

**FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC
PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019**

Considered overall, this has been a difficult year for FAHS, though there have been positive aspects too. The principal achievement is probably the fact that we are still operating! Against all the odds, we have managed to keep the association afloat and to maintain the digital programs that keep our members in touch with each other. On the negative side, we have been unable to find a source of on-going funding and must face the fact that FAHS as we know it may not continue for more than a few months into the new financial year in 2020. We will be discussing how to face that prospect later in the meeting.

As you know, Don managed to negotiate access to funding in 2018 through a Protection of National Heritage Sites grant. This involved producing two thematic papers on heritage fortifications in Port Phillip Bay and Sydney Harbour by October of this year. It appeared to provide funding that would allow our usual functions to continue, but has in fact proved to be fraught with difficulty, largely due to unclear communication between two federal government departments. An application to the same grant program for a digital interpretation program, aimed effectively at providing funding for our operations in this financial year, was not successful.

We were saved in part by a new Commonwealth program that aims to increase the digital literacy of older Australians. Although this may seem to be of tangential relevance to FAHS, it has proved to be a useful vehicle for reaching out to some of our constituent bodies and to the wider historical society movement. It has also allowed us to continue employing Sophie and has contributed towards employing John. Outreach Officer Sophie Shilling will report further on that program later in the meeting. We were alerted to this program through our colleagues on the GLAM Peak committee, underlining the usefulness of participating in that network.

In an attempt to interest the political parties in funding historical societies, Don and I met with Ged Kearney, Labor Member for Cooper, before the election. She had expressed interest in forming a Parliamentary Friends of Historical Societies Group, and still has that interest. We drafted a proposal for a small grants program, with her support, and tried to have it adopted by both of the major parties before the election. Despite encouraging noises from Labor, there was no actual commitment, and of course the election result rendered that strategy null and void. There remains the question of the utility of a Parliamentary Friends Group. I have followed up with Ged Kearney, but keep missing her. In the final analysis, we may not have either the time or the resources to pursue such a group. They need time to develop policy, and the financial resources to fund a launch at Parliament House in Canberra. We are no longer in a position to do that.

Again on a positive note, it was wonderful to participate in the presentation of a Fellowship to Hon Simon Molesworth, AO. Don made the actual presentation, since he has known Simon for a very long time, and it was a very pleasant gathering at the RHSV.

I would like to thank all of you, my fellow Councillors, for your support and enthusiastic participation in the ongoing work of the Federation. My special thanks to Ruth as Secretary, to Nick as Treasurer, to Esther as Vice-President and to Don as Immediate Past President and Advocacy Officer. I will come to Ian in a moment.

I would also like to thank our employees – John Davies and Sophie Shilling. We are indeed fortunate to have two such dedicated and creative people working for us.

And now for the saddest note of all. As you know this year we lost a much-loved member of this Council in our former Vice-President, Ian Jack. He was a member of this body from 2005 and held various positions during that time. John advises me that he was Vice-President from 2005-7 and Senior Vice-President from 2007-10, and then again from 2016 until his death. More recently he convened the awards committee. We all valued him as a kind and committed councillor and a wise advocate. I never heard him make a negative comment about anything. We will miss him greatly.

Margaret Anderson
President