

May 2020

No. 49

Newsletter



FEDERATION of
AUSTRALIAN
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Disaster preparedness & recovery

Contents

Editor's Introduction.....	1
From the President.....	2
Blue Shield Australia's MayDay 2020.....	4
Mayday, Mayday Are you prepared?.....	5
AMaGA Victoria's Regional Digitisation Project.....	7
Local History Backup Project.	9
Going for Grants: Essential steps for success.....	11



In light of the bushfires and floods we've seen across the country over the past few months, we can see how important it is to be prepared for the worst.

Rather than reflecting on what has been lost, this issue is dedicated to ensuring we learn from mistakes and are prepared as best we can be to protect local history collections across the country.

This issue of the FAHS Newsletter is released on May Day, which is Blue Shield Australia's most important day of the year. It highlights the need for disaster management and recovery of culturally significant collections. This year for May Day, we are

launching the Local History Backup project. We want Australian historical societies to choose five to ten objects and digitise them, then store printed copies in a time capsule, or join the digital one we've created on eHive.

This project will shine a light on local history collections across the country, to show the valuable heritage that is at risk of fire and flood every summer.

To help you along the way, we've got some conservation tips and risk management planning advice, as well as digitisation projects you can learn from.

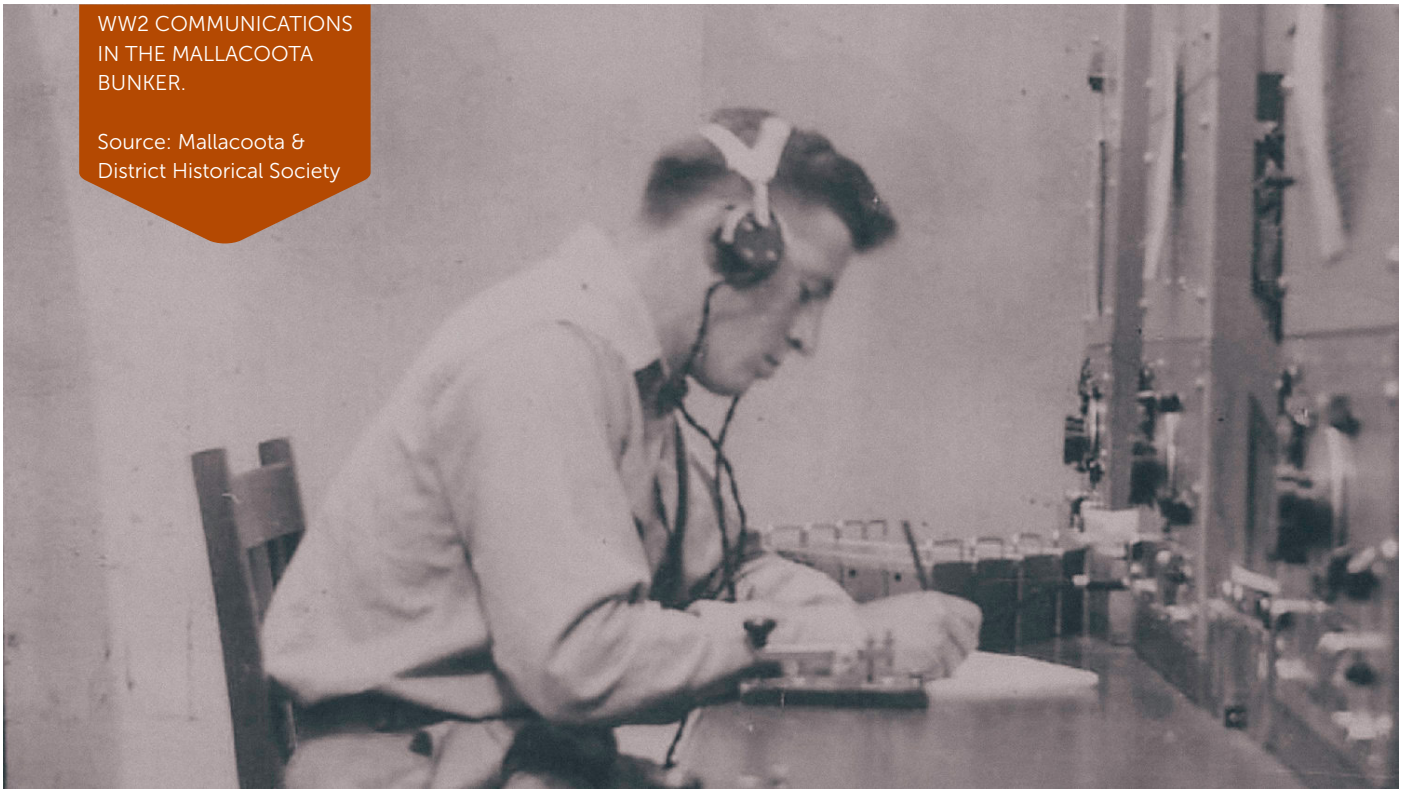
Perhaps most importantly, some first-hand advice for receiving grant funding from a society that has received thousands of dollars in grant funding. They share their secrets to a successful bid.

