

# FAHS Newsletter

GPO Box 1440  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone: (02) 6295 2837

Email: [fahs@jedav.net](mailto:fahs@jedav.net)  
Web: [www.history.org.au](http://www.history.org.au)

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Three months ago I closed my Melbourne suburban curtains to block out the miserable day. Outside, the temperature rose and rose to record levels, and I listened uneasily to reports of threatening fires in the Victorian bush. But I had no idea how bad it was. When I woke the following morning I was shocked to hear of perhaps thirty deaths and widespread destruction. Only over coming days did the full story become apparent.

On that day, now recorded as Black Saturday, 7 February 2009, the state of Victoria experienced its most extreme weather conditions and Melbourne had its highest recorded temperature – 46.4° C or 115.5° F. The resulting horrific bushfires tore across the state, taking more than 170 lives, injuring hundreds, destroying more than 2000 homes as whole townships were obliterated and displacing about 7000 people. It was Australia's worst natural disaster.

Two heroes who received some media attention were Mary and Reg Kenealy, the Secretary and President of the Marysville Historical Society, who attempted to save the Society's collection by taking it to their home in a tarpaulin-covered trailer. When the fire front arrived rapidly and unexpectedly, they were forced to leave the trailer behind. Mary and Reg were injured in an accident while escaping, but are thankfully well. The Society's premises and collection are gone. This was the most public example of the losses to our cultural heritage, but across the burned-out regions there were numerous historic farmsteads and outbuildings that were destroyed, besides numerous heritage buildings that housed pubs, businesses, public functions and private homes. And within those premises we have no idea of what richness of artworks, furniture, documents, tools, photographs, clothing and other objects were lost.

Of course, Victoria has not been alone in suffering from the challenges of our changing climate. There have been extensive floods in Queensland, and as I write this report the Queensland coast is again under attack, this time from Cyclone Hamish. Longer-term, we have also seen the suffering through much of the Murray-Darling Basin as declining rainfall and excessive water exploitation have dried up the rivers, broken farms and weakened town economies. All this further undermines the wellbeing and preservation of our old buildings and other heritage elements.

These matters have been very much to the fore of the FAHS. We have made representations on aspects of these matters to the Federal Minister (Hon. Peter Garrett) and his Department, and I am a member of a key heritage advisory committee.

The FAHS has also offered to help collect originals and/or copies of photographs and other heritage materials to pass on to those historical societies and communities that have lost their history. Please see the notice elsewhere in this newsletter.

Coming on top of the economic downturn, we face difficult times in the historical society movement. However, the Federation, the State and Territory societies and the local societies (numbering nearly 1000 and with nearly 100,000 members) make and will continue to make an invaluable contribution to preserving Australia's cultural heritage.

Don Garden  
President

## RECENT FEDERATION ACTIVITIES

### Presence on the federal Minister's Heritage Working Group

The FAHS President, Associate Professor Don Garden, has been appointed by the federal Minister for Environment, Heritage and The Arts to his Heritage Working Group. The Federation congratulates Don on his appointment.

### Merit Awards – Standing item

President Don Garden will travel to Perth to present Mrs Sally Anne Hasluck with her FAHS Merit Award at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society's general meeting on 20 May 2009. This award is in recognition of Mrs Hasluck's long-time and significant contribution to the historical society movement, particularly her work, both as a volunteer and as a professional consultant, in assisting societies and other collecting organisations to manage their museums more effectively. This also has been recognised by her appointment to the Western Australian Museum Board and to the Council of the National Museum of Australia.

### Submissions

Over the past few months the Federation has made the following submissions:

- to the federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts' review of the *Protection of Movable Heritage Act 1986* and Regulations;
- The Collection Council of Australia's consultation on the draft of the proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Significance: a guide*;
- The Collection Council of Australia's consultation on the draft *Standards and Guidelines: an E-directory (SAGE)*.

### Review of *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

Dr Ruth Kerr (FAHS Hon. Secretary and Advocacy Delegate, and Royal Historical Society of Queensland delegate) presented the Federation's views to the independent team reviewing the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 in Brisbane on 11 March 2009.

### Representation at a workshop on the proposed National History Curriculum

On 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 Mrs Esther Davies, FAHS Vice-President and Canberra and Districts Historical Society (CDHS) delegate, together with Ms Julia Ryan, a councillor of the CDHS and former consultant in History for the ACT Department of Education, attended a workshop on the subject of the proposed new National History Curriculum. This workshop was held at the National Museum of Australia and attended by museum educators from around Australia.

