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History Council of South Australia

President's Annual Report 2021

Annual General Meeting: 20 October 2021

Unlike our colleagues in Victoria and NSW, the History Council of South Australia (HCSA) has not (to date) been dramatically impacted by the Covid19 pandemic. Throughout 2021, the General Committee (comprised of sixteen members) and the Executive Committee (comprised of six members) have continued to meet every second month with attendance generally high and only a couple of virtual meetings held. The meeting format, whereby each member provides a brief update on happenings within their respective organisation, has continued to be an efficient way for members to be informed of upcoming issues and events. Committee members have been encouraged to submit a brief report prior to the meeting and to limit their verbal report to approximately three minutes (with flexibility depending on the importance of issues raised).

Advocacy

Planning and Design Code: The HCSA was a signatory to two open letters (dated 1 November 2020 and 18 March 2021) addressed to the Minister for Planning in which a number of organisations jointly protested against the public consultation process which, the signatories pointed out, did not meet the standards set out in the *Planning Development and Infrastructure Act*.

Waite Gatehouse Lodge: The HCSA signed an open letter to the Premier dated 20 December 2020, protesting the potential destruction of the Waite Gatehouse Lodge.

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) review of the Australian History Curriculum. Following discussion with the HCSA's sub-committee 'SA History in Schools' (see below), General Committee member Elspeth Grant (representing the History Teachers Association of South Australia) drafted a HCSA response to ACARA's review of the Australian History Curriculum which was submitted in early July 2021.

In our submission, the HCSA strongly agreed with the proposals for: continuing a focus on the study of history to help young people become active and informed community members; increasing connections between core concepts of historical thinking and other components of the History curriculum; allowing a minimum of two sub-strands for each year level in History (rather than three depth studies); improving the F-6 HASS curriculum in order to assist teachers who are not History specialists.

The HCSA stated that we wished to see greater diversity in the coverage of suggestions for all states and territories including suggestions for incorporating South Australian history that is of state and/or national significance. For Year 7 History, we commended the proposal to replace the 'Investigating the Ancient Past' depth study with the 'Deep Time History of Australia' sub-strand. For Year 9 History, we made the point that Progressive Ideas and Movements are a defining feature of South Australia's history. We expressed disappointment that World War I continued to be named as the sole compulsory sub-strand for Year 9 History, while the study of key events in Australia's colonial and early national

histories continue to be optional. We stated our belief that this reflects the continued militarisation of our school History curriculum (particularly as World War II is a compulsory sub-strand for Year 10 History), and pointed out that this comes at the expense of learning about fundamental events and developments such as Federation. We also noted that the time period specified for the World War I sub-strand (1914-18) may encourage a narrow focus on the theatre of war, tending towards glorification of war, rather than a study of continuity and change before and after the conflict, with promotion of peace. The same applies for World War II in Year 10 History.

Regarding Year 10 History, the HCSA voiced its support for book-ending the Year 7-10 History course with a focus on the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but noting the need to highlight that the struggle for Indigenous civil rights in Australia occurred alongside other rights and freedoms movements (such as feminism, peace, LGBTIQ+, multiculturalism, and the environment), and that students should learn about the confluence of these mid-late twentieth century movements. We voiced our opinion that the omission of the Migration Experiences sub-strand is of great concern, as we perceive migration to be a key feature of post-WWII Australian history.

The HCSA is indebted to Elspeth for her work on this submission.

National Archives of Australia's relocation of South Australian archives: With our member organisations the Genealogical Society of SA, Friends of the SA Archives and the Professional Historians Association (SA Branch), the HCSA sent a letter to David Fricker, the (then) Chair of the NAA, dated 21 July 2021, expressing our concerns regarding the removal of SA archival material to interstate repositories. Since then, a delegation of HCSA members have been attending consultation meetings, corresponding with Nick Gleghorn (State Manager, NAA), and advocating for the itemisation and description of SA records prior to their leaving SA, and for their timely digitisation. Nick last updated members of the consultancy group on 7 October 2021. He advised that the first movement of records out of Collinswood to Canberra was completed on 30 September and that 90% of the work to be done describing these records had been completed, and that some item descriptions were being loaded onto RecordSearch. In answer to a subsequent query regarding why only 'some' item descriptions were being loaded onto RecordSearch, he clarified that all items described will be loaded onto RecordSearch.