This is also the first issue of the Newsletter that is going out to our wonderful Supporters. Without your support we wouldn't be able to continue. From everyone at the FAHS, our deepest thanks go out to you for recognising the value in the work that we do.

Sophie Shilling, Online Outreach Officer

WW2 COMMUNICATIONS
IN THE MALLACOOTA
BUNKER.

Source: Mallacoota &
District Historical Society



From the President

Blue Shield Australia's annual May Day Campaign inevitably reminds me of our ongoing struggle to defend our cultural heritage from both neglect and danger. It is a sad reality that few politicians show much interest in our history and heritage unless it is to finance the commemoration of war or headline-grabbing events such as the current marking of Cook's first voyage to our continent.

FAHS has reflected on these matters in recent weeks when we have made three submissions to different forms of government inquiry. When these are released to the public, they will be made available on the FAHS website.

The first was the Review of the State Records Act 1998 in NSW. This was essentially about the proposal by the NSW government to, in

effect, merge two existing historical heritage bodies, the State Archives and Records Authority (SARA) and the Sydney Living Museums (SLM). Should these two bodies remain separate or would a single entity be more effective? There has already been a move towards amalgamation through the appointment of a single Executive Director and the merging of some administrative functions.

FAHS Council strongly opposed this merger because this is clearly being done to save money, and does not reflect any clear improvement of function. We argued that the two organisations have very different core purposes and roles and that this makes it very difficult for them to be managed as a single authority. The SLM is mainly concerned with preserving a number

of heritage buildings and mounting exhibitions within them, while SARA's role (like any government archive) is to collect, preserve and make available NSW government records, which is crucial for researchers. In some respects their purposes and the skills of staff are so different that they are potentially incompatible in the one organisation.

The second submission was to the Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. When the Act and the accompanying heritage regime were introduced about twenty years ago, FAHS expressed strong reservations. It represented a winding back of Commonwealth involvement in heritage, with most responsibility abdicated/delegated to the states and local government. As we feared, their adoption and



ZIG ZAG RAILWAY, c. 1870. THIS RAILWAY WAS DAMAGED IN THE RECENT BUSHFIRES.

Source: Dixon Library, SLNSW

exercise of responsibilities, has at best been uncoordinated, uneven and half-hearted.

At the Commonwealth level, since the EPBC Act was introduced there has been a steady decrease in the resourcing and recognition of Heritage by the Commonwealth government, particularly Historic Heritage. This downgrading has included the disappearance of the title Heritage from the name of the Department, and an ever-shrinking, downsizing and under-resourcing of the administrative unit responsible for Historic Heritage.

The marginalisation of Historic Heritage is also epitomised by the fact that the Commonwealth no longer offers financial support for community heritage

organisations as all the previous grant programmes have been abolished.

