

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC.

Annual Report of the President

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 2005/2006.

Apart from the Annual General Meeting for 2005/2006, which was held on Sunday 30 October 2005 at 102 Nelson Road, Mt Nelson on 12 September 2004, Mt Nelson, Hobart, Tasmania, the Committee held three ordinary meetings, one immediately following the AGM and three teleconferences (August, 2005 February and June, 2006). Once again the business agenda of each of these meetings was formidable but, as a result, considerable advances have been made in addressing and progressing the objectives of the Federation's *Triennial Operational Plan for the years 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07*. In between meetings the Committee conducted much business via email.

The position of Vice-President fell vacant when Mr David Lewis, Royal Australian Historical Society, ceased to be a delegate. The position of Senior Vice-President also fell vacant when, Dr Alison Alexander, resigned as an office-bearer. Mr Nigel Ridgway, History Council of South Australia and Professor Ian Jack, Royal Australian Historical Society, were elected at the AGM as Senior Vice-President and Vice-President respectively.

I wish to thank both the outgoing Vice-Presidents for all their support and input throughout their terms of office.

Finance and administration

With the resignation of Mr Gerard Hogan as Administrative Officer at the last AGM, Ms Kellie Bennett was appointed to the position and commenced on 1 November 2005. Fortunately, Mr Hogan agreed to maintain the Federation's presence in Canberra and acted as our Public Officer. Ms Bennett resigned in May 2005 for personal reasons but kindly agreed to assist with the handover to the new appointee and the preparation of the July Newsletter. At Mr Hogan's suggestion the positions of Administrative Officer and Public Officer were recombined and the Committee accepted Mr Hogan's resignation. He, too, agreed to assist with the handover to Mr John Davies who was appointed to the recombined position and took up the position on 1 June 2006.

The Federation has received a satisfactory report on its 2005/2006 accounts from its auditors, Pender Holdings Pty Ltd.

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. So far there have been no responses to these advertisements.

Fellowship Awards

A FAHS Fellowship was awarded to Dr Lorna McDonald of Rockhampton, Queensland. I presented Dr McDonald's award at an event at the Royal Historical Society of Queensland's headquarters on 3 March 2006 following a citation prepared and read by Dr Ruth Kerr. At the same meeting I also presented the late John Kerr's Fellowship award to Dr Kerr. Mr Kerr was awarded this honour in 2003 but the presentation was held over until end of Dr Kerr's term as President. Unfortunately, Mr Kerr died before the presentation could be made to him personally.

I wish to thank the Royal Historical Society of Queensland for its generosity in arranging the event at which the presentations were made.

Merit Award

No nominations for this award were received.

Raising the profile of the FAHS

During the year individual delegates promoted the FAHS in a variety of ways. They addressed meetings of local societies and networked with members of government agencies and other organisations. I have had meetings with the Dr Patricia Sabine, President, and Ms Bernice Murphy, CEO, Museums Australia, Ms Marie Wood, National Conservation Manager and Marie Treadwell, Research Officer, Australian Council of National Trusts, Ms Perry McIntrye, the President, History Council of New South Wales, Professor Adrian Jones, President, History Council of Victoria, and Associate Professor Jenny Gregory, the President, History Council of Western Australia. At each of these meeting I outlined the role of the Federation and we agreed to support each others' endeavours in areas of mutual interest and within the limits of our resources.

FAHS Newsletter Editor, Ms Esther Davies, has produced three issues of the *FAHS Newsletter* during 2005/2006 with assistance from the Administrative Officer, Ms Bennett. 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.

The periodical inclusion of brief notes on FAHS activities in member organisations' newsletters continued this year. This was done with the object of bolstering the interest of a wider audience of historical society members in the Federation than can be achieved through the distribution of the *FAHS Newsletter*.

Eight issues of the Federation's *E-bulletin* have been produced by Dr Kerr during the reporting year and distributed electronically to other cultural groups. This is an important communication that is designed 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.

The Federation's National Impact Strategy, drafted by Mr Nigel Ridgway (SA) with input from Mr David Lewis (NSW), continued to be implemented. Actions taken during the year included the wide distribution of a new FAHS information brochure, and the finalisation and distribution to delegates of the Powerpoint presentation which are being used as opportunities arise to promote the Federation at meetings of other organisations. The Committee also agreed upon a Vision Statement which is currently being publicised in the brochure and Powerpoint presentation.

Advocacy

1. Advocacy delegate:

Normally the President represents the Federation on national forums such as the NCHF. However, because I live in Western Australia and would not be in a position to attend all the meetings I requested, with the Committee's agreement, Dr Kerr to deputise for me. During the year the Committee agreed that the position of Advocacy delegate would be an elected office but that the incumbent would only attend meetings in the event of the President being unable to do so.

2. Regional Cultural Alliance:

The Federation has continued to be represented on the Regional Cultural Alliance by Dr Ruth Kerr. The RCA has still not gained any funding and because of this does not yet have a formal governance structure. In the main, its aims are maintained and advanced through contact by email and teleconferences but Dr Kerr attended a meeting of the Alliance in Canberra on 30 March 2006 arranged by Museums Australia. It continues to provide an important role in preventing duplication, mutually supporting each others' endeavours where appropriate and in opening up lines of communication. Dr Kerr's contribution to the Alliance has been valuable and is much appreciated.

3. The National Cultural Heritage Forum:

NCHF delegate: Dr Ruth Kerr continued as the Federation's representative on the Forum and on behalf of the Committee I thank her for her commitment and all the work she had done in connection with this position.