The workshop drafted a response to the *National History Curriculum Framing Paper*

Helen Henderson  
Immediate Past President.

## REPORTS FROM THE STATES AND TERRITORIES

### Note from the Editor.

While it was agreed that, for this edition of the newsletter, reports from constituent bodies would be limited to 200 words, I have, in the light of the February 7 bushfire tragedy, made an editorial decision to reprint the whole of the following report from Glenn Turnbull of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

### REPORT ON BUSHFIRE AFFECTED HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

For RHSV Council 17 March 2009

Over the past five weeks, I have been in frequent but careful contact with various members of historical societies in bushfire affected areas, particularly the societies at Marysville, Kinglake, St Andrews, Kangaroo Ground, Yarra Glen, Upper Yarra, Healesville, Kilmore and Yea. The collections of all these societies except for Marysville are safe.

Despite much frantic effort, most of the Marysville collection could not be rescued and it is unlikely that much will be salvaged from the ashes. It is possible that some items may be retrieved once the township of Marysville is opened next week. This will be accurately assessed by the Marysville Historical Society at that time. Some original photographic material, which was being catalogued at nearby Buxton, has survived. Marysville Historical Society is certainly very pleased with the offer of scanned photographic material on CD from the RHSV collection.

Remarkably, the small collection held at the Kinglake Neighbourhood House was not damaged. However, as this location is one of the few community buildings standing in Kinglake, it is being used by many different groups including the new ABC Kinglake Ranges radio station. As such, the location is chaotic and the collection is being neglected and marginalised. I have been invited to visit this collection in the coming weeks and will report back on progress. I will also investigate the willingness of that group to affiliate with RHSV.

Sadly, the Secretary of the Kangaroo Ground Historical Society lost her house in the fires, which included the society minutes. Tragically, the daughter of the Geelong Historical Society president died at St Andrews on 7 February and I have been supporting him as I work in Geelong twice a week. Societies lost members and some society members lost houses. It has been hard to get accurate details on this. I have invited all these societies to inform me of lost members and to write appropriate obituaries. These will be published in the Association of Eastern Historical Societies (AEHS) newsletter so their contribution will be remembered.

The role I have played is one of support and encouragement to the societies and its members during these difficult times. The role has produced quite unexpected results in varying ways. Within the first week of the bushfires, I called on my colleagues in the AEHS region to start sourcing Marysville and Kinglake history material. Since then, I have received much verbal and written support from unexpected areas. The Yass Historical Society has placed the AEHS newsletter on their web-site and other societies have offered free open days at their societies for members of fire-affected historical societies.

I have also received a great deal of good scanned material via email from all over the world including a local history from England on the Barton family (who managed a store at Marysville for generations). All this collected material will be forwarded to Marysville at the appropriate time. Unfortunately, I have not received any scanned material for Kinglake. I am prepared to continue in this liaison role with societies in the fire-affected area, if this is satisfactory with the RHSV council.

Glen Turnbull  
RHSV councillor



Mary Kenealy at the Marysville Historical Society site. Photo: *Joe Armao*

Photograph from the Melbourne AGE, 16 April, 2009

## **APPEAL FOR HISTORICAL MATERIALS TO ALL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AND THEIR MEMBERS**

**The Federation of Australian Historical Societies is joining with RHSV and AEHS in appealing for historical materials, including photographs and memorabilia relating to communities devastated by the February bushfires. Anyone with such materials can initially contact newsletter editor Esther Davies via e-mail [history@ejda.net](mailto:history@ejda.net) and arrangements will be made to either forward the materials to the appropriate people or to provide storage until the relevant societies have the facilities to house them.**

## **CANBERRA AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

On Tuesday 18 November April, a very large audience at the Society's November monthly meeting was addressed by eminent architect and author of the "*The Bush Capital*" Roger Pegrum, on the topic "*The Centenary of the Canberra district as the site of the National Capital*". Following his address Roger launched the Society's new Gateway website.. The Society's annual dinner was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December at the historic Brassey Hotel. A large gathering of enjoyed the meal and an entertaining address by long time Canberra resident and former Canberra Times cartoonist, Geoff Pryor. The first public meeting of 2009 was an address by John Sharpe on '*The History of Jazz in Canberra*'. On Thursday 12 March, the Society held its annual Canberra Day Oration at the National Library of Australia. The guest speaker for 2009 was the current Clerk of the Senate, Harry Evans who gave a most stimulating lecture. On the subject of finances there is good and bad news. Although the Society was not successful in its application for an ACT Heritage Grant, we have, however received a special grant of \$4000 from the Centenary Unit of the ACT Government for a future issue of the Society's Journal..

