

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, 2012- 2013

The Federation continues its advocacy and promotion work as it has done on behalf of the community history movement in Australia for 36 years. The key work has been through advocacy of heritage preservation, grants for community history (Your Community Heritage), development of a community heritage portal, promotion of the National Heritage Register.

We have maintained our program of teleconferences, four per year, and a regular communication pattern of emails to administer the Federation's business. The Executive Officer, Mr John Davies, has supported the Executive effectively, carrying out that work with a sense of great accuracy. The public face of the Federation through the website is maintained by the Executive Officer. The *E-Bulletin* is published monthly and the *Newsletter* twice yearly. The vast majority of recipients receive the publications and other communications electronically.

The Federation has taken regular opportunities to communicate with Australian government Ministers and Shadow Ministers on history, heritage and conservation matters. We have also liaised with the Australian Council of National Trusts, National Library and State Libraries as well.

Fellowships: Two Fellowships were awarded, to Ms Wendy Carter of Kununurra and Dr Michael Pearson of Canberra. Wendy Carter's Fellowship was presented in Darwin at a meeting of the Federation, the Historical Society of the Northern Territory and the National Trust of the Northern Territory after the AGM in July. The Fellowship for Dr Michael Pearson will be presented on 10 August 2013 in Canberra.

Constitution: A sub-committee of the Federation Council was established to review the Federation's Constitution. The sub committee comprised: The Hon Robert Nicholson (Chair), Dr Helen Henderson, Dr Ruth Kerr and Mr Stephen Sheaffe who reviewed and updated the Constitution in relation to the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991* (ACT). The draft Constitution was presented to Federation Council at its May 2013 teleconference which resolved to distribute the draft Constitution to the Presidents and Councils of the Federation's constituent members and the Director of the History Trust of South Australia. Their responses will be considered at the proposed November 2013 teleconference.

Community Heritage Portal: This project has not been completed. Our contractor, Mr Andrew Bowman of Carnamah WA has not been able to progress his work efficiently because of the delays by the contractor to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPAC) in completing the electronic structure of the computer program to run the portal. This has consequently delayed the input of historical society information and the launch of the portal. The Federation negotiated a variation of the contract with SEWPAC and this was signed on 28 June 2013.

National Cultural Policy: The Federation lodged a submission on its preferences for inclusion in the National Cultural Policy. The Federation advocated preservation of our documentary heritage and the networking of collections electronically throughout Australia. These themes were taken up by the then Minister for The Arts, Hon Simon Crean MP, and included in the Policy.

Australian Heritage Strategy: The Federation is disappointed that the Australian government has not advanced the strategy. Work on this was commenced back at the turn of the century and worked on in various forms with various staff of the Heritage Division of the Department of Environment and Heritage (and its successors in title).

Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC): In 2012 the Australian government considered delegating many of the Commonwealth's powers under the EPBC Act to the States under the a regime of *Framework of Standards for Accreditation* . The Federation advocated that this not be done and wrote to the Minister stating that it is likely to reduce standards of protection of heritage especially as on many occasions state and territory governments have demonstrated lesser standards of and priority for protection of nationally significant built heritage. The Minister abandoned the proposal. The Federation has written to the Shadow Minister, Hon Greg Hunt MP, in similar terms.

Funding: The Federation receives a Grant for Voluntary Environmental Sustainable and Heritage Organisations (GVESHO) grant and has a contract for the Portal with SEWPAC. The GVESHO grant was reduced as the number of recipients was increased by the Minister significantly. Raising of funds for an advocacy group in the public sector or philanthropists is very difficult.

Surveys and Advocacy: The Federation is preparing information for submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics for another survey of the activities of cultural and history groups in the community. The Federation's core roles are advocacy and promotion of community history and it continues to do this with government admirably.

I express my thanks to all the delegates for their contributions in meetings and advice out of session, particularly the executive. The work of the Federation on all levels is recorded by the Hon Secretary in the Agendas and Minutes in accordance with the Business Plan.

The Federation has supported the nomination of significance sites for the National Heritage Register viz. Thompson Square at Windsor NSW and the Parramatta Female Factory. It has also communicated with state and local governments on preservation of school buildings (WA) and the Mary Valley heritage railway in Queensland and been successful in having positive outcomes. I have visited historical societies wherever possible and promoted the role of the Federation in Australia, including visits to Chillagoe, Mareeba, Gayndah and Smithton. Other delegates have attended their state conferences.

The Federation and constituent members have written to state governments advocating professional development training for **history teachers**. The Federation has been advocating this for several years as well as development of a viable history curriculum. I thanks Esther Davies and Julia Ryan for leading this extensive work.

Dr Ruth S. Kerr
President
19 July 2013