



Dear members of the History Teachers Association of South Australia,

As the President of our association, it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the start of the new school year. I hope that you have all had a restful and rejuvenating break and are ready to tackle the exciting challenges that the year ahead will bring.

I am pleased to report that the start of the year has been a busy one for our association. We have been hard at work planning a range of professional development opportunities and events for the coming year. Our aim is to provide our members with a diverse range of learning opportunities, from workshops and seminars to guest speakers and networking events.

One of the highlights of our recent activities was the highly successful SACE Refresher Day that we hosted in early March. This event provided an invaluable opportunity for history teachers across the state to come together, share their knowledge and experiences, and learn from each other. The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive, and I would like to thank all those who attended and contributed to the day's success.

Looking ahead, we have a number of exciting events planned for the rest of the year, including our annual state conference. This event promises to be a stimulating and thought-provoking gathering of history teachers from across Australia. One issue which will be at the forefront of these thought provoking discussions will be the place of AI and the role CHATGPT will play in our teaching and learning. Admittedly, other than this paragraph, CHATGPT wrote this entire Presidents Welcome.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all members of the association for your ongoing commitment to excellence in history education. Together, we can continue to make a real difference to the lives of our students and to the wider community.

Sincerely,

David Albano

President, History Teachers Association of South Australia





## National History Conference Darwin October 2022



In October of 2022, several HTASA members made their way up to sunny and humid Darwin, on the cusp of wet season, to join other Australian history teachers from around the nation at the HTAA National Conference themed 'History Connects'. Here we met other educators and academics teaching on a wide range of topics and building resources for their individual sites or the curriculum more broadly.

Of note was the walking tours in and around Darwin city – being able to go to Stokes Hill Warf and see where the bombing of Darwin occurred, and then go into the Defence of Darwin Experience in the Darwin Military Museum. In here, you will see primary footage of the bombing, along with an interactive stage that every 15 minutes, shudders and shakes with lights and sounds replicating the arrival of the Japanese bombers. Alongside this exhibit, there is also a display on the Royal Flying Doctor Service who have a significant presence in the Territory and have been incredibly consequential in not only providing care for the rural people but also in connecting various regions. There were also walking tours of the Esplanade to see where the gunners attempted to shoot down the Japanese fighters, the WW1 cenotaph, and a memorial to the USS Peary.

On the Monday, we also were able to tour Parliament House, the Supreme Court, and Old Town Ruins. Aside from being covered in sweat after 2 minutes of walking, it was eye opening to understand the differences between State and Territory laws, especially the ability of Federal Government to override Territory decisions and the role that South Australia has had on the history of the NT particularly in the role that police officials played in massacres against the indigenous peoples. We also did a tour of the Museum and Art Gallery, close to the middle school where the conference was held, to see footage of the aftermath of Cyclone Tracey and hear residents discuss the chaos that the cyclone wrought. By the end of the conference, I was increasingly aware that Darwin is a city that has been devastated and rebuilt multiple times, and still fights to keep pushing on.

One highly informative keynote was by Robyn Smith, a lecturer based in Darwin who has worked on building a mapping system called the Colonial Frontier Massacre Digital Map, tracking the positions of many massacres that have occurred in the late 1800's and 1900's. Having a visual guide of the massacres was confronting and a useful tool for anyone wishing to understand the harrowing history of the middle of Australia and the genocide against our First Nations people.

Overall, the conference was a wonderful time to meet likeminded educators who have a passion to see history prosper in the classroom, develop our students into more critical consumers of information, able to



evaluate and analyse their role in the world, and using new technology and ideas to challenge and push them beyond previous limits.

Personally, I also experienced the learning curve to never go near coastal water in the NT – swimming pools were all I needed.