On April 4 CDHS conducted an Autumn Open Day fair at the Curtin shops and a successful workshop on the use of the Society's new website was held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April

Esther Davies

## **HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

The HSNT held a most successful Quiz Afternoon in February raising around \$1000 for the Society. Winners are given an annual membership (plus other things!) and this year we have 5 new people who have already shown interest in our activities. Our lecture series this year will be on genealogies and family history with Historian Pearl Ogden speaking on Wednesday 22 April on 'My Family, Your Family' and following this up with a workshop on 10 May 'So You Want to Self Publish'. Our weekend trip tin July will be to the Cobourg Peninsula with a follow up archaeological dig at Fort Wellington. We are also hoping to finally get to Bradshaw station in early August. As our contribution to Charles Darwin's

200th anniversary we are having a trip around Darwin Harbour with Emeritus Professor Alan Powell on Saturday morning, 26 September which will follow the conference being held at the Charles Darwin University.

More news when we firm things up!

Yvonne Forrest

### **ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

A group of Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) Councillors recently reviewed the Society's programs of events between 2006 and 2008, producing findings likely to be of interest to other societies. The subjects that attracted large audiences included those on topical events and anniversaries such as that of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, the history of Sydney, archaeology (both lectures and walks), house history/building features/restoration, and the two world wars. Also popular were well-known speakers like Paul Brunton. The day lecture group mainly comprised RAHS members. A core number of about 15 attended every event, with numbers increasing between 2006 and 2008. Topics associated with heritage and history brought in additional audiences, frequently doubling the numbers. Events organised jointly with the Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology (ASHET) attracted as many RAHS members as non-members. Railway engineering topics were particularly popular as were those with a nostalgic focus, for example on flying boats. Workshops did not generally have large attendances but they paid well. Researching land records was a subject that brought in the numbers, especially from local historians.

It was also noted that the WEA raised large sums of money with some historical topics.

David Carment

### **ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

With the completion of a three year Business Plan to satisfy the State Government's Department of Culture and the Arts and to meet with its new guidelines for funding not for profit organisations, the Society is pleased to acknowledge the Government's grant of \$41,000 per annum to help meet the needs of the Business Plan.

Last January the Society was granted \$11,000 for a *Short Term Artist in Residence program*. This is a new government initiative for the collections sector with a focus on cultural activities based on collections in order to engage more fully with their communities. Australian artist and Quiltmaker, Wendy Lugg commenced her program meeting members, researching the Museum and Library collections at the Society, responding to invitations to speak and talk with Affiliated Societies about her newly created artworks at Fremantle, Mundaring, Cockburn, Rockingham and Kalgoorlie and to members of Museums Australia WA. Wendy Lugg's website links to her newly created blogspot where she will report regularly on her progress as Artist in Residence with the RWAHS. Wendy's web address is <http://wahistoryresidency.blogspot.com>

As a result of a Lotterywest grant in 2007/08 for a Feasibility Study for a Community History House in WA, a *Community History House Working Party* will commence a series of meetings with the National Trust and Government Ministers to investigate properties which may be suitable for such accommodation.

Lennie McCall

### **TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

Recently 56 members of THRA enjoyed a two-day excursion to properties around Campbell Town, organised by member Mary Ramsay. This is the area of large and prosperous properties and members thoroughly enjoyed seeing such notable houses as Quorn Hall, Rosedale, Kenilworth and Riccarton. Usually the owners gave us a talk about the history of the property and we then spent time walking

around the gardens and grounds. The excursion included a tour of historic Campbell Town, and a dinner in the Town Hall, ably catered for by a local firm.

We also visited the site of Eliza Forlong's house. She and her sons imported Merino sheep to Van Diemen's Land and really set up the Merino industry. It was something of a pilgrimage to walk across parched paddocks to the site with its magnificent views, and imagine the house from the few remaining stones. Here lived one of the few women to make her mark on Australia's early history.

Given the present disastrous drought, we were pleased that our excursion, with food, accommodation, buses and incidentals, put at least \$9000 into the local economy.