NCHF meeting. Dr Kerr attended an NCHF meeting on 29 November 2005 in Canberra. Our Public Officer, Mr Gerard Hogan, also attended as an observer. The significant topics discussed and outcomes of the meeting with the Minister for Environment and Heritage, which occupied part of the NCHF meeting, were that the Minister::

- emphasised that the NCHF is a very useful and effective forum for him;
- supported the holding of a workshop to update the Forum's Vision Statement to which he agreed to provide attendance finance;

- agreed to a small group of the Forum to consult with the Department on the amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999;
- expressed interest in the Forum's proposals relating to the implementation of a Heritage Care Program.
- Announced that the GVEHO grants are being expanded to provide for more grants to cultural heritage bodies.

A wide range of other topics were discussed after the Minister left the meeting.

NCHF/HCOANZ break-out session: Dr Dianne Snowden, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, represented the Federation at the NCHF/HCOANZ break-out session on 20 April 2006 in Hobart. The session was chaired by Michael Collins. It was attended by representatives of the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand meeting with Sharon Sullivan, as NCHF Chair; Kristal Buckley (Australian ICOMOS); Simon Molesworth and Marie Wood (Australian Council of National Trusts); Bruce Cole (Engineering Heritage Australia); and Dianne Snowden (Federation of Australian Historical Societies). Dr Snowden reported at length on the meeting at which a range of issues were discussed. Some of the topics were:

- Issues arising from the Productivity Commission's report on its review of built heritage and subsequent submissions covering national roles, national leadership and a comparison between cultural heritage and natural heritage, the latter being felt to be better articulated.
- The role of the NCHF;
- The need for a comprehensive and integrated national heritage system, with a clearly articulated vision and policy, incorporating the Burra Charter, and prioritising the protection of cultural heritage was stressed.

3. Teaching history in schools

For sometime now the Federation has been much concerned about the lack of importance accorded history in primary and junior secondary school curricula in all the States and Territories except New South Wales and have made a number of submissions relating to the issue. Through our meetings with other organisations it is gratifying to find that there is widespread concern about this situation and that we are not the only body lobbying for change. The Federation wrote to the Prime Minister commending him on speaking out and advocating Australian history in schools. We also wrote to the Curriculum Council of Western Australia expressing concern about the new Years 11 and 12 outcomes based curriculum History Ancient and Modern. It is pleasing to note that agitation by many groups has had some positive outcomes

At its June 2006 teleconference, the Federation agreed upon its position on the teaching of history in Australian schools and decided to convey this to the Federal Minister for Education and Science.

4. Productivity Commission's Review of Built Heritage

In response to the draft of Productivity Commission's Review of Built Heritage the Federation made a supplementary submission in which among other matters, it rejected the Commission's recommendation of voluntary negotiated conservation agreements and presented a relevant economic analysis and cultural value statement to support its position. Our original and supplementary submissions have been placed on the FAHS's website. I wish to thank all delegates for their contributions to this submission but most particularly to Dr Marilyn Truscott and Dr Ruth Kerr for preparing the document and to Mr Nigel Ridgway for his criticism of the economic rationalist approach taken by the Commission.

5. Facilitating input from constituency regarding history & heritage issues

A strategy is currently being negotiated with the Council's of our member bodies relating to facilitating input regarding history and heritage issues with which they wish to obtain advocacy support from the Federation.

Training and support for historical societies

1. Museums Australia – proposed national collections training program.

As far as I am aware there has been little progress on this matter.

2. Guides to support the work of historical societies

Publishing History: A Guide for Historical Societies: The manuscript was submitted for printing during the year but the printer did a print-run without providing page proofs for final vetting. Following proof-reading by the authors and the Editorial Committee it became apparent that the printing would need to be re-done. An agreement was reached with the printer for the second print-run to be done again with considerable financial concessions to us. Corrections have been completed and the re-run is now being undertaken.

History and Tourism: A Guide for Historical Societies: Efforts have been made this year to obtain funds for this publication. As yet, we have not been successful.

Lobbying and Public Relations: a Guide for Historical Societies: The partial draft, prepared by Mr Gerard Hogan, is currently under the review of the Committee pending further action.

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. Following lengthy discussions with Museum Australia representatives on this proposal, this project is in abeyance until Museums Australia develops its national strategy for implementing its Continuous Cultures and Ongoing

3. My Connected Community

As a result of representations from the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, the Federation explored ways and means of assisting historical societies in remote areas to obtain advice/support with their various projects. One option that we have taken up is the decision to participate in Vicnet's *My Connected Community(mc2)* project through the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's Project Partnership facility. This encourages local history groups and local history networks across the country to participate in online mc2groups which provide additional communication opportunities among group members and also to promote local history. This service will be promoted to historical societies across the country early in 2006/2007 at which time access directions will be provided. I wish to thank Ms Vicki Court, IT Collections Manager, Royal Historical Society of Victoria and Mr Don Gibb for making this service to our constituents possible.

In conclusion, much has been achieved by the Federation over the past year and I hope the Committee will maintain its momentum in advocacy and in supporting the work of historical societies in the coming year. 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 second year as President. I am especially grateful to the members of the Executive, Senior Vice-President, Mr Nigel Ridgway, Vice-President, Professor Ian Jack, Immediate Past President, Dr Ruth Kerr, Hon. Secretary, Ms Lennie McCall (RWAHS), and Hon. Treasurer, Dr Bev Phelts (HSNT), who have assisted me so ably in ensuring the continued smooth-running of the organisation. Thanks too, to Mr Hogan, Ms Bennett and Mr Davies for their services to the organisation during the year.

Helen Henderson

20 August 2006