

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, 2009 - 2010

The last year has been a busy and generally successful one for the FAHS, although perhaps more one of stabilisation than advancement except in the area of having our voice heard.

I shall outline the activities under two headings.

1. Lobbying

My main activity as President has been working in various ways with other individuals and groups for the broad furtherance of history and heritage, and the more specific aspects in which historical and heritage societies are involved.

I continued as a member of Minister Garrett's Heritage Working Group, but it has met less frequently in recent months while also beginning to widen the range of heritage issues on which it has advised the Minister. The federal election brought a delay to further meetings and at the time of writing this report we are waiting to see who the Minister will be and what role the committee will be asked to play.

During the year I represented the FAHS in a variety of forums and discussions, including: I met with Minister Garrett; I had a meeting with Prof. Carmen Lawrence, the new Chair of the Heritage Council; I had several meetings with the representatives of the Australian Council of National Trusts to discuss cooperative action; I visited Canberra to meet officials in the Department of Water, Environment, Heritage & the Arts; I represented the FAHS on the committee of Blue Shield Australia, of which we became associate members; prior to the election I outlined to Greg Hunt, the Opposition Shadow Minister a proposal for \$1 million to be devoted to small grants for historical societies - this was incorporated into the Opposition's heritage policy.

Represented by David Carment, Dianne Snowden, Ruth Kerr and others, the FAHS became involved in the movement to prevent the closure of National Archives offices in Hobart, Adelaide and Darwin - and were delighted when that proposal was withdrawn while alternate arrangements were sought.

I have not been in a position to visit as many member societies this year, but have been to the RAHS twice (to present Fellowships to Dr Bruce Pennay and Professor Jill Roe), the CDHS and attended the South Australian Historical Societies Conference.

2. Communications

The website has continued to provide a very successful face to the world for the FAHS, and a source of information and advice for historical societies, including the updating by Judy Rechner of the FAHS guide to heritage identification and protection.

Thanks to Ruth Kerr and Esther Davies, the e-Bulletin and Newsletter have been very successful in communicating with historical societies across the nation, although we still experience difficulties in having our publications passed on to all societies and members. We continue to encourage all societies to join the Australian Historical Societies Support Group.

The future

Looking to the future, the FAHS faces a number of challenges. While we have continued to benefit from the larger GVEHO grant which we were awarded in 2008, our income still falls well short of what is needed to function fully as the peak national body for 1000 societies and their 100,000 members. In particular, we are very restricted in the hours for which we can employ our Executive Officer, we have insufficient funds to commission authors to prepare further training manuals and advice guides for the website, and the limited amount available for travel inhibits the capacity of the Executive to represent the FAHS as much as is required.

What the FAHS has achieved has very much been a combined effort by Committee members and the Executive Officer. As Executive Officer, John Davies has given careful administration and great support. His record keeping is immaculate and he is able to provide insight and services in a wide range of areas. My thanks to all members of the Committee for their time and efforts over the past year, but particularly I wish to acknowledge Ruth Kerr, David Carment, Esther Davies, Nick Drew and Helen Henderson who have been very effective and supportive members of the Executive.

Don Garden

September 2010