



# 2018 Election

## American Society of Plant Biologists

**Election Procedures:** On the electronic ballot card, mark your choice of candidates for elected office.

### Corresponding Membership Award

#### Thomas J. Higgins

Thomas J. Higgins is retired but still heads an active research group at the Division of Plant Industry of the CSIRO in Canberra, where he has been working for 36 years – the last 8 as Deputy Chief. He has made important contributions in plant biology research, being the first to show alfa-amylase transcript induction by gibberellic acid, a report that was published in *Nature* in 1976. This finding guided Thomas's primary research interest, which is to understand the synthesis and regulation of storage proteins in legumes. He also discovered the effect of sulfur stress on protein synthesis in developing alfalfa seeds. Thomas made relevant technological contributions, including developing an efficient

transformation method for cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*), an important legume in Africa, and other legumes. Exceptionally, he followed a biotechnological development from its very beginning in a research lab all the way to field trials and the distribution to farmers, including dealing with difficulties with patent issues and biosafety authorities. This was the case for the generation of transgenic cowpea expressing Cry1Ab and/or Cry2A and VIP resistant to the cowpea pod borer. For these efforts he has been acknowledged with major honors. Thomas has also dedicated time to support science communication in public and political forums, in particular for decision makers. His selection to become a Corresponding Member of ASPB is appropriate and highly deserved.