

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, 2015 - 2016

After many delays and obstacles the FAHS is now receiving the long-awaited larger grant and that has facilitated a higher level of activity, and has freed us of concern about financial survival, at least for another year or two. I express my thanks to the now former Minister, Greg Hunt, and the staff of the federal and ACT governments who have arranged for the payments to be processed.

The enhanced grant has enabled a range of activities. After an initial short period employing Dr Jodie Boyd as Online Outreach Officer, followed by a short hiatus when she resigned, Bernadette Flynn took on the position and has greatly helped to lift the FAHS profile and services to societies across Australia. She has been editing the *eBulletin* and the *Newsletter*, while also helping John Davies to develop our IT capacities. We have been able to fund the completion of the history education/curriculum project, and Bernadette Flynn has been commissioned to write another training manual, on membership recruitment and succession planning.

We have also undertaken the first stage of what is planned to be a three-part survey of societies to identify what they do and the challenges they face. This has produced some very interesting results.

I have been able to attend most of the meetings interstate of the GLAM peak bodies group and to participate in its work to promote the digitisation of Australia's cultural collections. The group was able to gain a grant for the first stage of a major project to achieve this. The FAHS is very grateful to be involved in this, which in itself is recognition of the size and value of collections held by our societies.

Very importantly, in September 2016 the FAHS paid for a meeting in Sydney between Bernadette Flynn and the managers/executive officers from RAHS, RHSV, RHSQ and the SA History Trust. The RWAHS manager also joined electronically for part of the meeting. The reports I received confirmed this as a very worthwhile day that justified the expenditure.

Financial security has therefore enabled the FAHS to expand its role as the umbrella body for Australia's peak community history organisations and their members. I will continue to press the Minister to extend the grant in the next triennium. We do what we can to facilitate the sharing of experiences and expertise across the community history and heritage movement, and to provide support and assistance to societies. FAHS has continued to advocate for this sector among federal Ministers, Opposition spokespersons and the public service.

In December 2015 the Minister launched the long-awaited Australian Heritage Strategy, a promising document that will be most welcome if its strategic recommendations are implemented. It is hoped that we can encourage the members of the new parliament to re-establish the Parliamentary Friends of History & Heritage.

As well as my Victorian visits, during the year I have been to Darwin, Perth and Adelaide 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 Councillors for their time and contribution. Specifically, I wish to acknowledge Nick Drew, Helen Henderson, Esther Davies, Judith Smart and Ian Jack who as office bearers and/or willing volunteers have made extra contributions when called upon.

As always, I express particular thanks to John Davies, the Executive Officer, for his conscientious work, often contributing longer hours than he is paid for. He has made a significant contribution to most aspects of our work. As mentioned above, the work of Bernadette Flynn is also greatly valued.

Associate Professor Don Garden
President