Thirdly, FAHS addressed the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (the Bushfire RC). We pointed out that historical societies were very fortunate to emerge relatively unscathed from the recent bushfires, although there have been many cases in the past when fires, floods, storms, etc, have damaged or destroyed collections and buildings. Last summer only one, at Mallacoota in Victoria, lost its building and collection. However, there were many heritage structures (buildings, bridges, railways) destroyed or damaged.

The FAHS submission was principally concerned with

ensuring the best possible future security for collections as the dangers from climate change and natural disasters escalate. We argued that it is essential that small community groups are given support to protect their collections and that this should be done by: greater assistance to digitise collections; support to ensure collection buildings are maintained and protected; the provision in each region of a place of secure storage where community groups might lodge the hard copies of their collection records, and assistance with transport when disasters threaten. We also submitted that Blue Shield Australia needs greater recognition and financial support.

Don Garden, FAHS President

Blue Shield Australia's May Day 2020

Blue Shield is a network of committees of dedicated individuals across the world that is:

"Committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster."

"Committed to the name Blue Shield, which comes from the UNESCO 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which specifies a blue shield as the symbol for marking protected cultural property."

Blue Shield is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by disasters of all types. Blue Shield International and its affiliated national committees work together as the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross internationally.

Blue Shield Australia (BSA) is one of the national committees of the international Blue Shield, and comprises representatives from the following Australian peak industry organisations:

- International Council on Archives, represented in Australia by the Australian Society of Archivists
- International Council of Museums, represented in Australia by ICOM Australia
- International Council on Monuments and Sites, represented in Australia by Australia ICOMOS
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, represented in Australia by the Australian Library and Information Association

These four organisations work together to prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergency situations in case of armed conflict or natural disasters that could affect Australia's cultural heritage.

Other Blue Shield Australia member organisations are:

- The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage
- Australian Museums and Galleries Association
- Federation of Australian History Societies
- Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives

Protecting our heritage is a fundamental responsibility for historical societies. May Day is a time when all galleries, libraries, archives, museums, heritage places, historical societies and local history groups can do something to make a difference when and if an emergency occurs.

Established by the Society of American Archivists, 1 May every year is a day when cultural heritage professionals and volunteers can take time to do simple tasks to prepare for disaster response. Activities can include reviewing or creating disaster response plans and policies, updating emergency contact lists, creating an inventory of emergency supplies and identifying high value items in the collection. If able to attend onsite, organisations can also survey buildings and collections for risks and conduct disaster drills.

Blue Shield Australia supports and promotes May Day events each year. Planning for the protection of collections fits nicely with Blue Shield's goal to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by armed conflict and natural disasters. May Day events can be found on the Blue Shield Australia website here <http://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/mayday/>

The Blue Shield Australia website also has a number of useful disaster recovery resources developed by a range of Australian cultural institutions. The resources support salvage and recovery of fire-damaged collections and flood or water damaged collections.

<http://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/resources/>

Blue Shield Australia



Collection emergency planning has four stages. These are prevention, preparation, response

Collection emergency planning has four stages. These are prevention, preparation, response and recovery.

