



President's Report

Prof Deborah Gare

25 October 2022

Committee Membership

The Committee of the History Council of WA has met formally on six occasions in the past year, and on numerous occasions for smaller working parties and advocacy work. Its members have included the following people in 2021 - 2022:

Member	Office	Representation
Deborah Gare	President	The University of Notre Dame Australia
Bruce Baskerville	Vice President	Centre for WA History Local and regional history/heritage
Lucy Hair	Secretary	Local history and government Heritage
Lorraine Clarke	Treasurer	Western Australia Genealogy Society Friends of Battye
Toni Church	Membership Secretary	Museums and Archives
Paul Arthur	Committee Member	Edith Cowan University
Kyra Edwards	Committee Member	Local government Indigenous communities
Allen Graham	Committee Member	Fremantle History Society
Jenny Gregory	Committee Member	The University of Western Australia National Trust of WA
Susanna Iuliano	Committee Member	Vincent Local History Library
Sue Lefroy	Committee Member	Albany Local History Library
Bri McKenzie	Committee Member	Curtin University Gender and inclusivity
Annemarie McLaren	Committee Member	The University of Notre Dame Australia
Helen Munt	Committee Member	Professional Historians Association Heritage City of Perth Cultural Advisory Committee
Michael Nind	Committee Member	Royal Western Australian Historical Society State Records Office of WA
Bobbie Oliver	Committee Member	The University of Western Australia Labour History Society State Records Office of WA NAA Perth Consultative Forum
Samantha Owen	Committee Member	Curtin University Chamber of Arts and Culture

Justin Owen	Committee Member	Curtin University Heritage and built materials
Rosinda Seara	Committee Member	History Teachers Association of WA
Cindy Solonec	Committee Member	Indigenous communities
Rita Tognini	Committee Member	Mount Lawley Historical Society
John Toohey	Committee Member	Local and community history

It has been a pleasure and privilege to serve with my colleagues, and I thank them sincerely for their impact, enthusiasm and dedication to the History Council.

I particularly thank several colleagues who have declared their intent to retire from the committee at the 2022 AGM, following significant service to the History Council (and other organisations in the history and heritage sectors): **Jenny Gregory (a former president of the HCWA, Cindy Solonec (who has represented indigenous communities and histories), John Toohey, Rosinda Seara and Rita Tognini.**

We were **a large committee in 2021-2022**, which, for the first time, included representation from regional communities in Albany, the Kimberley and the state’s Mid-West, which has been particularly important as we work with government and communities to prepare for the 2026-2029 commemorative events.

Preparing for 2029

Western Australia will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Swan River Colony in 2029, in addition to the 200th anniversary of Britain’s settlement at Albany in 2026. The anniversary presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to interpret, reflect upon, commemorate, and teach others about the origins of our community.

Most importantly, it will provide momentum in the reappraisal of Western Australia’s past, including that of the frontier, in which Indigenous voices will shape our understandings.

Just as it was last year, therefore, advocacy and influence in preparing for 2029 was the most significant issue to occupy the History Council in the past year, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

The committee has worked hard to influence policy and preparations of the state government, and continues to be in conversation with representatives of the Premier and Minister for Heritage and the Arts. This has included several visits to parliament in the past year in which we have advocated for an inclusive and agenda-setting History Summit.

We continue to support the work of Danjoo Koorliny, a Noongar advocacy organisation situated within UWA’s Centre for Social Impact that is led by Indigenous elders Richard Walley, Noel Nannup, Colleen Hayward and Carol Innes. You’ll remember that Danjoo Koorliny joined us last year to deliver part of the 2021 annual address. The History Council shares similar values and intent with Danjoo Koorliny, which are principally to encourage collaborative, inclusive and impactful outcomes from the state’s bicentenary. To this end we continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with Danjoo, Reconciliation WA and other organisations.

The closed borders arising from Covid prevented us from convening the major event we had hoped to run in 2022: a public address by **Henry Reynolds on ‘Truth Telling’** to be followed by the proposed

History Summit. But we continue to work towards advocacy in this space and hope to achieve more momentum with government and partners in 2023.

