Company/Organisation

Name of Company/Organisation

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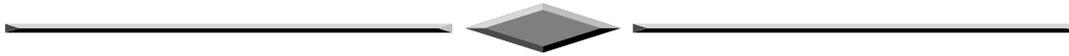
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Nominated Representative Details

Name

Position

Telephone Fax
(if different from above) (if different from above)



I,
Full Name (to be completed by nominated representative or industry individual)

declare that I will undertake to abide by the rules and ethics of the Association amended from time to time and also any regulations made by the Executive Committee in accordance with the rules:

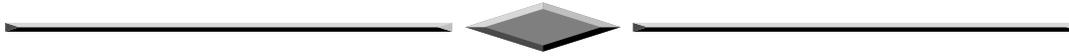
Signature Date

Return to: The Secretary
Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (Qld)
PO Box 2127
STRATHPINE QLD 4500
Telephone (07) 3881 1316 Facsimile (07) 3881 3513

NOTES:

1. The name shown on the application form should be **EITHER** the full name in which the organisation is incorporated **OR** the full name of the industry individual.
2. The **nominated representative** is the person nominated by the organisation to represent it in all matters affecting the organisation with respect to membership of the Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (Qld).

<u>OFFICE USE ONLY</u>			
<u>Proposer</u>	<u>Seconder</u>	<u>Paid</u>	<u>Membership No</u>
being current members of the Association propose the above-named as a new members of the Association			



AGTA NEWSLETTER

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To the Editor AGTA Newsletter,

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<input type="checkbox"/> 1/4 Page Advertisement/s for Two Editions <i>(10% discount)</i>	\$90.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Page Advertisement/s for Three Editions <i>(20% discount)</i>	\$480.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Half Page Advertisement/s for Three Editions <i>(20% discount)</i>	\$240.00
<input type="checkbox"/> 1/4 Page Advertisement/s for Three Editions <i>(20% discount)</i>	\$120.00
	TOTAL

I understand I will only be invoiced for the cost of the advertisements placed in a particular edition immediately following the publishing of that edition.

I have read and accept the conditions of this agreement. *Signed* on/...../.....

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FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

To: The Secretary – AGTA Fax No: (07) 3881 3513
From: _____ Date: _____
No. of Pages (including this cover page): 1

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ATTENDANCE

I can attend I cannot attend

Name: Signed:

PROXY VOTE

I, being a member of the Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (Qld) Inc., hereby appoint as my proxy vote on my behalf at the Annual General Meeting on 9 December 2004.

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2004

Signature _____

The appointment of a proxy must be provided prior to the start of the AGM.

NOMINATION OF COMMITTEE POSITIONS (9th Executive Committee)

POSITION	NOMINATION
• Chairman	
• Vice Chairman/ Public Relations	
• Secretary	
• Deputy Secretary/ Newsletter Coordinator	
• Treasurer	
• Non Executive Members (3 positions)	• • •

Proposer: _____

Seconder: _____

(Must be seconded by a member, may be seconded at the AGM)