Alison Alexander

## **ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND**

Late in 2008, the Society's activities for 2009 Queensland's sesquicentenary year, were placed on our website for members and the general public. Each will have an opening event. The Society's lunch-time and evening lecture program re-commenced on 11 February. On 19 March the Society opened its exhibition entitled 'Sesquicentenary of Queensland 1859-2009'. We are also holding a large exhibition on the Symbols of the Sesquicentenary of Queensland which is being curated by one of the Society's members, Dr Rod Fisher, at the Commissariat Store. The Governor, Penny Wensley, has accepted the Society's invitation to open it on 1 June 2009 as a part of our History Week celebrations

Although initiated by the Society, History Week is for the participation of all Queensland history groups and is being planned as a lead up to Queensland Day on 6 June. History Week will commence on 29 May with the Q150 Constitutional Conference 2009 at Parliament House, organised by the T.C. Beirne School of Law, The University of Queensland and the Supreme Court of Queensland Library and it will end on Saturday, 6 June with the Society's Queensland Day Dinner. The dinner will again see the presentation of the Society's prestigious John Douglas Kerr Medal of Distinction in historical research and writing. The Medal is presented each year by the Society in conjunction with the Professional Historians Association (Queensland). New signage has been prepared for Bourke and Wills' 'Dig Tree' for which the Society is the Trustee of the Reserve on Cooper's Creek. A grant was obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency for the purpose.

The Hon Editor and Assistant Editors are also working on publishing three years of conference papers with the support of the Publications Committee and Council. This includes peer review of many papers.

Denver Beanland and Ruth Kerr

## ANNUAL MEETING, SYDNEY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2008



L to R: Ms Yvonne Forrest (NT), Dr Ruth Kerr (QLD), Ms Lennie McCall (WA), Assoc Prof Don Garden (VIC, President), Prof Ian Jack (NSW), Dr Dianne Snowden (TAS)



L to R: Mr Manfred Cross (QLD), Mrs Esther Davies (ACT), Ms Joan Hunt (VIC), Dr Helen Henderson (WA, Immediate Past President), Mr Don Gibb (VIC)



## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT – 2007/08

It is with pleasure that I present my report on the activities and achievements of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies Inc. (FAHS) for the year 2007/08.

Apart from the Annual General Meeting for 2006/2007, which was held on Sunday 14 October 2007 at the headquarters of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, the Committee held four ordinary meetings, one immediately following the AGM on 14 October 2007 and three teleconferences (July 2007, February and May, 2008).

The Federation's *Report on the Outcomes of the Triennial Operational Plan for the years 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07* was ratified at the AGM. I am delighted that over the life of the Plan the FAHS addressed all the goals through implementing most of the planned strategies. Lack of personnel and financial resources prevented the completion of some of the strategies and all of the planned evaluation strategies with the exception of the one to investigate the value of the Newsletter to the target readership. Nevertheless, informal feedback to delegates in their respective States and Territories indicates a greater appreciation of the work of the FAHS by historical societies across the nation and recognition that it is an organisation that can provide them with the kind of support that will assist them in their work of promoting history and managing their valuable moveable and static heritage. The number of invitations to respond to government and historical society proposals and/or concerns increased markedly over the life of the plan as has also the level of participation in government-initiated and history community-initiated forums and discussions at the federal level.

At the AGM, delegates also adopted the Federation's *Triennial Operational Plan for the years 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10* which, subject to increased funding, makes provision for an expanded role for the organisation with regard to supporting and promoting the historical society movement.

The office bearers for 2007/2008 were President: Dr Helen Henderson (Royal Western Australian Historical Society); Senior Vice-President: Professor Ian Jack (Royal Australian Historical Society); Vice-President: Dr Bev Phelts (Historical Society of the Northern Territory); Immediate Past-President: Dr Ruth Kerr (Royal Historical Society of Queensland); Hon. Secretary: Ms Lennie McCall (Royal Western Australian Historical Society); Hon. Treasurer: Dr Lyn Reid (Dr Lyn Reid, a member of the Historical Society of Northern Territory);<sup>1</sup> Dr Ruth Kerr was Advocacy Delegate. The remaining members of the Committee were:

Ms Margaret Anderson and Ms Kate Walsh (History Trust of South Australia) – from February 2008 when the HTSA replaced the History Council of South Australia.

Ms Jan Barkley-Jack (Royal Australian Historical Society) – until 16 July 2007;

Ms Judy Becker (Canberra and District Historical Society) – from March 2008.

Ms Diana Chessell (History Council of South Australia) – until 27 August 2007;

Mr Manfred Cross (Royal Historical Society of Queensland) – from October 2007;

Mrs Esther Davies (Canberra and District Historical Society);

Ms Yvonne Forrest (Historical Society of the Northern Territory);

Associate Professor Donald Garden (Royal Historical Society of Victoria) - until October 2007);

Mr Don Gibb (Royal Historical Society of Victoria);

Ms Joan Hunt (Royal Historical Society of Victoria) - from December 2007;

Ms Jean Stewart (Royal Historical Society of Queensland) - until September 2007;

Dr Dianne Snowden (Tasmanian Historical Research Association) – from March 2008;

Mr Ian Terry (Tasmanian Historical Research Association) – until February 2008;

Ms Marilyn Truscott (Canberra and District Historical Society) – until March 2008);

Mr Alan Ventress (Royal Australian Historical Society) – from May 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> This is in accordance with Section 11(i) of the FAHS Constitution.