Increasing the awareness of South Australian History: In September 2020, the HCSA formed a working group comprised of Elspeth Grant, Kristy Kokegei, Skye Krichauff and Liz Ho (Chairperson of the History Trust of SA Board) to: assess the current scenario regarding orientation to and appreciation of SA history among school students and their teachers and school career advisory services; seek advice from key agencies and individuals advocate for the inclusion of South Australian History in the primary and secondary school curriculum; formulate a HCSA position regarding opportunities for the reflection of an inclusive SA history in the current curriculum and in teacher training; and, with HCSA Executive Committee endorsement, make submissions including to the Australian school curriculum review. We have met several times throughout the year (10 December 2020 and 4 February, 11 March, 21 May 2021). We have examined how the History Trust works with the Education Department, met with two Managers of Development from the Department of Education, and planned how to respond to the ACARA National Curriculum Review (see above).

Muriel Matters Awards Reference Group: On behalf of the HCSA, I joined the Reference Group for the Muriel Matters Awards which met on 16 June. We decided on the parameters of the awards, eligibility, evaluation, selection criteria, the design of the medallion, and how the awards will be presented. We concluded that the award would be open to all secondary school students in South Australia, that each school would nominate one student, and each student nominated would receive an award. The

selection criteria is 'A student exhibiting self-initiative in taking action to promote democratic discussion and activity to advance a cause'. The Awards were launched on 12 October and applications are now open. Students will receive their award before the end of the 2021 school year.

History Councils Australia (HCA)

At the HCSA's General Committee meeting on 7 December 2020, we voted to support the HCA's proposed Memorandum of Understanding and Policies and Procedures. We also decided to raise the possibility of two-year (rather than one-year) leadership rotations, with the option for the current leader to extend the term if all member HCs agree. This is in recognition that the NSW and Victorian HCs receive government funding and are better resourced to lead the HCA. This suggestion was received favourably by HCA members. NSW is currently the HCA leader and, with rotations in alphabetical order, SA is next.

In late February 2021, the HCA applied for an Australia Council 'Re-imagine Sector Recovery Grant' for a project titled 'Why History Matters'. We envisaged a national series of talks (in person and on-line) featuring leading Australian historians in each state and chaired by a high profile journalist or academic, to inform the public about historical issues, create durable resources, enhance identity and build capacity in history across the nation. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful but agreed to continue to work together on similar applications when the opportunity arises.

Events

Historians' Awards: This year we voted in favour of allowing previous nominations (submitted up to three years earlier) to carry through to successive years. We introduced a new category, the 'Digital Technology Award', to go to an individual, group or organisation that has demonstrated innovative use of digital technology. Wakefield Press generously agreed to sponsor this additional award. We also changed the parameters of the 'Regional Historian Award' to the 'Regional and/or Community Group Historian(s)' in order to open the category to groups and to historians working in the metropolitan area.

The Awards were held from 2-4pm on Sunday 30 May in the Mortlock Library of the State Library of SA. We partnered with the History Trust and State Library, who were generous with their contributions (see finance (below) for further details). Once again Wakefield Press provided book vouchers for the Awardees, and the HCSA is grateful to Michael Bollen for his generosity and ongoing support of the HCSA. Rosemary Wanganeen provided a moving Welcome to Country and Keith Conlon acted as MC. It was a wonderful afternoon enjoyed by all present. The following were the Award recipients:

- Emerging Historian: Anne Black for her research on life and work of George Isaacs and the publication of *Pendragon* (Wakefield 2020).
- Digital Technology Award: Kristy Kokegei and the History Trust of South Australia for their Talking History series.
- Regional and/or Community Group Historian: Geoff Nobel for his work on lands titles, photographs and oral histories documenting the history of the Peterborough district.
- Historian of the Year: Will Sargent, for his work preserving and promoting the history of the gay community in South Australia.
- Lifelong Historian: Don Loffler, for his life long work on the history of the Holden car in Australia.
- Wakefield Essay Prize winner: Connor Deegan, 'Settling the pioneer legend in stone: The memorialisation of Captain Charles Sturt in the early twentieth century'.

- 2021 HCSA Fellow: Rebecca Jones, 'Drought, flood, heat and dust: living with extreme weather in arid Australia'.

Unfortunately, Ann Black and Rebecca Jones were unable to attend as they live in Victoria and Covid regulations prevented them entering SA.

Regional Lecture: 2020: Due to the uncertainty of COVID, last year we held a webinar rather than a face-to-face regional lecture. The topic was 'Pre- and early-colonial South Australia's slavery connections', with presenters Beth Robertson, Philip Jones and Cameron Coventry, and facilitator Amanda Nettelbeck. The webinar was held on Saturday 20 November and was well attended with 119 tickets requested and 70 attendees. As an added bonus, we received 5 new member subscriptions directly following the webinar.

