

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019–2020

The Committee of the History Council held six regular meetings and five executive meetings in the financial year 2019/20. Most were held at the National Trust's Old Observatory in West Perth, but following the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic in March, subsequent meetings were conducted online by Zoom.

The 2019//2020 Committee of the History Council of WA was as follows:

President Jenny Gregory, Vice President Bobbie Oliver (Australian Society for Labour History), Secretary Lucy Hair, Membership Secretary Pam Harris (Fremantle History Society), Treasurer Nick Drew (Royal Western Australian Historical Society).

Committee members: Bruce Baskerville (Centre for WA History, University of Western Australia), Jean Butler, Kyra Edwards (Indigenous Representative), Deborah Gare (Notre Dame University), Vanessa Kirkham/Sharron Turner (History Teachers Association of WA), Bri McKenzie, Geoff Moor, Helen Munt (Professional Historians Association), Samantha Owen, Cindy Solonec (Indigenous Representative), Pamela Statham Drew (Friends of Battye), John Toohey.

Three members of the Committee, Pamela Statham Drew, Sharron Turner and Jean Butler, will not be seeking re-election because of other commitments. All have made a valuable contribution, particularly Pamela who has been on the committee for 4 years and whose breadth of expertise has been extremely helpful. We thank them very much for their input.

I am very grateful to all Committee members for their contribution of time, knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm. The History Council does not have an Executive Officer and all members of the committee are volunteers. To assist the President and other members of the Executive, Committee members undertake a considerable amount of the workload. Each member takes a turn as meeting minute taker and as quarterly newsletter editor. Some represent their organisation on the Committee. Some represent the History Council on external bodies; Bobbie Oliver on the National Archives Perth Consultative Forum; Samantha Owen and Kyra Edwards on the Chamber of Culture and the Arts; Pam Harris on the State Records Advisory Committee, and Helen Munt on the City of Perth Cultural Advisory Committee.

We are also grateful to the National Trust, where our Committee Meetings have been held, and the SLWA and RWAHS who have hosted several of our events. All have provided the venue on a complementary basis.

A VOICE FOR HISTORY

Communications: Items of interests and news of events continue to be posted on the History Council of WA Facebook site, which now has more than 1730 followers. The History Council also has a Twitter account, but our input has been limited and should be increased in the future. The Quarterly Newsletters continue to be used to update members on matters of interest. The role of Editor rotates among committee members. We especially thank our 2019/20 editors; Samantha Owen (Winter 2019), Pam Harris (Spring 2019), Helen Munt (Summer 2019/20), and John Toohey (Autumn 2020). We also thank Grace Kaspe at Flametree Creative for her technical assistance in uploading each

newsletter to Mail Chimp for circulation to members and onto the News page of the History Council website.

Value of History Statement: Since its launch at our last AGM on 22 August 2019, the statement has been included with all our correspondence, sent to all members of State Parliament, posted on our Facebook page and shared on other social media pages — libraries, museums and history practitioners, Family History Association, and History at UWA. It has also been distributed to History departments at each of the universities. The statement can be endorsed on our website.

ADVOCACY

National Archives of Australia (Perth)

Members provided feedback on the functioning of the the new reading room and offices of NAA in Francis St, Northbridge opened in March 2019. Although there has been disappointment at the need to pre-order items, research and exhibition spaces are excellent.

City of Perth History Centre: As noted in the last Annual Report, the History Council made submissions on the City's Strategic Community Plan 2029 and the City's Cultural Development Plan 2018-24 and held several informative meetings with the City's Arts, Culture & Heritage unit in 2019. Heritage Perth has now been absorbed into the City and we have some concerns whether the marketing of heritage will continue at the same level with less staff available. We were pleased to note that the History Council's nomination of Helen Munt as our representative on the newly-established City of Perth Cultural Advisory Committee was successful.

Tabitha McMullan, Alliance Manager Activation & Cultural Experience, with Kate Parker, Cultural Collections Coordinator and Richenda Prall, Cultural Heritage Engagement Officer, presented a report at a History Council Committee meeting by Zoom in March 2020. They noted that Heritage Perth's Open Day had to be cancelled due to the pandemic but events have been rescheduled to Heritage Month April 2021. Several events and exhibitions, such as 'The Heart of Perth — Kuraree: 150 years of the Perth Town Hall', were moved to online digital engagement. Projects continue through school programs, aged care talks, social media channels, a community bunting project. Oral histories are underway with four Indigenous Elders. The pandemic has also created opportunities to fast-track digitisation projects.

City of Fremantle Local History Centre: The History Council has corresponded with the City of Fremantle regarding the establishment of a new home for the collection in the City's new premises and the level of staffing to support the collection.

UWA Publishing: a submission was made to The University of WA urging retention of UWA Publishing which is being reviewed.

Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 Review: Having made submissions to Phase 1 and 2 of the review, the History Council is expecting to make a final submission on the Aboriginal Heritage Bill which will be submitted to parliament by the end of 2021.

