



President's Report 2022–2023

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It gives me great pleasure to present the President's Report for 2022–2023.

The first few months were dominated by preparations for the Oral History Australia conference which we hosted in Launceston on October 13–16. *Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges* finally went ahead after its postponement due to Covid twelve months previously. Even as late as August the committee was still concerned by sporadic Covid outbreaks around Australia, but by October these had basically died down so the conference proceeded with little requirement for masks. Delegates universally expressed relief that it took place face-to-face rather than online which had been a possibility.

The conference was a great success, especially the three plenary sessions. New Orleans' Mark Cave's keynote address, *Why did this happen? Making meaningful answers in the aftermath of crisis*, demonstrated that oral histories after a crisis can be much more important than day-to-day journalism in writing a coherent narrative of what happened and why. Kim Mahood's *Mapping place, mapping story* described her cross-cultural mapping work which is designed to foster communication and understanding between traditional custodians of country and the non-Indigenous stakeholders with an interest in the same country. And finally palawa women Theresa Sainty and Zoe Rimmer closed the conference with a powerful discussion of the significance of memory and oral history for lutruwita's palawa people. The first and last of these are available on Oral History Australia's YouTube channel, along with a session on Migrants and Refugees and Margaret Pack's presentation on *A history of abortion care in Aotearoa New Zealand*.

The other 74 speakers discussed a myriad of varied topics which prompted animated discussions amongst the 119 delegates. A profit of almost \$12,000 was shared equally with Oral History Australia which had provided a lot of the seeding funding. The committee will shortly be considering what to do with our healthy bank balance. Our scholarship holder Jeanette Thompson provided a comprehensive report on the sessions she attended.

It was very unfortunate that the conference coincided with massive rainfall in Launceston which led to the cancellation of Aunty Patsy Cameron's booked-out post-conference walk at the Cataract Gorge. At very short notice committee member Jon Addison offered an informative replacement tour of *The First Tasmanians* exhibition at the Queen Victoria Art Gallery which was gratefully accepted by a number of delegates, while member Julieanne Richards also provided a most interesting tour of the Beaconsfield Mine and Heritage Centre.

The cancellation of Aunty Patsy's tour was not all negative. Five people donated their refund to Oral History Tasmania to support Indigenous people. After consultation it was decided that the \$300 would be put towards a scholarship for a palawa person to attend the 2024 conference in Melbourne. Another three people did not provide their bank details for the refund, and eventually \$180 was donated to the taypani milaythina-tu/Return to Country fund at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for the repatriation of cultural material.

Membership of Oral History Tasmania rose to a high level because of the conference, as people could access the discounted registration fee. The reduction in membership fee may also have encouraged more people to join. The Household category has been discontinued Australia-wide as it's been barely used.

Our customary oral history workshop proceeded in Glenorchy in May, with the usual interesting mix of participants and much lively discussion.

In 1991 the organisation produced its first newsletter, later to be called *Real to Reel*, and it has been published three times a year since 1994. However, regular emails to members with the latest news have gradually become more important. In August 2022 the committee decided it was time to cease publication, joining nearly every other state which has made that decision in recent years. This decision is up for ratification by this Annual General Meeting. All newsletters are still available on the website.

For some years Consumer Affairs has suggested that our turnover is too small to warrant an audit, and following the resignation of Philip Brown who was our auditor for several years it was difficult to find a replacement, especially one who would do the job for a reasonable rate. We will therefore be asking members at this meeting to change the constitution so that an auditor is no longer required. If this is agreed to, the committee will assist the treasurer to draw up the financial report each year.

We have begun the process of updating the website to reflect the fact that we are a member of Oral History Australia (OHA) along with the other states. Over the next few months we will be moving to a multi-site under the OHA umbrella, which will enable all national news to be automatically posted to the Tasmanian site.

I would like to thank the committee who worked especially hard in the lead-up to and during the conference: Cindy Thomas, Jon Addison, Karin Lê, Leonie Prevost and Virginia Greenhill, with particular mention of Lana Wall who had a huge job keeping track of the finances. Virginia kindly volunteered to take the minutes following the retirement of Alison Johnston and we were pleased to welcome Wendy Green to join us. Earlier this year we were sorry to lose Leonie who resigned after several years on the committee; we are still looking for a replacement. And as always I would like to thank the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery for its continued support.