History Council of WA: Annual Public Lecture, 25 October 2022

Several critical issues have dominated international news this year. As historians, we are particularly mindful of the importance of several key issues and events:

- the death of Queen Elizabeth II, a moment of profound historical, social, cultural and political significance. While the mourning that was undertaken in Britain, Australia and elsewhere speaks to the significance of many past events, her death will also launch a new era in which we can predict further social, political and cultural change.
- The national and international crisis wrought by the pandemic, which resonated with the language and experiences of war time.
- Unprecedented natural disaster that is a result of climate change, which we continue to witness as the eastern states flood again.
- And, the war in Ukraine, which reminds us so dramatically of events in Europe, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s.

Never in my lifetime, I think, has there been a period in which the Humanities and Social Sciences—and History in particular—have been so important in the solving of real-world problems.

It was to these critical issues that we turned this year when framing the 2022 Public Lecture, due to commence shortly this evening—a reminder of the long reach of history in the urgent problems of our present and future.

And so it is with great pleasure that we will hear shortly from my colleague, Prof Sandra Wilson, when she gives her address, ‘Before Ukraine: Justice and War Crimes: Japan and the Allies, 1945 – 1951’.

History Council of Western Australia, 2022 Awards

I am delighted that the History Council will again present its annual **History Awards** to individuals and organisations who have made outstanding contributions to advocacy for and/or understandings of Western Australian history.

This year we received more than 17 nominations from individuals, museums, local government organisations, and community and professional associations. Nominations were assessed by an experienced panel of judges and ratified by the History Council Committee. Awards will be presented for the following categories at the 2022 AGM:

- an outstanding and enduring contribution to understandings, impact and advocacy in Western Australian history;
- a significant contribution to understandings of Indigenous history in Western Australia;
- a significant contribution to understandings of local history in Western Australia; and
- a special judges’ award for an innovative and transformative project in Western Australian history.

Advocacy

The History Council’s work in advocacy for history and heritage has continued in the past year. We have made **submissions to local, state and federal governments** on matters relating to social, material and Indigenous history and heritage. These have included:

- the Premier, Mark McGowan, and the Minister for Heritage and the Arts, the Hon David Templeman, regarding state planning for the 2026 and 2029 anniversaries;
- the City of Swan regarding the Guildford Heritage Area Policy Review; and
- the Chair and CEO of the ABC, regarding the role of archivists in the organisation's records.

Our partnership with New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia in the History Councils of Australia continues. This year, the History Councils also joined the Australian Historical Association in advocacy on behalf of the ABC archives and archivists.

Finally, I am very pleased to acknowledge the impact of many of our History Council committee in a new project. Many of you will be familiar with—and probably contributors to and users of—the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Earlier this year a number of long-serving colleagues retired from the Western Australian working party of the ADB, and over recent months a number of new members have been introduced to the national project. At a recent meeting with Malcolm Allbrook, Managing Editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, it was striking how many of those joining the organisation from WA are also serving on the History Council committee—a reminder of their ongoing commitment, impact and service, for which I thank them all.

Communications

We recognised last year that emailed newsletters aren't always the most agile form of communication for members, and in 2022 we attempted a review of our communications strategy.

A positive step to modernise our communications plan was to shift the role of memberships secretary to 'memberships and communication', which Toni Church has been undertaking for the past year.

Our committee members volunteer their time, as you know, and the little time that is available to each of us has been the biggest impediment to working further in this space. Nonetheless, we hope to achieve further improvements to a comms strategy in the coming months.

Thank you

In conclusion, may I thank each of you for your continuing support of the History Council. Never has the work of organisations such as ours been more important; never has it been more urgent for the Humanities and Social Sciences to be heard and for their impact to be felt. Your membership of our organisation helps give us a voice with which to be advocates, and I thank you.

Again, I thank my colleagues who have served on the committee this past year, and in particular Lucy Hair who, as secretary, works tirelessly to support the council and makes much of what we do possible.