2021: The 2021 Regional Lecture is to be given by Philip Payton at the Bridgeport Hotel in Murray Bridge on 1 December. Philip will discuss his recently published book, *Vice Regal* (Wakefield Press, 2021) which examines the lives of South Australia's governors. The Murray Bridge City Council and the Murray Bridge Historical Society are helping us promote and host the event.

Fellowship

We received a large number of applications for the inaugural HCSA Fellowship, many of which were of a very high standard. Judging took place in early December 2020, and applicants were notified of the outcome before Christmas 2020. A sub-committee was formed to organise an event to announce the inaugural HCSA Fellow. However, Covid uncertainty led to the delay of the event, and we decided to announce the 2020 Fellow (Rebecca Jones) at the Awards Ceremony (see above). Rebecca lives in Victoria and has not yet been able to travel to South Australia to commence her research at the State Library. Applications for the 2022 Fellow are now open, and are due on 30 November.

Newsletter, website and social media

Jess Fairey has continued in her role as editor of the newsletter which is published every second Tuesday. The number of items submitted are gradually increasing, and the newsletter is steadily becoming more informative and relevant as a result. Brenton Griffin took on the role of managing the HCs Facebook page this year and the number of followers has, at the time of writing, reached 1,179, with the average post having about 10-15 'likes' and 200-500 'views'. Both Jess and Brenton are volunteers, and on behalf of the HCSA, I thank them for doing such a fantastic job.

The website is working well and is ably managed by our secretary Yianni Cartledge, who has supplied the following data for the period 17 October 2020-17 October 2021: 15,971 page views; 15.8% returning visitors and 84.2% new visitors; 69.16% of users accessed the website through a desktop, 26.11% through a mobile and 4.73% through a tablet. Interestingly, only 65% of users were Australian with 16.3% from the USA, other users were from China, Canada, India, the UK, Japan, Germany, Bangladesh and Spain.

Finances

As an organisation that receives no government funding and instead relies primarily on membership fees, finances are always tight for the HCSA. A major annual expense is the Awards Ceremony, however, due to our partnering with the History Trust and the State Library and the generosity of both institutions, expenditure was minimal this year. The HCSA financed the catering and the certificates, the State Library provided the venue and security, and the History Trust provided the drinks

(generously supplied by Penfolds, a sponsor of the History Trust), audio visual equipment, photographer, and miscellaneous equipment. Britt Burton (Public Relations Coordinator for the History Trust) co-ordinated the organisation of the event and was wonderful to work with.

Our Treasurer Greg Slattery is buoyed by the number of membership renewals that are currently coming in for 2022. As with last year, being able to renew membership online through our website has made the process more efficient, although there was a temporary glitch to the system in August/Sept, it was quickly rectified. Our finances have been greatly bolstered by a \$10,000 grant from the History Trust which will be used for general expenses and to help fund the 2021 and 2022 Regional Lectures and 2022 Awards ceremony.

We have several new members this year, six of whom are from interstate. While non-members' access to our Facebook page continues to act as a disincentive to become a member, we continue to recognise the importance of providing this service and building our public profile.

The HCSA's membership fees have not risen since the first year of the Council. This has been a deliberate policy aimed to make membership affordable to small organisations and individuals. However, the abolition of concession rates and a rise to fees is worth discussing for the following year.

Thanks

I have thoroughly enjoyed my role as President over the past 24 months, and regret that work commitments (including conducting oral history interviews in remote areas at unforeseen dates) prevent me continuing in the position. I would like to sincerely thank all members of the General Committee for your attendance at meetings, your informative reports and your advocacy and support for all things 'history related' in SA. I would particularly like to thank the members of the Executive Committee (Vice-President Kristy Kokegei, Secretary Yianni Cartledge, Treasurer Greg Slattery, David Sweet and Andrew Peake) for their collegiality and input. Yianni took over as Secretary at the last AGM. He has readily and efficiently mastered all that has been thrown at him, and has been a pleasure to work with. Kristy is stepping down as Vice President. She has been a wonderful advocate for the HCSA; her technical expertise and knowledge of SA history organisations are extensive and much appreciated.

I look forward to supporting the new President and working with the Executive Committee to ensure a smooth transition and a productive year in 2022.

Skye Krichauff