Following his resignation as a delegate, Professor Garden was invited to become the Federation's Advisor and Project Assistant. He agreed and was confirmed in that office.

Mr John Davies continued as Administrative Officer and in that role maintained an FAHS office presence in the ACT to comply with the ACT Incorporations Act.

### **Finance and administration**

Following the completion on 30 June 2007 of the 2004/2005 – 2006/2007 round of the Federation's triennial funding under the Australian Government's Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Program (GVEHO), an application was made for a GVEHO grant for triennial funding for 2007/2008 – 2009/2010. Due to a change in government policy, we received a grant for the year 2007/2008. Although it was disappointing that GVEHO triennial funding was discontinued, at least for 2007/08, and that our grant was reduced by six percent, I acknowledge with gratitude the confidence the Australian Government has shown in the Federation by providing this grant which enables us to continue to operate at a reduced level. We look forward to continued federal government financial support.

The Administrative Officer, Mr John Davies, continued to be engaged on a part-time basis for 6 hours a week and to maintain the Federation's office presence at his residence. It was hoped that we might be in a position to extend his hours but unfortunately we were unable to do this because of financial limitations.

Member constituent societies' annual subscriptions were increased by 20% during the year. While this will provide some additional funds to cover operational costs, ongoing federal government support is vital to enable us to continue to employ the Administrative Officer, to maintain an office presence in the ACT and to hold a face-to-face AGM and general meeting of delegates each year.

Once again efforts have been made to obtain additional funding by providing opportunities for interested individuals or companies to advertise their services/goods on our website and in our newsletter. Unfortunately, no advertisements were placed.

The minutes of meetings and other records of the Federation since its inception in 1977 have been accumulated and digitised by the Administration Officer. These records will assist in the preparation of the Federation's history, which is being co-authored by Dr Kerr, Dr Donald Garden and Dr Alison Alexander to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organisation. Arrangements have been made for hard copies of the records to be deposited at the National Library of Australia Archives.

The History Council of South Australia withdrew from the Federation in September 2007 because of the very limited personnel, financial and other resources available to the Council and the pressure of other commitments, particularly the early planning for the 175<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of South Australia's European settlement in 2011. The FAHS regretted that the HCSA found it necessary to come to this decision and acknowledges with thanks its support of the Federation and the contribution to its work by HCSA delegates. Fortunately, the History Trust of South Australia (HTSA) agreed to become a constituent member of the Federation to replace the HCSA..

### **Amendments to the Constitution**

At the February 2008 meeting of delegates, the Constitution was amended to allow for the replacement of the History Council of South Australia with the History Trust of South Australia (HTSA) as a constituent member organisation. Ms Margaret Anderson, Chief Executive Officer, and Ms Kate Walsh, Manager History Unit, HTSA are the Trust's delegates.

The Constitution was also changed to reduce the time for the distribution of notices of ordinary general meetings from six weeks to two weeks.

A number of errors in the registered Constitution were amended and accepted by the ACT Registrar-General's Office.

### **Fellowship Award**

A FAHS Fellowship was awarded to Dr Alison Alexander, Hobart, Tasmania. I presented this award at the general meeting of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association held in Hobart on 9 September 2008.

### **Merit Award**

No award for this honour was made this year.

### **Training and support for historical societies**

#### **1. Facilitating input from historical societies regarding history & heritage issues**

The strategy designed to facilitate the flow of information to the Federation regarding history and heritage issues of concern to our constituent members and their affiliated societies, which was implemented in the previous year, attracted a number of requests for information and advocacy. Issues addressed under this scheme related to public liability, volunteer and general insurance, historical societies' eligibility to receive tax deductible gifts, registration of heritage sites, the teaching of history in schools, and funding for moveable and static heritage. The position with regard to historical societies and tax deductible gifts has been clarified. Options for cheaper insurance have been identified but, due to some pending information, as yet no decision has been made regarding which scheme to promote to our constituents. On other issues related to history and heritage, the Federation has responded in some detail as to the action it is taking in these matters.

