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ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012

The 2011/2012 Committee of the History Council of WA was as follows:

Dr Lise Summers (President), Professor Ed Jaggard (Vice President), Mr. Robert Mitchell (Treasurer) and Committee Members: Ms Gail Barrow, Mr Glen Bennett, Mr Steve Errington, Dr Sue Graham-Taylor, Ms Kerry Boyd, Mr Noel Robertson, Mr Andrew Gill, Dr Sue Hart, Ms Rosemary Fitzgerald, Ms Merredith Southee and Ms Ann Delroy.

Ms Julia Wallis, the Council's Executive Officer, is an ex-officio member.

At the end of July 2012 membership stood at - with 28 institutional members and 78 individual members.

Reports of Activities to 30 June 2012

Communications

This year saw a change to the History Council website, and the launch of our Facebook and Twitter accounts. The History Council website had been established with assistance from the National Trust of WA, and they continued to provide hosting support. However, the site was becoming increasingly difficult to manage and navigate and the decision was made to seek a new hosting arrangement and software platform. The change enabled the site to be hosted in Western Australia, and allowed for the addition of an extra email account for president@historycouncilwa.org.au.

The Facebook and Twitter accounts, with 91 and 85 followers each, enable the Council to promote a range of activities, events and news items, not just to those followers, but to a much larger potential audience through the interconnectivity of these media.

Our email roundups continue to go out on a weekly basis, thanks to the Executive Officer, Julia Wallis, who has also taken up production of the newsletter. The newsletter was edited until recently by Jennie Carter and we are extremely grateful for her work on behalf of the Council in this regard. Jennie continues to represent the History Council on the State Records Advisory Committee.

Advocacy and events

The Council is represented on two committees – the State Records Advisory Committee and the National Archives of Australia Consultative Forum. Unfortunately, broader representation on committees and statutory bodies such as the Heritage Council has not been made available to the History Council. The WA History Awards are now managed in-house by the State Library of Western Australia. The Council is concerned to ensure that our concerns continue to be presented to these and similar bodies and have undertaken to make submissions and comments on a number of issues including:

- the Legal Deposit Bill;
- review of the State Heritage Act;
- National review of Heritage and Culture; and,
- submissions on the Perth Waterfront.

Although unable to draft a submission on the Aboriginal Heritage Act, due to the very short consultative window, we have developed a new Indigenous Heritage advocacy position, and will continue to watch developments in this area with interest. Similarly, we were given a very short period to respond to the State Library's new Strategic Directions, but look forward to greater consultation as the Library Board looks to develop programs for their implementation. The Council continues to advocate for improved funding for culture and arts institutions in Western Australia, in particular for a new WA Museum in the Cultural Centre and a repository for the State archives collection.

The Council was represented on a panel discussion on the heritage interpretation of the Treasury Buildings by Dr Summers and Mr Gill, while Dr Graham-Taylor attended a presentation on the Perth Esplanade in August 2011. We continue to monitor these developments closely and, as stated above, have made a number of submissions and comments on the Esplanade project. The Council has also prepared a number of media releases on the lack of good historical information on the site and issues relating to heritage interpretation. As a result of these media releases, Dr Summers was invited to speak on RTR FM and 6PR.

The Council held two major events in the 2011/2012 year - a forum on the history of the Perth Esplanade, which was created in direct response to the minimal consultation on the heritage interpretation of the site; and a forum on the Australian Curriculum Framework, chaired by Mr Glen Bennett. Our End of Year event at Heathcote Museum enabled the general membership to view the interesting art interpreting the history of the site.

The Council will continue to develop a range of advocacy positions, with a statement on the role of Rottnest and its potential as a cultural heritage site as the next priority. We continue to seek ways to improve community awareness of the History Council and to advocate for history at all levels in Western Australian society.

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I thank all retiring members — Dr Sue Graham-Taylor, Dr Sue Hart, Mr Noel Robertson and Ms Ann Delroy — for all their valuable work on the committee of the History Council. In particular, I'd like to thank Dr Graham-Taylor, who stayed on to assist the President in this transition year, and has been active in the campaign for a better recognition of the history and heritage of the Perth Esplanade and in raising awareness of issues relating to the review of the Aboriginal Heritage Act, and environmental history generally. Professor Jaggard has stepped down as Vice President, but will remain on the committee.

We are grateful for the continuing financial support of the WA History Foundation and for support in terms of venues to the Constitutional Centre and the National Trust of Western Australia.

Dr Lise Summers
President
August 2012