*Hannah Austin*



## Introducing... our Deputy President

*Every edition this year, we'll introduce a few members of HTASA so you can put a face to a name when you email or come to the conferences.*

Megan has been teaching at Kadina Memorial School, located on Narungga land, since 2009. She a senior Modern History teacher who has historically hosted small, but enthusiastic, classes. Megan's skill set focuses primarily on locating and analysing obscure historical sources as well as the weekly Source Analysis Skill Building posts published in the HTASA Facebook group and @htasa1 on Instagram are her little pet project. Megan is a fervent Western Bulldogs supporter and October 1, 2016 will go down as one of her favourite days in history. If you have questions related to teaching 7-12 History, Megan is happy to field questions via email: [megan.tucker74@schools.sa.edu.au](mailto:megan.tucker74@schools.sa.edu.au)

## Introducing... our Treasurer

Craig Fraser is a teacher of History at Unley High School, located on Kaurna land. His passion for history started in high school, where he was fortunate to have some passionate and engaging teachers who sparked his love of history. This love was further increased by the historical fiction of Valerio Massimo Manfredi and the "historically accurate" works of Monty Python. After school Craig spent his time either travelling or studying history. When not teaching or spending time with his family, Craig can be found on one of his bikes somewhere.





## Introducing ... Wendy Martin

At the beginning of 2020 I retired from Xavier College, Gawler where I had worked since 2001. I began my teaching career at Murray Bridge High School in 1973, and have been fortunate to work in government, Catholic and independent schools in South Australia. My teaching career also included working as a teacher in Sydney, Connecticut, Launceston, and Canberra. I am still on the HTASA Committee acting to support and strengthen History teachers in our state in their work, developing not only their students' History skills, but also their understanding, perception, and compassion.

**National History Challenge**  
2023

THE THEME FOR THE 2023 NATIONAL HISTORY CHALLENGE IS  
**CHANGE & CONTINUITY**

CLOSING DATE 25 AUGUST 2023  
[historychallenge.org.au](http://historychallenge.org.au)

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## Bangka Island Massacre Podcast

The VWMA recently launched *The Sudden Storm* a commemorative podcast produced by Megan Spencer exploring the impact of the WW2 Bangka Island Massacre of Australian nurses on 16 February 1942. Several teaching resources also accompany the podcast.

It can be found at: <https://vwma.org.au/education/sudden-storm-the-bangka-island-massacre-podcast>

*Synopsis The Sudden Storm: The AANS sisters of Singapore + Radji Beach*



On 16th of February 1942, on a remote, tiny beach on Bangka Island near Sumatra, a shocking incident occurred - shocking even in the context of the terrible world war that was raging at the time. It wasn't until around three years later that 21 Australian families found out what had happened to their daughters and their sisters, members of the Australian Army Nursing Service all, who had enlisted to serve their country in the early years of WWII.

The incident was part of a story that began with the Japanese occupation of Singapore a few days earlier, and the hurried, chaotic evacuation of civilians and AANS nurses by sea. It ended with their execution by soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army. Incredibly, one Australian Army nurse, Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, lived to tell the tale. What happened on Radji Beach was a massacre that ranks as one of the worst war crimes of WWII involving Australians - a tragedy that is still remembered today, eighty years later. In *The Sudden Storm* you'll hear from a raft of people – young and old - dedicated to keeping the story of these Australian Army nurses very much alive and present, especially when it comes to telling the story of women in war.

From mural artists, family members and military historians, to high school History students, ex-service personnel and authors, over 25 voices contribute to this 'sonic memorial' dedicated to women who served and sacrificed in the most difficult of circumstances. It's an emotional road trip that takes us into the past and the present.

The podcast also focuses on two of the women who fell on Radji Beach: Sister Elaine Balfour-Ogilvy and Sister Lorna Fairweather, both from South Australia. While this story about women during wartime is at times difficult to hear, it's also one of courage, fortitude, compassion and hope. It teaches us much about war and the ever-increasing necessity for peace... that frontlines aren't always on 'the battlefield' and that memorializing those lost to war can be a hugely creative and expansive endeavour.