#### **2 Guides to support the work of historical societies**

***Publishing History: A Guide for Historical Societies:*** This book was published early in 2007 and distributed free-of-charge to historical societies across the nation. The publication has been favourably received and there has been a strong demand for copies (on sale for \$11.00 including GST) from individuals. The stock of this publication is now very low, however, it is now available on the internet via the Federation's website.

***Heritage Tourism in Australia: A Guide for Historical Societies:*** It is very pleasing to report that this online guide for historical societies to the use and development of local heritage in the promotion of tourism, and in the use of tourism to promote heritage has been completed and is now available via the FAHS website. There has been very positive feedback from some federal and state government agencies, including the New South Wales Heritage Office, who part funded the project, and from various historical societies. The author, Dr Dianne Snowden and the designer, Ms Julie Hawkins, and the Editorial Committee, Dr Garden and Dr Kerr, are to be congratulated for the innovative, informative, easy to read and attractive publication they have produced. The Federation's Administrative Officer, Mr John Davies, uploaded the guide onto the internet and facilitated access to the many websites mentioned in the work by checking all the links and amending those that were problematic. He is to be congratulated for the work he did in this regard. A promotional article prepared by Dr Garden has been widely circulated.

***Continuous Cultures and Ongoing Responsibilities – A Guide for Historical Societies in Engaging Indigenous Communities in the Care and Management of Indigenous Cultural Items Held by those Societies.***

This project is still in abeyance until Museums Australia develops its national strategy for implementing its *Continuous Cultures and Ongoing Responsibilities* guide.

### ***FAHS Heritage Handbook - A Guide for Historical Societies***

Efforts are being made to obtain funds to update this guide which was published in 2002.

### **3. My Connected Community**

The membership of the Federation-initiated online Australian Historical Societies Support Group has continued to grow over the past year. The Federation has continued to promote the service to historical societies across the country during 2006/2007, but ongoing promotion of what it has to offer is required to expand its usefulness to historical societies. This service to historical societies across the nation has been made possible by Vicnet's *My Connected Community (mc2)* project through the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's Project Partnership facility. It encourages local history groups and local history networks across the country to participate in online mc2 groups which provide additional communication opportunities among group members and also to promote local history. I wish to thank Ms Vicki Court, IT Collections Manager, Royal Historical Society of Victoria for the support she has given to members of the online group during the year.

#### **Raising the profile of the FAHS**

Individual delegates have promoted the FAHS in a variety of ways during the year. They addressed meetings of local societies and networked with members of government agencies and other organisations. Through her contacts on the National Cultural Heritage Federation, the Regional Cultural Alliance and her meetings with federal government politicians and bureaucrats, Dr Kerr has promoted the activities of the Federation. I addressed the State History Conference of affiliated societies of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society which was held in Mundaring in September 2007. I have also provided several articles on the activities of the Federation for inclusion in constituent members' newsletters.

The *FAHS Newsletter* Editor, Ms Esther Davies, has produced two issues of the *FAHS Newsletter* during 2006/2007 with assistance from the Administrative Officer, Mr Davies. Each issue was distributed to approximately 950 historical societies nationwide by post or email. The *Newsletter* was also sent to other State/Territory and national bodies with whom we have reciprocal arrangements. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, the August 2008 *FAHS Newsletter* will probably be the last hard copy issue. In future, the publication will be distributed via email and will continue to be available on the internet via the Federation's website. Efforts are currently being made to expand the email address list to include as many societies and other organisations as possible.

Twelve issues of the Federation's *E-bulletin* have been produced by Dr Kerr during the reporting year and distributed electronically to cultural groups across the nation. This is an important communication that is designed to promote the FAHS, to grow our professional networks and hopefully increase the interest of community historical society members, who have access to the Internet, in national and international history and heritage issues and developments.

#### **Advocacy**

The FAHS has continued to be actively involved in the work of the National Cultural Heritage Forum (NCHF) which the Federation considers to be a vital channel for the provision of advice and information to the federal Minister for Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and his department on heritage-related issues of concern to the community. Although the Regional Cultural Alliance does not yet have a formal governance structure, its aims are maintained and advanced through contact by email and teleconferences. Dr Kerr, our Advocacy Delegate, has been an ongoing participant in these activities.