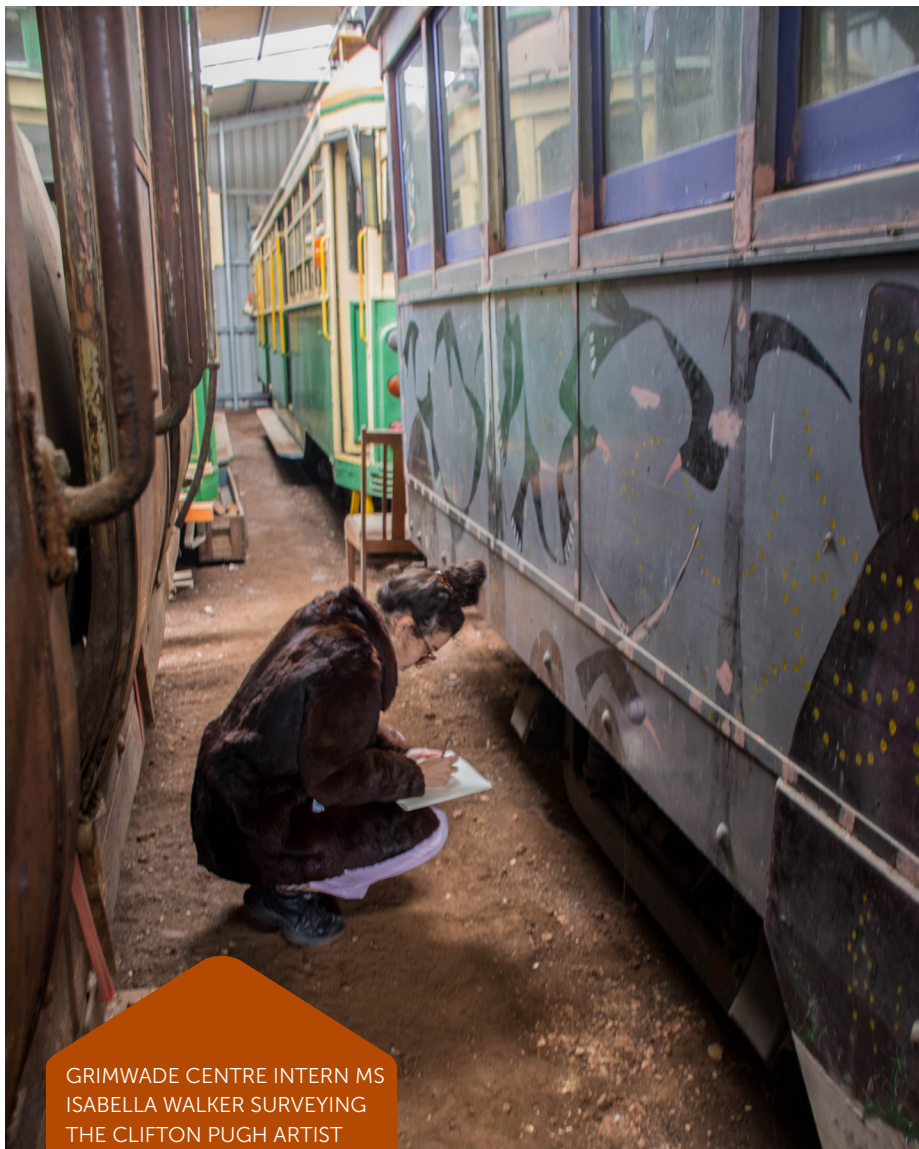
One of the first steps to take in prevention would be to assess the building, collection and surrounding environment against these risks, considering the likelihood and impact of incidents so that preventive measures can be enacted. Preventive measures can include building maintenance, good housekeeping, quarantine and handling protocols, improving storage and security, as well as regular checks of the collection during periods of bad weather or building works. In addition, risks

**ction
gency
has four
These
vention,
ration,
se and
very.**

**PARTIAL CONTENTS
OF A COLLECTION
EMERGENCY KIT.**

Source: Noni Zachri





GRIMWADE CENTRE INTERN MS
ISABELLA WALKER SURVEYING
THE CLIFTON PUGH ARTIST
TRAM AT BALLARAT TRAM
MUSEUM, 2019.

Source: Noni Zachri

should be regularly reviewed in light of new incidents, changes to the management or location of the collection, and scheduled maintenance works.

The preparation phase then involves actions to prepare for incidents that are still likely to occur, based on the assessments conducted. These are developing the written collection emergency plan, collecting supplies, forming an emergency management team and implementation of training and induction programs. The basic elements of the plan are the same regardless of the organisation. These include site plans, communications lists

and strategies, response plans for different incidents, salvage guides, location and lists of emergency supplies and other policies and procedures such as those relating to occupational health and safety and security. There are many resources available, such as *Be Prepared*, which can be used to help prepare these documents. Avoid copying information from other plans as the content needs to be relevant to the location, collection and function of the organisation. Regular reviews are also crucial. Plans that are out of date or those containing irrelevant information will not be as effective and result in delays to response and recovery times and ultimately greater losses to the collection.

