

Australasian Speech Science and Technology Association

Agenda for the 2024 Annual General Meeting

Wednesday December 4 2024, planned for 4.30pm-5.30pm (started early at 4pm).

Leggat Hall, University College, University of Melbourne

1. Acknowledgement of country

Debbie Loakes (DL)

2. Attendance – listed at the end of this document

Apologies: Felicity Cox, Rosey Billington, Laurence Bruggeman, Janet Fletcher, Adele Gregory, Colleen Holt

3. Minutes from 2023 AGM – accepted by Gerry Docherty, seconded by Brett Baker

4. President's report – unopposed, available: <https://assta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ASSTA-AGM-Presidents-report-2024.pdf>

DL spoke to FC's (Felicity Cox's) President's report, in a powerpoint presentation prepared by FC. In particular, DL noted that Felicity could not be at the AGM to give her report in person, and that FC sent her best wishes and wanted to thank all members for their successes in 2024. DL also noted that FC wished to thank Olga Maxwell and the rest of the organizing committee for their work with the conference. This included the technical committee and the organizing committee. DL also noted that FC had mentioned the Anne Cutler Inaugural Lecture at the SST2024 in her report. This had been scheduled before the AGM, but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the keynote's illness (Rosey Billington, RB). DL noted that RB is still going to be giving the Anne Cutler lecture when possible, in a webinar form. FC had also particularly wanted to thank all other keynotes, including the opening keynote by Marija Tabain, the SocioPhonAus keynote Lynn Clark, and the closing keynote Sasha Calhoun.

Other key points included FC encouraging members to apply for award schemes, and DL urged members to remind their students to do the same. Although, this was qualified by noting that Mike Proctor (MP) would be reviewing the financial health of ASSTA in his treasurer's report. DL encouraged people to look out for the conference reports from members who had received awards from ASSTA, which will be going on to the ASSTA website in 2025.

Another key point of the president's report was that the next SST conference will be a part of the Interspeech 2026 conference in Sydney, of which Diversity & Equity - Speaking Together is the theme. After a member question, MP reported that this will be the 28th of September to the 1st of October 2026. Another key point from the president's report is that ASSTA members are invited to be involved with Interspeech.

DL invited members to email her at the ASSTA secretary address to facilitate discussions.

DL spoke to FC's report thanking and acknowledging the voluntary contribution that office bearers make, stating that their valuable service to ASSTA has been greatly appreciated. FC in particular thanked Louise Ratko, who was the first ECR Member for ASSTA from 2022-2024 and left for a position outside academia, and by Hannah White, who stepped in for the interim period.

The last important point raised in the President's report was about redundancies at La Trobe University affecting two ASSTA members, Marija Tabain and James Walker. ASSTA had submitted a letter of support to the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe, Professor Nick Bisley, to advocate for the discipline and support the ASSTA members at La Trobe but this was unsuccessful. FC had noted in her report that ASSTA will continue to support affected members in any way possible.

5. Treasurer's report – unopposed, available: <https://assta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/AGM2024-treasurers-reportsigned.pdf>

MP spoke to his report, noting various key points. Accepted by David Grayden and seconded by Olga Maxwell.

Firstly, MP addressed the financial situation and low funds overall. He noted all files and the auditor's report are available for members to read, to understand the financial situation of the association. He confirmed that the financial year for ASSTA finishes on the 31st of July every year. On July 31, 2024, ASSTA held total assets of \$44,000, down from the starting balance at the beginning of the financial year which was \$70,000. MP also reported that assets are cash assets held in National Australia Bank accounts.

Another key point of the treasurer's report was that all of ASSTA's income is membership fees, other than some interest (of which none was earned in the 2023-2024 period). In the most recent financial year, membership fees were around \$5000, while previously they have averaged \$3600. MP then reported that the greatest expenditure items for ASSTA are the SST conference (every two years), web hosting and auditor fees. MP spoke further about the state of ASSTA's assets noting that the association is at a record low.

MP then raised the issue of the increasing costs of hosting ASSTA's website and managing the membership database. He reported that initially, the website cost about \$3,000 per year, but over the past six years, costs have risen to a point where they now exceed the revenue generated from membership fees, becoming unsustainable. Currently, the money paid for hosting and support, does not cover what is needed for the website and membership database, nor additional expenses from issues like spam attacks. The site is hosted by DevApp in Adelaide and built on WordPress, which

complicates managing both the website and the membership system. MP mentioned that we need a reassessment of current hosting and membership database solutions, especially given the association's needs are simple. He reported ASSTA being contracted to DevApp until March 2025, with a two months' notice to move to another hosting solution. MP also reported being in contact with a company in Chatsworth (NSW) which currently does the web hosting and conference management organisation for the Australian Linguistics Society. They have made an offer for a cheaper hosting solution, and MP also believes it to be superior, with a simpler and more robust membership database.