You can't be unchanged by this story. With stunning music and powerful sound design, *The Sudden Storm: The AANS nurses of Singapore and Radji Beach* was made by award-winning podcast maker Megan Spencer for the Virtual War Memorial Australia. It was made possible with funding from the South Australian Department for Education.

*\*Please note that this podcast contains concepts related to war and some depictions of war and its aftermath. It also includes references to sexual violence in war. Please refer to the episode Show Notes for exact timestamps. Download the Show Notes PDF from the menu at [vwma.org.au/explore/schools](https://vwma.org.au/explore/schools).*

Megan Spencer © 2022



# THE SIMPSON PRIZE 2023

## The 2023 Simpson Prize Competition Question

How significant was Australia's contribution to the Allied military victory on the Western Front in 1918?

### Instructions

You are encouraged to debate, agree with, or challenge the question.

You are expected to use at least four sources listed below. Up to half of your response should use your own research.

Information about word or time limits, the closing date, entry forms, and judging can be found at the [Simpson Prize official website](#).

The Simpson Prize is funded by the Australian Department of Education and run by the History Teachers' Association of Australia.



## Writers Week 2023 – The importance for History teachers

Firstly, a disclaimer. I love Writers Week in the Women’s Pioneer Garden on King William Road. The fact that the event, running over a week, is free when in other states it is often ticketed, and that we attract (not only controversy) but also some world class authors, scholars, politicians, and thinkers, is such a great plug for our state and students. I spent far too much time skipping many uni lectures and tutors to go and sit and listen and learn on topics I knew little but walked away engaged in the arguments and ideas presented.

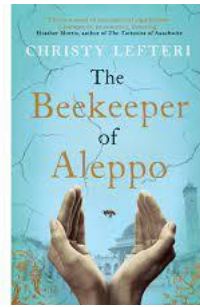


This year has been no different. Hearing from Richard Fidler on the Golden Age of Islam, specifically on the rise and fall of Imperial Baghdad, Ben Macintyre on Spooks and the tales they spin (the role of espionage in the world wars and Cold War – A Spy and the Traitor is a fascinating story of Soviet double crossing), panels on the idea of absolute truth and those who believe they are absolutely right (a heated conversation that had strong connections to the rise of the alt-right

in the US) and another panel on ‘Have we learnt nothing from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?’ hosted by ABC’s Laura Tingle. While sitting there, hearing from Anatol Lieven, Ben Macintyre and Fintan O’Toole on key events from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the narrative of victimhood and oppression (Nazi Germany), the fragility of the nation state and the need of citizens to have a humble scepticism in their own states’ mythology and question it was fascinating and everything that I want my senior students to engage in. The panel on ‘America, America’ saw discussions on the fall of the American empire, spheres of influence and rise of China, with Bob Carr hosting, and made the connection between 20<sup>th</sup> century history, politicians and the modern age very clear.

So, my suggestion for next year – see if you can organise an excursion to get your students in to hear from the writers – it is such a great opportunity to engage with global issues in the community and understand the importance of good historiography, people’s lived experiences (there was a strong contingent of Indigenous authors, Jewish and Palestinian authors, some living in exile, and a Belarusian in exile in Germany), and that what they are learning in the classroom will shape how they view their role in the wider society. Plus, Writers Week reiterates that learning is continual and always fascinating.

## Book Reviews



In response to a request for some pleasant readable reviews that allow one to sit down quietly with a cup of hot cocoa and read without pretensions or pressure... well - here are three relatively concise book reviews. Only one concerns an actual historical work, but all three books could be characterized as dealing with important aspects of History and all have only recently been published.

