

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, 2014 - 2015

The previous year has been a mixed one for FAHS. In general, the organisation has been travelling smoothly and has continued to serve its purposes in advocating at federal level, facilitating the sharing of experiences and expertise across the community history and heritage movement, and providing support and assistance to societies.

However, our plans for expanding FAHS activities had to be suspended because of delays in receipt of our promised larger grant. It finally arrived in early July and we were able to move quickly to advertise for our Online Outreach Officer, and then to appoint Dr Jodie Boyd. I welcome her to FAHS and look forward to the development of her work, including the revival of the *Newsletter*. The grant has also enabled a more generous level of payment to EO John Davies and will facilitate more training manuals and support for other activities. It will continue for two more years.

At federal government level, matters move slowly. The Williams/Chaplains case put an end to small community heritage grants to historical societies, and so far neither side of politics has shown interest in rectifying the situation legislatively. Minister Hunt, however, has proposed a National Heritage and Arts Lottery as a way of raising and injecting money into the sectors. FAHS has supported the proposal and I understand it has had wide support within the federal government, except for one or two Ministers who have raised objections and caused its delay. I am more hopeful of progress following the changes in the Ministry.

I have also been led to understand that the delay with the launch of the Australian Heritage Strategy might be related to the same issue, as the Lottery is a key part of the AHS.

The political turmoil during this year is probably responsible for the failure formally to launch the Parliamentary Friends of History & Heritage – a FAHS initiative. I hope that once the dust settles and parliament next meets the PFHH will get moving.

During the year I have visited Darwin, Brisbane, Perth and ACT where I met with FAHS delegates and local society members. I am hoping in the coming year to visit other states – please let me know if there is a suitable opportunity.

My thanks to all the delegates and members of the Council for their time and efforts over the past year. Specifically, I wish to acknowledge Ruth Kerr, Helen Henderson, Esther Davies, Judith Smart, Nick Drew, Ian Jack and Bob Nicholson who as office bearers and/or willing volunteers have made extra contributions when called upon.

I wish to express my particular appreciation to John Davies, the Executive Officer, for his very conscientious work. He has often put in longer hours than he is paid for and plays a central role in most aspects of our work.

Associate Professor Don Garden
President
17 October 2015