



The Royal Society of Victoria  
Founded 1854  
Promoting science and science education

Dear Member,

You may have already seen an article referring to the Royal Society of Victoria, published on the website of The Age, predated November 30 2014, and authored by John Elder. The article contains erroneous and misleading assertions in connection with the Society's management of the Lynette Young Bequest.

Members of the Society have been informed on a number of occasions over the past four years, through articles and notices in newsletters and annual reports and at meetings, about the Lynette Young Bequest and its history. Members have strongly endorsed all actions taken by Councils on this issue and other related matters over this period. From 2009 it was removed from the Society's audited financial statements at the recommendation of an external forensic accountant engaged by the Council of the day to investigate the Society's financial procedures.

Twice this week, the Society's lawyers have been instructed by the Executive to write to the Age seeking the immediate removal of the article on the grounds that it contains defamatory statements that are prejudicial to the Society's good name and its ability to raise funds. At the time of writing, it is uncertain whether these demands have been met in full, as versions of the article are appearing and disappearing from the website, and we are uncertain as to whether it will appear in the print version.

I should make specific reference to the last claim made in the article that the Ralph Howard bequest has been used to 'lay bitumen in the car park'. The facts here are that the bequest was invested until plans were drawn up to renovate the car park, in the light of frequent complaints about its condition from members and renters of the building. This has involved a heritage architect, a qualified arborist and approval by Heritage Victoria before work could start. The car park has now been paved (no bitumen), with new bollards and lighting installed. Most importantly, there are six spaces reserved for commercial parking, which when rented will provide the Society with ongoing income to support our science programmes.

Members can be assured that the financial affairs of the Society are being managed according to strict guidelines arising out of the external review of our procedures. The Society maintains compliance with the rules for Incorporated Societies in Victoria and has maintained communication with the relevant government officers and departments.

We regret that these matters have arisen yet again and are taking up more of our time and energy better spent on our scientific programmes.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Birch  
President

28 November 2014