Plans cannot function in a vacuum; it is important to get the support of senior stakeholders during development, linking the plan to broader organisation or government programs and to communicate the contents to all involved. Preparedness should also be built into regular activities for the organisation, such as monthly meetings to discuss collection issues and regular incident reporting, regardless of the severity of the event.

One day, an organisation may experience an emergency that hadn't been planned for. However, even in these types of events, elements of the collection emergency plan will still be relevant such as the communications strategy. The most important thing is to keep calm, ensure that people are safe, investigate the cause of the incident and stop the spread if possible, to minimise loss to the collection. Remember that you can only do your best with the information at hand and to feed experiences from response and recovery back into the prevention and preparation phase.

Noni Zachri, Paper & Photographs Conservator, Grimwade Conservation Services, University of Melbourne.

For more information on how to write a disaster plan for your organisation, you can refer online to the free publication *Be Prepared: Guidelines for small museums for writing a disaster preparedness plan* available through the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials' website: <https://aiccm.org.au/disaster/disaster-planning>

AMaGA Victoria's Regional Digitisation Project

The Regional Digitisation Project is a new initiative funded by Creative Victoria that is being rolled out by the Victorian Branch of AMaGA (Australian Museums and Galleries Association) over an initial period of 12 months.



The Regional Digitisation Project is delivering training across small to medium-sized regional museums and community collecting organisations through the provision of workshops, intensive training and support that focusses on digitisation best practice and follows the popular motto: 'Do it once and do it well'.

In 2019, AMaGA Victoria sought expressions of interest from their regional member network to take part in this exciting pilot project. AMaGA received over 50 submissions from the Northern, Western and Eastern regions, with a final six organisations from each region chosen to take part.

The aim of the project is fundamentally about preservation and access. Now more than ever the importance of digitisation as a preservation method is being brought to the fore, highlighted just a few months ago by Australia's catastrophic bushfires. When Museums and collecting organisations are impacted by fire and historic objects are damaged or destroyed, the digitised image of an item preserves a

visual memory of their culturally significant items.

Now more than ever the importance of digitisation as a preservation method is being brought to the fore, highlighted just a few months ago by Australia's catastrophic bushfires.

Whilst this project sets about up-skilling organisations with digitisation techniques in photography and scanning, digitisation is also a very important component of best practice collections management. A significant part of the project is to support each organisation to upload, catalogue and publish their collection of lovely new images to an online collection management system, Victorian Collections. The Victorian Collections platform archives the organisation's digital images and catalogue data, and provides public access to their collection. These outcomes underpin the project's success.

The project's success will also be attributed to the collaborative

partnerships with our three host organisations. Each Digitisation Officer has been partnered with a host organisation in their respective regions - The Burke Museum, Beechworth; The Mechanics' Institute, Ballarat; and Federation University Gippsland Campus, Churchill. During the 12 month program, the Digitisation Officers will be based at the host site where they'll undergo workshop planning and provide digitisation support for the regions. The Digitisation Officers will also offer additional training opportunities at the host site that will be accessible to all museums and collecting organisation in the regions. This partnership will provide vital on-site and collegial support for our Digitisation Officers, and will also promote the importance of sharing resources and skills within our sector – all wonderful benefits for those involved!

Members of Victoria's community collecting organisations are certainly excited about this project as the benefits are two-fold: improved preservation and increased public access. By digitising their collections, these



HIGH QUALITY
PHOTOGRAPHS
SHOW ALL FEATURES
OF AN OBJECT.
THIS DRASTICALLY
REDUCES THE NEED
FOR PHYSICAL
HANDLING.

