



President's Report 2019–2020

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It gives me great pleasure to present the President's Report for 2019–2020, although as might be expected it falls into two very different parts.

In September 2019 we held another interesting seminar. Garry Richardson returned to the Oral History Tasmania seminar program, this time to share aspects of his own life in 'Half a lifetime: thirty-nine and a half years in forestry'. Barb Lypka and Chris Goodacre spoke about the Friends of the Theatre Royal's project documenting the inside story of the theatre's significant performers and theatre makers in the period 1960s–1980s in 'An oral history of the Theatre Royal'. Finally, Elizabeth Nickols' talk about 'The people you meet each day' focused particularly on her interviews with Dutch migrants of Penguin and Ulverstone. This talk attracted a number of people connected to the local Dutch community, and it was pleasing to see that we had an improved attendance compared with the previous year. The move from August to September may also have contributed.

The biennial National Oral History conference was held in October in Brisbane. Our two scholarship holders, Yvette Barry and Elisha Goss, proved worthy recipients who contributed during the conference and then wrote detailed accounts for the benefit of all members; these were published in the December issue of *Real to Reel*. I must thank the committee who again paid part of the costs for my attendance. Apart from the opportunity to discuss the latest developments in oral history, the conferences provide the only time for the committee of Oral History Australia to meet in person and determine future directions.

In early 2020 we were beginning the process of planning the usual May workshop and September seminar when all plans were thrown into disarray with the Covid-19 lockdown. The committee continued to meet via the new (to us) technology of Zoom and this has been quite satisfactory, but the workshop had to be postponed. We considered holding both the workshop and seminar online, recognising that these would not have worked as well, but in June government restrictions eased and we were able to plan an August workshop and continue with the September seminar. In both cases we needed to leave the provision of food and drinks up to each participant, in order to comply with Covid restrictions. We therefore reduced the cost to attenders of both events.

Finding a venue for the workshop in Launceston has been difficult since the Queen Victoria Museum decided some years ago to close at 4.00. Several possibilities were explored but even where rooms were still available during Covid times, the cost was often prohibitive. So it was

very pleasing that Lana Wall found the Green Centre at Peacehaven would be available in August.

Covid-19 has had one worthwhile outcome. Oral History Victoria holds regular face-to-face meetings where members can have a casual discussion of oral history issues over a coffee or wine. However, this has not been possible in Tasmania with our far-flung membership. Now that we have been introduced to Zoom it was possible to schedule Tasmania's first 'fireside chat' in June. Attenders were from all regions and the event proved a winner. A second event is planned for later in the year.

We made a change to the website layout this year, by including an Acknowledgment of Country as a footer on each page.

The main activity this year has been planning for the biennial National conference, scheduled to be held at the Tramsheds in Launceston in October 2021. Business Events Tasmania supplied a variety of Launceston postcards for inclusion in delegates' satchels for last year's Brisbane conference, and I gave a short speech at the close of proceedings inviting people to come. However, Covid then put a face-to-face conference in jeopardy. In consultation with Oral History Australia the decision has been made to continue planning as if it will go ahead, with a final judgment to be made in the first half of next year. If meeting in person proves impossible, the conference will proceed online. Oral History Australia has provided \$2000 seeding money.

The committee is still running smoothly, with Alison Johnston continuing to take the minutes and Lana Wall keeping track of the finances. Long-time member Terry Fritsche did not seek re-election last year, and I'd like to thank her for her contribution which included taking the minutes for a number of years. We were delighted to welcome Cindy Thomas to our deliberations and I thank her, along with continuing members Jon Addison, Karin Lê, Jai Paterson and Leonie Prevost. And as always I would like to thank the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery for its continued support.