Senate Inquiry into 'Nationhood, national identity and democracy': a submission was made to the Senate.

Australian War Memorial Proposed Development: a submission arguing against the development, in line with other History Councils, was made to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

State Library of WA: Bobbie Oliver and I met with Margaret Allen (SLWA) and Damian Shepherd (SROWA). We were encouraged to make a submission from the History Council to the Minister and Director General regarding reductions in SLWA services.

State Records Office: Damian Shepherd, appointed as Director State Records in 2019, advised that various initiatives planned at SRO will improve services and agreed to make a presentation to the Committee.

History staffing at Curtin University: Following our representations several years ago, we were pleased to hear that a contract history lectureship had been advised at Curtin University and wrote to express our support for the position being advertised, and our expectation that this would enable a greater focus on the provision of history units for students.

History Councils of Australia (HCA): Discussions were held with the other three History Councils (NSW, Victoria and South Australia) regarding collaboration on national issues. Previous joint activity has included occasional gatherings at conferences of the Australian Historical Association; and the following submissions; joint letter in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart to the Prime Minister (Oct 2018), on reduction in ARC Research Funding to Humanities (Oct 2018), changes to Commonwealth Marriage Act Form as a result of the new Marriage Act (March 2019), Senate Inquiry into Nationhood, National Identity & Democracy (Sept 2019), and Commonwealth funding changes to Humanities (June 2020). At our Zoom meeting on 8 July 2020 it was decided that President/Chairs of each History Council would take turns as Convenor of HCA. On the alphabetical principle, Stephen Gapps, Chair of History NSW agreed to take on the role for the next year. The meeting noted

- The four HCs share common ground, in that all are committed to:
 - the discipline of history and the work of historians
 - the Value of History (as expressed in the joint statement)
- The value of sharing the workload and collaborating on submissions to inquiries and reactions to current affairs where the issues are:
 - of *national* importance (relating to Australia as a whole, including matters associated with the Australian Government)
 - of *nationwide* importance (which may be state or territory-based, but that affect all Australians – e.g. the destruction of the Juukan Caves in WA).

The need for a simple procedure for making combined responses in an agile and timely way. WhatsApp (a method for group chat) was agreed on a means to raise alerts on emerging issues, and to consult on the feasibility of co-operative advocacy.

Commonwealth University Funding for History: The Higher Education Support Amendment (Job-ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students) Bill 2020, which doubles the cost of history units for students and reduces the funding available for universities to teach history, was discussed with HCA representatives. HCA issued a media release and made a submission to government. We also made a separate submission, issued a media release and wrote to all members of the House of Representatives and the Senate urging members to vote against the bill. Details were provided on our website and social media outlets.

Heritage Advocacy: The History Council corresponded with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and issued a media release expressing our concerns regarding the destruction of Aboriginal listed heritage sites following Fortescue Mining's rail construction in the Spear Hill Valley and Rio Tinto's mining at Juukan Caves. We urged the Minister to arrange for the new Aboriginal Heritage Bill to be completed as soon as possible so that greater protection of Aboriginal heritage sites is assured. We also wrote submissions to Rockingham City Council opposing the demolition of Saw Cottage and to City of Vincent opposing the demolition of two Federation houses in Beaufort St Mt Lawley and were gratified that these appeals were successful.

History in Years 11 and 12: A working party (Bri McKenzie, Vanessa Kirkham, Samantha Owen, Kyra Edwards) was established to assist in promotion of history through HASS and to develop some video interviews with successful individuals who majored in history. Activity was delayed due to pressure of work and the pandemic. ACARA is undertaking a review of the History K-10 Curriculum over the next six months and it was agreed to liaise on this with HTAWA.

Bicentenary: We wrote again to the Premier and the Minister for Local Government, Heritage, Culture and the Arts, requesting information about plans to establish a Committee to plan for 2029 and offered History Council representation on the committee. We were advised that discussions are under way, thanked for our offer and requested to consider proposals for 2029 projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

Membership base

Membership numbers increased slightly in the past year. At the end of June 2020, the History Council had 63 members (24 corporate and 39 individual). However, the numbers over the past five years are generally considerably lower than when the History Council was first established. The reason for this reduction is not clear. It is unlikely that 2019/2020 numbers have been affected by the pandemic as subscriptions are usually received at the beginning of the financial year. Prior to the pandemic, there was an economic downturn with many redundancies and retirements among knowledgeable staff employed in corporate member organisations. We are also aware of the reduced number of staff in history departments in the state's five universities and the increasing age of some members.

	Total	Corporate	Individual
2019/20	63	24	39
2018/19	53	19	34
2017/18	77	28	49
2016/17	72	20	52
2015/16	69	N/A	N/A
2014/15	26	N/A	N/A
2013/14	80	17	63
2012/13	94	27	67
2011/12	106	28	78
2010/11	123		
2009/10	129		
2008/09	136		
2007/08	131		
2006/07	129		
2005/06	118		
2004/05	137		

History Council of WA Membership 2004-2020 (sourced from AGM Reports)

Strategic Plan 2020-24: A working party (Helen Munt, Samantha Owen, Vanessa Kirkham, Jenny Gregory) developed a new strategic plan which was commented on and amended by the Executive and the Committee, for presentation to members at the 2020/21 AGM.