Source: Geraldine Brault



organisations are preserving their objects through high quality photographs that show all features of an item. This allows the collection's custodians to observe the condition of an item at a given point in time, which drastically reduces the need for physical handling and, thus, exposure to harmful environmental risks (i.e. light, air pollution, physical force).

Members of Victoria's community collecting organisations are certainly excited about this project as the benefits are two-fold: improved preservation and increased public access.

In terms of public access, when published on the Victorian Collections website the discoverability of the collections are increased, adding significant value in terms of their research potential. We all know how satisfying it is to be able to see a beautiful image of an item we are reading about, and thanks to the Regional Digitisation Project you'll be seeing a lot more of Victoria's material culture in the near future.

Erin Davis-Hartwig
Regional Digitisation Project
Officer (North East Victoria),
AMaGA Victoria

If you would like to know more about digitisation, jump over to new Victorian Collections Helpdesk! There is plenty of information to support your organisation if you're starting from scratch or honing your digitisation skills.
<https://desk.zoho.com/portal/victoriancollectionshelp/kb/articles/planning-your-digitisation-project>

Local History Backup



Long before summer, and the devastating bushfires across Australia, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies began planning an initiative to highlight and preserve Australia's local history collections that are threatened every summer by natural disasters, including fires and floods.

Because no part of Australia is safe from natural disaster, this project is open to all historical societies in Australia - not just societies in regional or rural areas.

The mission of this project was to create an easy way to preserve collections. Whether your society chooses the physical or digital time capsule, digitisation to create copies will be required.

Digitisation creates an accurate copy of a collection object when

carried out correctly. when photographing or scanning an object, it is important to make a true copy of the object. If photographing the object, choose an angle that demonstrates the physical



features without distorting, or covering up unsightly features, such as a scuff mark, for example. If scanning, be sure to scan blank verso pages, covers, and spines of books. This way, if anything should

happen to the original, an accurate copy is retained. The digitised copy can also act as an access copy, which will save the original from damage by physical handling.

The other important benefit of this project is the exposure that Australia's local history collections will receive. The online portal will gather the collections in one place, demonstrating the variety and depth of historical society collections across the country. Objects from the collections will be featured on the FAHS social media channels, publicising historical societies and the important work that we do.

Societies have the option of creating a physical time capsule, or joining the digital time capsule.

For the physical time capsule, a vessel will be required. Blue Shield has provided a subsidy



of \$75 for the purchase of a time capsule. Choose five to ten objects from your collection that tell the story of your area, and print good quality copies of the digitised images on archival paper, as well as descriptions of the objects. Seal your time capsule and store it offsite. Remember to take photos of the process and share them on social media, in your newsletter, and send them to us to share too.

To join the digital time capsule, join the Local History Backup community in eHive and start uploading. For step-by-step instructions for signing up to eHive, joining the community, and cataloguing objects, go to www.history.org.au/local-history-backup.

[Above] A polypropylene container that is airtight and water, dust and UV-resistant is best for a physical time capsule.

[Below] Lightboxes are an inexpensive way to ensure well-lit, good quality photographs. Smartphone cameras should be stabilised against a piece of furniture or on a tabletop tripod to minimise shake (which would make the photograph blurred).

Source: Sophie Shilling

The FAHS encourages all historical societies to digitise more of their collections and join the Local History Backup project for Blue Shield's May Day this year.

If you have any questions, contact our Online Outreach Officer, at outreachofficer@history.org.au.



Going for Grants: Essential steps for success



Yes, you too can have your photo taken with a large cheque.

The Bacchus Marsh and District Historical Society Inc. has been quite successful in receiving grants. The financial support has allowed us to meet our objectives in the collection, preservation and sharing of our local history.