MP also raised the matter of the auditor, noting that it is a significant expense but one the association must bear because the ASSTA constitution mandates an external audit. However, he also pointed out that since 2007 it is not a strict requirement for small associations incorporated in the ACT to get an annual audit. MP noted that the current auditor knows the organisation, is happy to continue, and has not increased his fees for over a decade. He noted that while we are not legally obliged to be audited, he wanted feedback from the membership about this. Marija Tabain (MT) suggested that having an external auditor a good safeguard because they are independent, and she noted this is also good for appearances more generally. She also reported that the external auditor was useful for ICPHS 2019, especially when there were some initial problems with the PCO of that event. The consensus after the discussion was to keep the same external auditor. MP also noted that the association may move to being a charitable organisation, and others noted that the Charitable status is advantageous -for, e.g., ARC Industry Fellowships / partnerships. MP also discussed some streamlining of processes, such as having membership fees every two years, which would also be advantageous for the organisation.

Brett Baker (BB) noted that ALS are also looking into the matter of having charitable status, but it is not as easy as first thought. He also noted that he will share details of the provider used by ALS, as well as the quote (for 18 months)

6. **Reports for noting** - ASSTA Forensic Speech Science Committee, National Spoken Language Database (available <https://assta.org/assta-news/assta-agm/>).

Forensic Speech Science Committee Helen Fraser (HF) noted that the Forensic Speech Science Committee is striving for better integration between forensics and the rest of ASSTA. She reported welcoming several new members, including Paul Foulkes from York, and several new student members, which has been positive. HF reported on some key activities. One which occurred in 2024 was a webinar called *Are You Forensic Curious?* in which each of the FSSC members gave five-minute tasters of why they think forensics is interesting and important, with some general discussion. HF noted it was quite a small audience which is understandable given other commitments of the members. She also noted that a special workshop was prepared for SST and for which FSSC was granted funding for. HF thanked those who facilitated, especially Olga

Maxwell, and noted that in the end the workshop was withdrawn due to numbers. She also noted a forensics session on the final day of the SST conference, and proposed that in future years perhaps forensics topics could be scattered throughout the conference program rather than grouped together. HF noted the diversity in forensics and reported that FSSC members and presenters at the special session sometimes have less in common with each other than with other groups. HF ended by thanking everybody involved with the Forensic Speech Science Committee and those who supported their activities.

National Spoken Language Database Committee DL reported that The National Spoken Language Database Committee has been somewhat dormant recently. Michael Wagner (MW), who chaired the committee, apologized for this and shared an online report for ASSTA members to read. The committee's previous executives have all now stepped down. Catherine Watson (CW) has agreed to chair the group moving forward, with the support from MW during a transition period. Felicity Cox will also join the new committee. There was a discussion at the AGM about the ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships and work on the development of corpora. The committee oversees key databases such as Austalk and ANDOSL, and members were reminded that ASSTA is now serving as a steward for Austalk. CW emphasized the importance of stewardship, drawing parallels to a similar concept in New Zealand, where speech data is treated as a valuable resource. She suggested developing guidelines and policies for managing corpora in Australia. DL noted FC's concerns that access to corpora has been a real issue. There was a discussion about the nature of these issues, with Tuende Szalay reporting that information on the webpage is not easy to find, accessing data requires registration which can take several months; and non-ASSTA members may not know about AusTalk or cannot find the required information. She also noted that AusKidTalk has many of the same issues – she reported there are also huge issues with creating corpora.

DL reported that in his communications, MW had thought it would be a good idea for ASSTA to employ someone to manage corpora, but as reported by MP there are no available funds in the association to do this. DL noted that members interested in being involved in the reinstated National Spoken Language Database Committee should get in touch with her.

BB asked that whoever is taking on the chairing of this committee should talk to Nick Thieberger (University of Melbourne), and DL confirmed that she would connect CW and Nick Thieberger.

7. ECR / PG network activities

HW reported on ECR network activities, noting a supportive group who have regular online meetings. She also noted that attendance at meetings is not high (about 12 in a meeting) but those who attend find the sessions rewarding. Sasha Calhoun (SC) who is the executive member supporting the group also mentioned that the Facebook page is

somewhat dormant, and there was a discussion about other platforms which members may use to connect in future. DL mentioned that the group is great for networking among students and ECR members, and that an announcement can be sent around again to connect.

8. Election of officers

DL reported that the executive was remaining the same, with a new ECR member announced. The positions, nominees, nominators and seconders are shown below.

