

# HISTORY COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

PO Box 1619 West Perth 6872  
ABN: 8338 3850 795

---

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2003/2004**

At our inaugural general meeting on 19 March 2003, the first committee of the History Council of Western Australia was elected. Since then the constitution has been formally adopted by the membership and the Council has been incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987* on 5 June 2003. At the end of June 2003 membership stood at 137.

The inaugural committee was as follows:

Dr. Jenny Gregory (President), Dr. Sue Graham-Taylor (Vice President), Dr. Rita Farrell (Secretary), Mr. Robert Mitchell (Treasurer) and Committee Members; Ms Lennie McCall, Ms Ruth Marchant James, Ms Moira Mulligan, Ms Kris Bizzaca, Dr Helen Henderson, Mr Gerard Foley, Ms Jennie Carter, Ms Lynley Forgione, Ms Jenni Woodroffe, Dr Neville Green, Associate Professor Lenore Layman. Ms Jill Milroy and Ms Donna Oxenham. During the year Ms Donna Oxenham resigned and Mr Blaze Kwaymullina joined the committee.

The Committee has met monthly since April 2003 and has worked to further the objects of the Council. These include raising the profile of history at all levels of government and throughout the community; providing advocacy for history and heritage collections; and functioning as an information, communication and referral centre for individuals and organisations in the history community.

### **Laying the Foundations**

This past year has been one in which we have laid the foundations for future activities. We have developed a Strategic Plan, facilitated by committee member Dr Helen Henderson, which will guide our future activities over the next three years. We have also developed a Privacy Statement and appointed an Honorary Auditor, Rob Wallis.

We have been fortunate in gaining the support of the WA History Foundation, which has provided a grant of \$25,000, to enable the History Council to

- establish a corporate presence

As a result a logo and graphics have been designed, stationery and a brochure has been printed and a web site ([www.historycouncilwa.org.au](http://www.historycouncilwa.org.au)) has been established, so that we can

- establish a community profile
- increase corporate and individual membership
- enhance the status of the Council as a professionally orientated peak body enabling it to carry out its function as an advocate for history
- facilitate liaison between the Council and its affiliated membership and external bodies

- obtain administrative support

To date, the activities of the Council have been carried out through the efforts of the Committee members. Most of these are people with demanding professional lives and the requirements of the Council necessarily take lower priority than the needs of their paid employment. We foresee an increase in its activities over the coming years and are presently in the process of appointing a part-time Executive Officer, at approximately one day per week. This will ensure

- more efficient responses to correspondence;
- consolidated control over record keeping, including maintenance of the membership database;
- a standardised approach to record keeping;
- timely preparation of the newsletter;
- maintenance of the web site;
- a single point of contact for conference/event registration; and
- a single point of contact for membership enquiries.

- set up a Corporate infrastructure

Some capital investment will be necessary for the Executive Officer to function effectively, including office equipment and furniture. Office space may ultimately be available in the History Centre foreshadowed by the Premier, Dr Geoff Gallop. In the meantime, the National Trust of Australia has indicated a willingness to provide some office space free of charge.

We are very grateful to the WA History Foundation for their support.

### **Pursuing our objectives**

The Committee issued press releases during the year to raise awareness of its existence and its objectives. Our first press release resulted in a feature article in the *West Australian* on 16 July 2003 about the aims and objectives of the History Council.

We have discussed a variety of issues in considerable depth and have lobbied various organizations and state and federal members of parliament to advocate for history. These issues, a number of which have been raised by members of the History Council, have included the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dutch contact in 2006; the relocation of the statue of James Stirling; the WA Heritage Icons project; the move for compulsory observance of Anzac Day in WA schools; the retention of Commonwealth Census data; the storage, preservation and accessibility of school records; the Historic Records Rescue Consortium; the Joint Copying Project; the relocation of the WA Museum's collections to Welshpool; the Wand Report on Native Title archives; the future of the Museum of Childhood and Museum Studies at Edith Cowan University. We have also begun to develop questionnaires to candidates in local and state government elections to raise the profile of history.

We have also held discussions with the State Government regarding the importance of including historians on relevant State government boards and the current system of Premier's Awards. We successfully nominated an historian to State Records Commission for appointment to State Records Advisory Committee; gained representation of the Historic Records Rescue Consortium; gained appointment on the National Archives of Australia (WA) Consultative Forum and the Board of the West Australian History Foundation.

In September 2003 the History Council was represented at the Family History Fair held at the State Library.

To facilitate the exchange of ideas between History Councils in Australia, during the year the President visited the premises of the History Council of NSW and met with Dr Penny Russell, its President, and corresponded with the President of newly formed the History Council of SA.

After investigating activities in other states and the Western Australian calendar of major events, it was decided that our major public event for 2003 would be a forum to be held during Proclamation Week. 'Proclaiming History: A Proclamation Week Forum' was held at The Constitutional Centre of Western Australia on Saturday 25 October 2003. A small but appreciate audience heard eminent speakers Professor Norman Etherington, Emeritus Professor David Black, and Mr Peter Johnston. Papers from the forum will be published electronically on our new web site.

The History Council was invited by the Constitutional Centre to become involved in a major conference, 'WA 2029: Sharing the Journey', an initiative of the Premier, to be held on 17-19 November 2004 in the new Perth Convention Centre. Twenty-two members attended an ordinary General Meeting of the History Council on 20 November 2003 to discuss the conference. History is one of seven strands of the conference: these include indigenous issues, heritage, the built environment, the constitution, youth, and science and the environment. Some 53 people have

submitted proposals for papers for the history strand, which is presently being refined. We are very grateful for the work of Jenni Woodroffe in the initial planning for the conference.

Despite intimations from the government a State History Centre, which would provide accommodation for the History Council as well as other history organisations, has not yet been established. Our meeting place continues to be the Constitutional Centre of WA and we are very grateful for the continuing support of its Director, Betty O'Rourke, and her staff.

Dr Jenny Gregory  
President