EVENTS

While events are not our major focus, several were held in the 2019/20 year.

AGM and Annual History Council Lecture: The 2019 AGM was held on 22 August 2019 in the Great Southern Room of the State Library. Following the AGM, the History Council's 16th Annual Lecture was given by Bill Bunbury OAM, for many years Australia's best-known oral historian and social history broadcaster, who gave a moving address on the value of oral history. The Value of History Statement, a joint statement being released at each state AGM by the four History Councils of Australia, was then launched.

Ideas Forum: Held on Sunday 13 October 2019 at Stirling House, RWAHS, this forum was attended by representatives from the Army Museum of WA, City of Vincent Local History Centre, Fremantle History Society, Friends of Batty Library, Australian Garden History Society, History Teachers Association WA, Australian Society for Study of Labour History, Law Museum, Oral History Association WA, Professional Historians Association, Royal Western Australian Historical Society, UWA Centre for WA History, UWA Historical Society, as well as country members from the Albany History Collection and Bridgetown Historical Society. The afternoon was divided into two sections to enable us to discuss ideas for History Council action and for 2029 commemorations. It was a very valuable initiative.

The top three ideas for the History Council to consider developing were to (1) advocate for the teaching of history in WA universities, (2) advocate the value of history to employers seeking staff and (3) use the History Council website to provide links to digital history collections and encourage their use by local schools.

There were a host of ideas for commemorating 2029 generated. It was agreed that, in a spirit of reconciliation, it should be referred to as '200' or '2029', that commemorative events be properly researched and evidence based to avoid erroneous marketing spin, that a touring series of events, or the passage of a message stick, could begin in Albany so that its foundation in 2026 be recognised.

The main infrastructure projects proposed at the Ideas Forum were

- cover the freeway between Parliament House and the Barracks Arch,
- develop an Indigenous Cultural Centre,
- support the development of a Community History House for all history organisations,
- replace the Swan Brewery lights
- construct a large fountain at the Causeway entry to the city,
- develop a bicentennial ethnic arboretum park on a large degraded area,
- avenues of 200 trees,
- develop a Midland Railway Workshops rail history museum.

Publications proposed

- Statistical Atlas (with 200 milestones, 200 historic sites, 200 objects, 200 people and 200 events)
- thematic multicultural history of WA focusing on ethnic groups.

Lectures

- host TED talks,
- pop up History Theatre

It was agreed that the most important role for the History Council at this time is to advocate to government for the establishment of a 2029 Planning Committee.

Truth Telling Forum: The History Council hosted this important event jointly with Reconciliation WA on Sunday afternoon 10 November 2019 in the SLWA Theatre. We are grateful to our sponsors; SLWA who provided the venue gratis, BHP who sponsored the flight and accommodation for our guest speaker Professor John Maynard, University of Newcastle, and Freehills who sponsored the

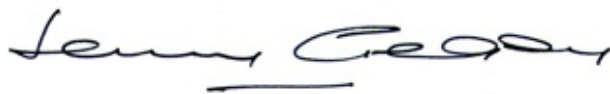
afternoon tea. The History Council funded the Welcome to Country by Sandra Harbin from UWA and contributed to the flight costs of Aileen Walsh from ANU.

The afternoon was introduced by Alan Carter. Sandra Harbin then welcomed us to Country and David Collard discussed the Uluru Meeting. This was followed by a session on Historians before Uluru by Professors Ann Curthoys and John Maynard. Following afternoon tea, Jenny Gregory introduced the Truth Telling panel; Effie Shioski on Storytelling and Makarrata, Ezra Jacobs Smith on Uluru and Wadjemup, Aileen Walsh on Ancient Memories and Dr Chris Owen on Acknowledging Massacres. After a Q&A session, Kim Scott and Fred Chaney concluded the forum.

The event, which was attended by around 200 enthusiastic participants, was recorded and a podcast, now on the History Council website. Special thanks to Alan Carter, CEO Reconciliation WA, and from the History Council, Cindy Solonec whose assistance in the overall organization of the event was invaluable, and Jean Butler, Lucy Hair, Pam Harris, Samantha Owen, who provided support on the day and John Toohey, who arranged the recording and podcast.

Christmas Sundowner: Thanks to an inspired suggestion by Deborah Gare, on Thursday 5 December 2019, members of the History Council of WA and the Professional Historians Association (WA) attended a Christmas Sundowner at the recently restored National Hotel in Fremantle. We began with drinks on the restored rooftop garden and were able to explore the building before enjoying a long table dinner on the verandah overlooking High St, and listening to an interesting presentation on the restoration process by owner and publican Karl Buller.

Plans for an Environmental History Forum in May 2020 were aborted due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Gregory', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Emeritus Professor Jenny Gregory AM FRHS
President