During the past year, the Dr Kerr, and others have represented the Federation at a number of meetings. These include:

- a. History Summit Round Table discussion arranged by Museums Australia. The meeting was held at the State Library of Victoria on 2 July 2007 (Dr Kerr);

- b. National Cultural Heritage Forum meeting in Canberra on 9-10 August 2007. The Federation considered and submitted agenda items: focussing on a proposed Cultural Heritage Fund, history teaching, and training for volunteers (Dr Kerr);
- c. Marie Hird, Manager and two other officers of the Curriculum Branch of the federal Department of Education, Employment and Work Place Relations regarding the proposed national curriculum, 4 March 2008, Canberra (Mrs Esther Davies and Ms Julia Ryan);
- d. Collections Council of Australia Round Table meeting, Canberra on 21 May (Ms Judy Becker);
- e. Mr Andrew Palfreyman, Senior Heritage Advisor to the federal Minister for Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, on 11 June 2008 in Sydney regarding the importance of retaining the NCHF, and heritage and funding issues (Dr Garden and Dr Kerr);
- f. Unofficial meeting of the NCHF, 17 June 2008, Canberra (Dr Kerr and Mrs Davies).

The Federation has also made a number of submissions to politicians, federal, state and local government agencies regarding:

- Reinstatement of legislative protection for the Register of the National Estate;
- Proposed developments on the North Bank of the Brisbane River, Brisbane;
- Supporting the Institution of Engineers of Australia's submission to the review of the *Protection of Moveable Heritage Act 1986*;
- Seeking inclusion in the Prime Minister's 2020 Summit;
- Productivity Commission's final report on the conservation of Australia's heritage places 2005;
- Supporting the federal government's proposed program for Summer Schools for Teachers of Australian History;
- The draft of the proposed *Standards and Benchmarks for Museum Practice*.
- The proposed Heritage Care Program;
- Supporting the Collections Council of Australia's Regional Hubs Program;
- Supporting the federal government's proposed new national history curriculum for all students from kindergarten to year 12;
- Supporting the National Brains Trust Forum on Heritage submission to the Prime Minister relating to the omission of heritage from the agenda of the 2020 Summit and making certain recommendations concerning greater support for heritage by government.

Dr Kerr is the FAHS representative on the Australian Library and Information Association's Expert Group on Government Publications but since her appointment there have been no meetings.

I acknowledge with gratitude Ms Julia Ryan's contribution to FAHS advocacy relating to the teaching of history in schools. Ms Ryan is a member of the Canberra and District Historical Society Council and is a former SOSE (Studies of Society and the Environment) consultant in the ACT Education Department.

**In conclusion**, the Federation has achieved much over the past year including strengthening its role as an advocate and support for historical societies across the nation. The members of the Committee are to be congratulated on the level of their commitment to the historical society movement and to the Federation itself. I thank them all for the generous way they have given of their time and expertise to the work of the Federation and for all the support they have afforded me in this my final year as President. I am especially grateful to the members of the Executive and the Administrative Officer, Mr John Davies, who have assisted me so ably in ensuring the continued smooth-running of the organisation. Special mention must be made of the contribution of Dr Lyn Reid, Hon Treasurer for the last two years, and of Ms Lennie McCall, Hon. Secretary for the past five years as neither will be seeking re-election this year. Dr Reid and Ms McCall have efficiently performed the duties of their respective offices and I greatly value the support they have given me during their terms of office. Thanks too, to Mrs Esther Davies for editing the *Newsletter* and for her valuable contribution to submissions and meetings relating to the teaching of history in schools and to Dr Kerr for producing the *E-bulletin* and for her very considerable and important contribution to all the areas of advocacy in which the Federation was involved over the last twelve months.

Finally, I have enjoyed my two terms as President and wish the incoming incumbent and other newly elected office bearers all the best in their future endeavours to sustain the Federation and expand its influence within the political arena and the historical society movement.

Helen Henderson

20 August 2008

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

PG/253 18 April 2009

### **\$60 MILLION FOR HERITAGE PROJECTS ON WORLD HERITAGE DAY**

The Australian Government's investment of \$60 million for heritage projects will help support local jobs and improve heritage infrastructure across the country.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, said the funding under the government's \$650 million *Jobs Fund*, and will support high priority heritage projects while also generating jobs, particularly in regional areas.

"It's my great pleasure to celebrate World Heritage Day today with this announcement of additional funding to support Australia's heritage places, including additional funding for our World Heritage properties. "This funding program includes a number of separate components focused on protection of National Heritage-listed places, National Trust properties, community heritage projects, including locally significant places, and natural heritage projects. "The natural heritage component includes at least \$8.6 million for natural heritage places, particularly directed at supporting Australia's World Heritage sites. This is in addition to existing Commonwealth funding provided to ensure these places of outstanding universal value are protected. This significant investment in Australia's historic, Indigenous and natural heritage will provide economic stimulus by focusing on projects that have an immediate employment impact as well

as ongoing economic benefits. It will also provide much-needed support for community groups and organisations involved in heritage projects across Australia."

