

President's Report 2020–2021

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It gives me great pleasure to present the President's Report for 2020–2021. It has been a very different year from our usual ones because of the impact of Covid-19.

As noted in last year's report, our customary May workshop was unable to be held because of the Covid lockdown. We considered moving it online but fortunately restrictions were lifted enough for us to hold a face-to-face workshop in August. The Green room at Peacehaven proved to be a suitable venue with sanitiser made available and chairs able to be far enough apart for social distancing. Providing food on shared plates was not allowed but participants were happy to bring their own lunches. Lana Wall has to be particularly thanked for organising the use of the room.

In September 2020 we held another interesting seminar. Again we were unable to provide food so the usual format of three speakers with lunch in between the second and third speakers was changed to having only two speakers after lunch. Even so we had a good turnout.

Debra Cardogan-Cowper from the Tasmanian Wool Centre in Ross spoke on the topic, '*Dial a Local*': *sharing our locals' stories* about Ross oral histories, excerpts of which have been incorporated into a historic phone box so visitors can 'dial up' to hear them. She was followed by Terrie Pollard and Kim Johnson talking about the book Kim initiated, *When we were young*, publishing the recollections of Kentish residents about the first 20 years of their lives. Both talks were well received.

We asked those who attended which seminar format they preferred, either two or three speakers, and the vote was almost evenly split. If we looked at just members and again non-members, the result was the same. The committee decided to keep to the usual three speakers in future, Covid willing. No seminar was planned for 2021 because of the national conference.

As mentioned last year, our first online 'fireside chat' was successful so we scheduled another later in the year. However, there was no interest, perhaps because face-to-face meetings were now possible.

In 2021 we reverted to the usual schedule and held another successful workshop in Glenorchy in May. It's interesting to note that interest in learning how to do oral histories has remained constant over the almost 30 years that we have put them on.

The main activity this year of course has been planning for the biennial National conference, scheduled to be held at the Tramsheds in Launceston in October. The title was discussed at both state and national level and eventually we chose *Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges*. The title proved apt. Our initial confidence that Australia's good record at keeping Covid at bay would allow a face-to-face conference gradually dissipated in the face of the rapid spread of the Delta variant of Covid which led to more lockdowns interstate.

Nevertheless we continued to plan in the hope that the conference could go ahead, either in person or online. We offered scholarships to attend the conference to university students and, for the first time, senior school children. Jeanette Thompson was successful with her application but we did not receive any applications from school students.

In just the last few days we have decided to postpone the conference until 2022. It was a difficult decision but in the end clearly necessary.

Alison Johnston continues to take the minutes and Lana Wall keeps a steady eye on the finances. Jai Paterson has been an asset to the committee so we regret that she has decided to step down this year. I thank them for their contribution along with the other members Jon Addison, Karin Lê, Leonie Prevost and Cindy Thomas, especially in the last twelve months when more frequent and longer meetings have been required. And as always I would like to thank the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery for its continued support.