Firstly, *The Border* by Erika Fatland is a brilliantly insightful history of Russia disguised as a travel memoir. When I grow up, I want to be an adventurer like Fatland, who circum-navigated the twenty thousand kilometre Russian border and not only visited all of Russia's 'neighbours' in the process but she has documented the problematic relationship that each state has had with Russia throughout history. All of them, except her native Norway has suffered invasions, massive bloodshed and war (some all too recently) simply because they are neighbours to that malevolent behemoth, we call Russia.

Fatland's observations concerning North Korea, Ukraine and Azerbaijan are particularly illuminating and these are often shared via conversations she has with ordinary people. One, with an earnest North Korean twelve year old (who spoke perfect English) shed light on the level of indoctrination evident in the hermit kingdom. The boy told her his ambition was to join the army and spend ten years as a soldier defending his country. Of course, North Korea has the largest army in the world at 1.3 million – a free labour force - and conscripts are expected to commit to ten years. The boy, despite his aptitude for languages, did not want to travel, "Our country is the best in the world. Why would I want to go anywhere else?"

Deliberations on living under the dark shadow cast by Mother Russia were often shared with Fatland in regions where Putin's neo-Fascist aggravation has been causing constant anguish for local people. This observation, came from a young Ukrainian man leaving Crimea after its illegal annexation:

"I did not want to live somewhere that was occupied by the Russians. They are the cause of huge injustices in Syria, Donetsk and Lugansk. I do not support states that bomb people. I will soon go back to Donetsk to carry on the fight. My brother too."

This was five years ago so clearly Ukrainians were very much aware of Putin's megalomania even then. Let's hope this brave young Ukrainian is still alive.

On a positive note, it becomes very apparent that on this epic journey, Fatland's encounters with ordinary people the world over are genuine and warm with the vast majority of the people she met, openhearted, generous and kind. A book that inspires us all to travel wide and adventurously - and to embrace the good in humanity.

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri is not a History book, but a fictional account that contains powerful references to a contemporary historical issue that all of us need to confront. Seeking asylum - a





catastrophic conundrum that we, as Australians, have become all too good at ignoring. The number of refugees in the world is now approaching 100 million which is almost double the number of displaced people at the end of the Second World War. In 2020/21 Australia granted 6000 refugee visas. Surely, we must do better?

Nuri's is a harrowing story of the trials and tribulations of a Syrian refugee – an intelligent, honest and sensitive person who is battling with undiagnosed PTSD as a result of what has been called the 'Stalingrad' of the Syrian campaign - the battle of Aleppo. Russian forces, backing brutal dictator, al-Assad, virtually levelled the city of two million with cluster bombing of largely civilian areas including hospitals and schools (essentially a rehearsal for what Putin's forces are now doing in the Ukraine). Nuri's distorted trauma memories provoke great empathy but are dealt with using deft subtlety and discernment by Lefteri.

The intense refugee camp nightmares, Nuri and Afra find themselves in are almost as horrific as the war itself. We perhaps think that once refugees escape conflicts, life successively improves, but the desperate ugliness and malevolence of these internment camps is dreadful. Afra, blinded by trauma powerfully tells Nuri, "You are lost in the darkness." Nevertheless, Lefteri, a former psychotherapist and the daughter of Cypriot refugees, sensitively and poignantly never leaves the reader without hope. The story is a triumph of human endurance and resilience – and a warning to us that the refugee experience is one for which we all need to offer greater empathy and compassion.

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John Curtin, often considered to be Australia's greatest Prime Minister, a significant figure in any Year 10 History course and there are many reasons for this. Curtin was the anti-war socialist in 1916, campaigning against conscription, who became our greatest war time Prime Minister and forged the close alliance with the US that remains a key plank of Australian foreign policy today. Easy! However, what was life really like for this fascinating man, admired by so many?

***John Curtin's War Volume 1*** by academic and economist (alas), John Edwards does offer some instructive insights into Curtin's life up to and including the first part of the Second World War. We are told how Australia, with a population of only seven million, was a dramatically different place at this time. One amusing example concerns the Curtin household at Cottesloe, which was not only permanently unlocked, but Curtin never even carried any house keys!