Over the past few years, we have received an investment of:

- \$8,200 (2 grants) from the Bacchus Marsh Community Bank Branch for the renewal of IT equipment.
- \$12,973 from the Public Record Office Victoria - Local History Grants Program for the digitization of local paper (The Express 1919-1945) onto TROVE
- \$3,500 from Great War Centenary Committee fund for our WW1 book
- \$5,000 from our Trust for our WW1 book

There is a plethora of online tools and books on how to write a successful grant application and

it is always good to arm yourself with as much knowledge as possible before committing pen to paper.

That said - here are a few ideas you may wish to consider when chasing that elusive grant for your society.

1 Have a clear project plan

In reviewing our society's various successful grants over time, each application was underpinned by a detailed project plan and vision that was easily explainable to the members. Key members had taken the time to clearly define the objective(s) and drafted a plan on how that would be achieved to a projected timeline. Sounds like project management 101 jargon, but really, it's basic and we're doing this all the time in our societies – whether it's planning an activity, writing a publication, meeting or researching a topic. We're planning all the time.

In summary:

- be clear on what you want to achieve and how you're are going to get there
- it is easier to put a costing to measurable outcomes
- it is easier to promote and explain to members and outsiders

Make sure that your members share the vision, because if you can't explain it to your members, how are you going to explain it to a prospective sponsor or grantor.

2 Consider establishing a Grants Working Group

We are not all blessed with the superhuman member who is a sole powerhouse when it comes to churning out grant applications.

It's like the old saying goes – many hands make light work. The task of drafting up an application for the first time can be intimidating, especially if you have limited experience in this area. It can be made a lot easier if we share the workload – the writing, the review and the project schedule. We all have skills and experience and it's good to establish a mix of talent that complements each other.

Investigating eligible grants can be an onerous task at the best of times and this is even before a single word has been written in an application. A working group has many pairs of eyes and has a better chance of discovering the ideal grant which best aligns with your club and best suits your specific project. Share the workload and utilise the diversity in knowledge and skills.



[Left] ARRIVAL OF NEW IT EQUIPMENT IN THE ARCHIVE, MARCH 2020, AND [right] SOCIETY SECRETARY BARB MCMILLAN GETS EXCITED ABOUT A NEW PHOTOCOPIER/PRINTER.

Source: BM&DHS

3 Start small - finish big

The general principle is – the bigger the grant – the more conditions and the more detailed the application. You can almost guarantee that grants which involve substantial sums of money will also require significant documentation, legal funding agreements and possibly involve a complex audit process to demonstrate expenditure.

There are multiple layers of grants and we recommend that you initially start local if possible. Investigate what your Shire/ Council or local businesses have for community groups. As mentioned, our Society has been quite successful in receiving grants from our local Bacchus Marsh Community Bank Branch.

Our grant for digitising the Express papers on TROVE from 1919 to 1945 was from the PROV.

Always look local first - community bank/Shire/Council etc – then look at state - nation – international.

4 Know the Grantor and the conditions/ criteria of the grant

I always remember the story of the student who received nought for an examination question in which they had spent a great deal of time and provided an extremely long and detailed answer. On asking the examiner why the poor mark – the response was simple – they didn't answer the question.

I hate saying it but drafting a grant application is like answering an examination question. You must meet the criteria of the grant and if you can't – maybe you need to smile and move on. I know our grants working group was continually looking at the criteria of the grant to see if our Society was eligible. The devil is certainly in the detail.

Make a point of contacting the Grantor to discuss the grant and eligibility criteria.

Another point is to consider the political position of the grantor. If it is a local business or Shire/ Council – then they are more