Mr Garrett said one of the key criteria for assessing projects for funding would be that they create jobs - both now and into the future, with projects required to provide ongoing social and economic benefits to the community, for example by boosting tourism, or by improving access to, and use of, a community heritage place. "In both the immediate and long-term, this will benefit urban, regional and rural communities, by enhancing and taking greater advantage of the social and economic value of our heritage places. "Local businesses will also benefit by providing not only the specialist technical skills but also the materials required to undertake these heritage works.

"The program will commence immediately, with \$6 million of the total \$60 million for heritage to be spent in the 2008/09 financial year, ensuring an immediate benefit to communities. Importantly, the program will include both public and targeted calls for proposals. This will ensure that nationally significant projects can commence immediately, while also providing local communities with access to funding to support locally significant heritage projects that are ready to commence and provide immediate local employment opportunities.

"This funding provides a unique opportunity to enhance our existing and irreplaceable heritage assets and help secure a stronger, more resilient economic, social and environmental future for our country," Mr Garrett said.

For details on the Jobs Fund visit [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)

For more information about Australia's heritage visit [www.heritage.gov.au](http://www.heritage.gov.au)

## TO THE 'END OF THE EARTH' FOR A SILK NEWSPAPER

This article first appeared in the March 2009 issue of *The Friends of Battye Library Newsletter* and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author

officials, settlers and Aboriginal people.

All project funding has now been utilized and the State Records Office acknowledges and warmly thanks FOBS for supporting increasing access to the State's Archives.

Gerard Foley

### To the 'End of the Earth' for a silk newspaper

Recently, as a result of a campaign by the National Library of Australia and State and Territory Libraries to locate Australia's missing newspapers, a rare silk edition of the Meekatharra Miner of 7 August 1909 was donated to the Battye Library (we are always on the lookout for newspapers to fill gaps in our collection, so please contact us if you find any issues). The production of a few issues of the first edition of a newspaper printed on silk or cotton (usually pink, blue or cream) was a common practice in Western Australia in the early years of the 20th century. They are a beautiful and enduring memento of a newspaper's birth and the Battye Library has about a dozen in its collection.

Meekatharra is a gold town and a centre for pastoral and mining interests in the East Murchison, some 764 kilometres north-east of Perth. With a population of about 2,000, it is the centre of a shire of c100,000 square kilometres (about the size of South Korea) of semi-desert where mining, sheep and cattle are the major activities. 'Meekatharra' is thought to mean 'place of little water' - given the town's position on the edge of the desert and its annual rainfall of less than 250 mm, an apt description.

First settlement of Meekatharra began in 1894, but it was not until gold was discovered in May 1896, that the town prospered. However, success was short-lived until a second gold discovery in 1899. In 1901 the Meekatharra State Battery began operation and the town was officially gazetted on 25 December 1903. From 1906-1908 Alfred Canning developed the Canning Stock Route of 54 wells from the East Kimberley to the Murchison. The railway came to Meekatharra in 1910 and the town became the railhead at the end of the route, ensuring its survival. Shipment of wool began in 1910 and it continued to serve local pastoral interests until it closed in 1978.

Today the gold mining activities of the past have left a rich legacy for the

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town, as the relics of yesteryear still dot the countryside, to the delight of the tourist. Many still go prospecting, often with success. The new Meeka Rangelands Discovery Trail provides an insight into this mining past along with the town's Indigenous heritage. Meekatharra also is the first town in Australia to be powered by solar energy and its 2181 metre runway (built by the Americans during the war) was Perth's alternative in case of emergency.

Meekatharra did achieve brief notoriety in October 1977 when (then) Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser visited the town on 7 October. While there, his plane developed engine trouble and he was stranded for a few hours until Lang Hancock offered him the use of his private jet to fly home. A few days later, at a luncheon, Tamie Fraser was heard to refer to Meekatharra as "the end of the earth." The people of Meekatharra took this in good fun and invited Mrs Fraser to their Rocktober Cup race meeting in October 1978. Mrs Fraser accepted and undertook a range of activities while there (including the presentation of the cup). Her graciousness and willingness to make amends for her remark won the hearts of the Meekatharra people.

Steve Howell  
(Senior Subject Specialist; Battye Library)



Mrs Tamie Fraser ca1977.  
(photo courtesy State Library of Victoria - Image Number: hp001040)



Example of a page from *The Camp Chronicle* 1915, a silk newspaper in the Battye Library's collection. (To view this and other treasures of the Battye Library see: <http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/treasures/index.htm>)

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