A member of the Victorian Socialist party, the Trade Union anti-conscription movement and an editor of the Westralian Worker for a decade, Curtin would be considered a radical today. Yet he won the 1943 election with a massive majority of 49 - 25 seats in the House of Reps and all of the 19 senate seats contested!

Nevertheless, what 21<sup>st</sup> century Australians would find most astounding about politics at that time was the level of goodwill and bipartisanship that existed – even before the war. Menzies and Curtin were chief rivals as leaders of the two major federal parties, but regularly met, conversed and had the utmost respect for each other. Menzies once wrote to Curtin saying that his opposition had been 'honourable' and his friendship 'a pearl of great price'. The war cabinet formed by Menzies in 1940 included members of the Labor Party who, despite being in opposition at the time, helped make crucial decisions as Australia navigated its way through very perilous waters.

Edwards has researched his subject astutely and the anecdotes about the private Curtin are quite appealing – from playing cricket in the yard with his son, chatting with passengers about gardening on the train to not owning a refrigerator (as only 'the wealthy' could afford one). Curtin read widely and often recommended



the following texts; J.R Green's *A Short History of the English People* and Thorold Rogers' *Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labour* in addition to the works of Shakespeare, HG Wells and Lawson. However, Curtin, the writer and journalist is what impresses the most. Here was a man from 19<sup>th</sup> century rural Victoria, whose family were quite impoverished, left school at 13, yet he was a beautifully eloquent writer! Here's one speech that offers a hint:

### ***The Task Ahead***

*[First published in The Herald (Melbourne), 27 December 1941]*

*By John Curtin*

*That reddish veil which o'er the face  
Of night-hag East is drawn ...  
Flames new disaster for the race?  
Or can it be the dawn?*

*So wrote Bernard O'Dowd. I see 1942 as a year in which we shall know the answer.*

*I would, however, that we provide the answer. We can and we will.*

*The year 1942 will impose supreme tests. These range from resistance to invasion to deprivation of more and more amenities ...*

*Australians must realise that to place the nation on a war footing every citizen must place himself, his private and business affairs, his entire mode of living, on a war footing. The civilian way of life cannot be any less rigorous, can contribute no less than that which the fighting men have to follow.*

*I demand that Australians everywhere realise that Australia is now inside the firing lines. Australian governmental policy will be directed strictly on those lines. We have to regard our country and its 7,000,000 people as though we were a nation and a people with the enemy hammering at our frontier.*

*All Australia is the stake in this war. All Australia must stand together to hold that stake. We face a powerful, ably led and unbelievably courageous foe.*

*We must watch the enemy accordingly. We shall watch him accordingly.*

Like any great man, Curtin had to overcome many setbacks on his way to becoming arguably Australia's greatest Prime Minister, from debilitating alcoholism when younger, the loss of his seat in 1931, constant battles with poor health and travelling massive distances by train to return to Perth from Canberra. There should be more books like this one and thankfully there are as John Edwards has recently completed ***John Curtin's War Volume 2*** which I look forward to reading very soon.

Fitting to share this poem written by Australian journalist, Victor Courtney upon Curtin's untimely death in office on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1945.

"Tribute"

The tired statesman's cares are laid aside,  
And he who filled so loyally his part,



In so much of our pain and toil and pride  
Seems closer now unto the people's heart.

He sought no glories that the selfish need  
No tinsel, nor was moved by blame or praise,  
In simple manly faith he came to lead  
Australia in Australia's darkest days.

We mourn him, and in mourning him we know  
Such men in any nation's life are rare.  
'Tis bitter truth that only when they go  
We realise the load they had to bear.

No poignant words are needed to convey  
Our loss, or deeper tragedy to lend.  
"He was our chosen leader," we can say,  
But even more than that - he was our friend.

*By Ron Pippett*

*History Coordinator, Prince Alfred College.*