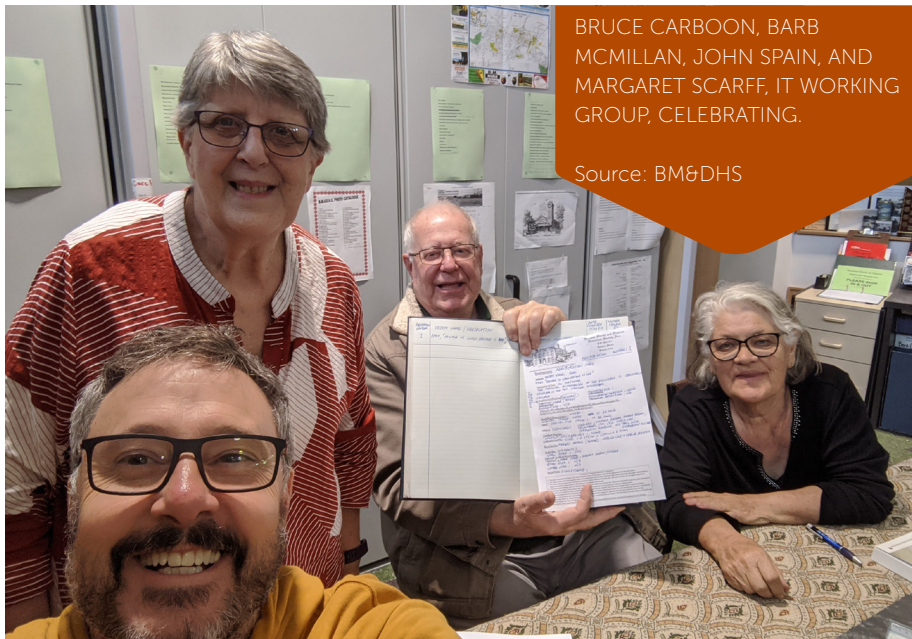
than likely to be focused on projects that would benefit the local community. For example - our successful Public Records Office of Victoria grant application was pitched as being of benefit to the state, national and international.

5 Be clear with your budget

Once again, it sounds a little repetitive, but it is essential that you have a clear understanding of all the income and expenditure associated with the successful delivery of your project. It's good to get two or more quotes for goods and services so that there are no surprises and don't forget to allow for GST.

6 Be prepared to contribute

Many grants have criteria that may require the recipient to



BRUCE CARBOON, BARB MCMILLAN, JOHN SPAIN, AND MARGARET SCARFF, IT WORKING GROUP, CELEBRATING.

Source: BM&DHS



It might sound like a 'no-brainer' but make sure you celebrate when you are successful. As volunteers it's important to acknowledge receiving a grant and proceeding with the delivery of the planned project outcome. It's also very important to ensure that your members share in this success as well - ownership needs to be universal.

also contribute financially to the project. For example – our local Shire/Council normally requires a dollar for dollar match. This is fair, but maybe a little of a challenge if your club has limited funds. Remember in many cases – the cost (in kind) of volunteer hours working on the project can and should be included. These can add up to a sizable contribution by your organisation to the project.

If your Society is not willing to spend some money on your project to make it happen, then how can you seriously expect an external grantor to contribute. If your Society is willing to invest in its project – it says volumes and flags to potential grantors that the outcome is important.

Our Society has proudly contributed financially to all projects that have received external funding.

effective in winning some grant funding.

Try to learn from the process and experience, accept that maybe your application needed more work if unsuccessful. It's highly likely that the competition was tough. Talk to the Grantor, seek feedback if possible, on your application, attend workshops on application writing and talk to other Societies who have been successful.

It's all about learning and improving so that next time you are successful.

STEVE MCGHIE MP, KATRINA LYLE, BRUCE CARBOON AND BARB MCMILLAN, CELEBRATING THE PROV GRANT.

Source: BM&DHS

Make sure you promote and publicly express gratitude to the grantor. Promote the project and the outcome via social media, local media newspapers/radio and your website if you have one. Most grantors appreciate the publicity for their philanthropic activities, and in most cases, they will certainly be promoting your Society from their end.

Finally, good luck with those grant applications. We hope we have inspired you to have a go. It would be great to read about your successes, so that we can learn from you. Just remember to get the photo with the smiling faces behind the BIG cheque!

Bruce Carboon
Bacchus Marsh and District Historical Society Inc.

7 Learn from each application

Regardless of the outcome it is important that you learn from each grant application. Don't fall into the blame game or simply give up if your effort isn't