Position	Nominee	Nominated by	Seconded by
President	Felicity Cox	Sasha Calhoun	Debbie Loakes
Secretary	Debbie Loakes	Sasha Calhoun	Janet Fletcher / Olga Maxwell
Treasurer	Michael Proctor	Sasha Calhoun/ Olga Maxwell	Debbie Loakes
Executive Member	Sasha Calhoun	Mike Proctor	Debbie Loakes
Executive Member	Olga Maxwell	Janet Fletcher	Mike Proctor
ECR member	Tuende Szalay	Hannah White	Felicity Cox

9. Announcement of ECR representative

The new ECR member was announced by DL as Tuende Szalay (TS) (table at 8 above).

TS introduced herself, noting that she works on the phonetics of Australian English and its implications for speech as well as speech health and speech technology. TS noted she is passionate about big data and speech corpora and stated that she had been an ECR network member ever since the network started, citing that it is great for research support and moral support. She also noted that she was looking forward to continuing the work started by Louise Ratko and Hannah White and also acknowledged student member Angelo Dian's work in organising student events at SST.

10. Items for discussion

Web hosting – discussed above with treasurer's report

SST paper submission process

Joshua Penney (JP) had emailed DL as the secretary of ASSTA to discuss SST paper processes. JC had raised the point in the email correspondence that SST proceedings papers are an opportunity for having a refereed published paper, and that for the proceedings to be have a maintain the status of quality publications an improved review process may be needed. JP spoke to this, stating that one issue is that reviewers put a

lot of time and effort into reviewing the four-page papers, but there is currently no mechanism that obligates the paper authors to act on the suggestions from the reviewers. This is despite the fact that we have an expectation that community members take on the suggestions. The other matter, described by JP as “the flipside”, is that while authors get detailed reviews, there is currently no way for them to respond (such as stating that they are working within a different framework, for example), and currently differences of opinion could look like ignoring reviewers. JP noted that there should be an additional layer of correspondence so that authors have some mechanism for communication about how they have dealt with suggestions. He also added that this is what Interspeech has been doing for the last few years after different interventions. He welcomed the discussion from members at the AGM as to how this could be dealt with for SST, noting that solutions could be as simple as having authors upload a revised document outline with dot points of how revisions were dealt with. OM raised that in 2024, borderline SST papers or papers where reviewers disagreed were further checked and discussed by the technical committee.

MT commented that four-page papers can be quite different from longer journal publications and this constrains authors, as well as the fact that there may be a lot of burden for reviewers on such short papers. Other members expressed that SST proceedings papers can still attract a lot of citations (especially in engineering and computer science), emphasising the seriousness of this issue. It was noted that rebuttals are easier to deal with when the committee is larger.

AGM audience comments are as follows:

HF suggested an option where authors could submit an abstract before the conference and have the four-page submission after the conference. DL and Chloé Diskin-Holdaway (CDF) noted that a similar process occurs for the ISAPh (International Association of Applied Phonetics) conference where there is a two-page paper submission, and then a revised four-page paper after the conference but with no additional reviewer checks. CDH noted that there are pros and cons with this approach, with authors also having additional work after the conference had concluded. CW observed that having no full page paper submission would be an issue for many people who receive funding for conference travel and attendance based on the acceptance of their full papers. MP expressed that it is important to have alignment with Interspeech where there is an opportunity for rebuttal with organisers and area chairs are doing quality checks. SST is an international conference with widely cited papers across many disciplines and alignment with Interspeech review process would be of benefit.

Gerry Docherty (GD) stated that SST would follow the Interspeech process at the next conference, as the events will be combined in 2026, and suggested revisiting this matter after that.

Corpora (see NSLD report)

11. Any other business

CW noted that in the non-SST year, it would be good to run the AGM online. She also expressed her enjoyment in seeing other members and discussing issues together in person. She noted that ASSTA has attempted to do webinars, but it is difficult to get people to do them. She mentioned that MT gave an initial webinar, followed by a forensics webinar in 2024 and agreed that it would be positive for the community to come together at the end of the year. There was agreement in the ASSTA AGM audience. DL noted that it should be easy to run the meeting online and get people's votes, and discussion points, that way. DL mentioned that this would be discussed with FC, and further correspondence would be sent out.

ASSTA AGM attendance – University College December 4, 2024

Financial attendees

Debbie Loakes, Brett Baker, Catalina Torres, Jesin James, Poorani Vijayakumar, Justine Hui, Shubo Li, Nan Xu Rattanasone, Catherine Watson, Sasha Calhoun, Marija Tabain, Michael Proctor, Hannah White, Tuende Szalay, Joshua Penney, Mark Antoniou, Chloé Diskin-Holdaway, Gerry Docherty, Olga Maxwell, Kirsty McDougall, David Grayden, Xiaowei Xia, Conor Clements, Yizhou Wang, Helen Fraser

Non-financial attendees

Daniel Pape

Mitch Browne