

PHA NSW & ACT



Professional Historians Association

NEW SOUTH WALES AND AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Annual Report 2023-24

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1. PHA NSW & ACT background and objectives

PHA NSW & ACT (Inc), c/- History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000.

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The Professional Historians Association of New South Wales was formed in 1985, then renamed in 2014 as the Professional Historians Association of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory Incorporated. It is a founding member of the federal peak body Professional Historians Australia (PHA) (formerly the [Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations Inc. \(ACPHA\)](#)).

The objectives of PHA NSW & ACT are:

The Association works to support and develop the professionalism and status of public historians in the community through:

- I. Leading public historians in the continuing professional development of their skills and practices across a life-long career as a historian
- II. Facilitating and inculcating an ethos of high standards of professional and ethical practices among public historians
- III. Promoting concepts of public history and professional practice across the many fields of historical inquiry and diverse forms of interpreting and presenting history to which public historians are significant contributors
- IV. Advocating public history perspectives in public debates concerning interpretations of history and the keeping of documentary, environmental and other historical records
- V. Providing potential clients with guidance on engaging public historians for appropriate remuneration, conditions and other considerations
- VI. Representing members in contractual and employment matters
- VII. Recognising the outstanding contributions made by public historians within the field of history and within the broader community
- VIII. Fostering mutually supportive and co-operative relationships among public historians, being a forum for the exchange and sharing of information and news between fellow public historians, and publishing in any form of technology materials relating to the objects of the Association
- IX. Maintaining links, formal and informal, including through memberships and affiliations, with public and private external bodies engaged in the practice of history in any of its diverse forms

- X. Maintaining membership of and contributing to the evolution of Professional Historians Australia Inc, and maintaining and deepening collegiate links with other professional and public historians’ associations around the world.

2. Membership of the 38th PHA NSW & ACT Committee 2023-24

Chair	Naomi Parry Duncan
Deputy Chair & PHA delegate	Jeff Hopkins-Weise
Secretary and Public Officer	Alison Wishart
Treasurer and PHA delegate	Roland Leikauf
Member (Memberships)	Jacqui Newling
Member (website)	Phillip Jaworski
Member (Events) (until Nov. 2023)	Rachel Franks
Administration Officer	Nina Mohdzaini

The following report of the activities of the Professional Historians Association NSW & ACT is prepared in accordance with Clause 24 (2) (b) of the Constitution of the Association, being that the business of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will include ‘reports on the activities of the Association during the last preceding financial year’.

3. Reports

3.1 Chair's Report

This was my first year as chair, and I would like to buck convention by starting by expressing my gratitude to the committee. We've been a small group, with three of six members starting afresh in our roles, and we had no events officer, but this is a fantastic committee to be a part of, let alone have the honour of chairing. My thanks to Alison Wishart as secretary, Roland Leikauf as treasurer, Jeff Hopkins-Weise as vice-president, Jacqui Newling as membership officer and Phillip Jaworski as our digital wonder. I would also like to thank Jeff and Roland for their work on the national PHA, and Phillip for transitioning our web support to a new provider and safeguarding the security of our members.

I would also like to thank the new members who have joined us this year, and have shown your support for the aims and objectives of our organisation. History matters, and doing history well is a public service. It is an honour to be the chair of an organisation that is solely devoted to doing history well, in plain view!

So, to talk about the year in history. The biggest thing was perhaps the saddest. In the organisation's last annual report, outgoing chair Peter Hobbins talked about the promise of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, but as we know, the October 2023 referendum was a resounding 'No' to a campaign that had been 17 years in the making. While this campaign was always driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it required support from governments to succeed. The blocking campaign conducted by the Federal Opposition was devastating, but I have also been dismayed at the limited response of the Albanese Government to addressing the aftermath. I feel historians have a key role here, to keep telling the truth about our past and keep finding ways to ensure Indigenous cultures in this country have a future. While the Voice element of the Uluru Statement has been put on hold, Treaty and Truth remain defining objectives. Historians are vital to both those processes.

The Australian Government has also been disappointing on tertiary education, and has not done anything to undo the damaging 'Job Ready Graduates' scheme forced on universities by the previous government. This means arts and humanities students, including those doing history, are saddled with outrageous levels of debt and that universities now pay more to teach them. This results in academic job cuts and is a deliberate attempt to dissuade students from taking up history and archaeology courses. This has a direct impact on our profession because it reduces the pool of trained graduates and limits the impact historians can have in academia. Professional history thrives when there is interplay between the academy and the world outside – we need each other.

The NSW Government announced a new Heritage Strategy for NSW towards the end of last year, but briefings have been thin on the ground. The NSW Department of Environment and Heritage website states:

The NSW Heritage Strategy will work to recognise, protect and celebrate the places, objects and cultural practices that give our communities meaning. It looks to modernise heritage systems and processes, understand the meaning of heritage to

the NSW community and address key challenges of heritage now and into the future.

The strategy will:

- *implement the review of the Heritage Act 1977 (NSW) to ensure its powers and responsibilities meet the needs of coming decades*
- *examine the section 170 Heritage and Conservation Registers of NSW Government agencies and the management of the assets listed on the registers*
- *examine the interaction between state planning laws, planning policies and the Heritage Act*
- *review the funding support and incentives for heritage conservation and maintenance.*

This builds on the 2021 Review of the Heritage Act, which was stalled when the government changed. The new government is applying stringent financial measures to all of its departments and agencies, so I suspect action on this will be slow. The recent revival of the Heritage Forum and the appointment of new members of the Heritage Council are promising developments, so we will keep you posted.

Events are a vexing question for the committee at the moment. Our Christmas Party on 6 December 2023 was well attended and the committee has resolved to work on increasing these informal social events, with our first on 27 August. While Zoom makes it possible for the committee to meet regularly and with ease, it is lovely to see historians' faces! Our other events were less successful. We moved our May Reconciliation Week event online, owing to low booking numbers. Our attempts to organise a joint forum with the Royal Australian Historical Society during NAIDOC Week in July failed due to lack of interest, despite having a great lineup of speakers and a good location in Springwood in the Blue Mountains. It was planned for a week during the school holidays in winter, but I feel something deeper is happening across the community. It seems the initial excitement people felt at re-entering the world after COVID-19 lockdowns has abated, and people are going out less often. I intend to ask our members what events they would like us to deliver in the coming year and how we might tailor online experiences to suit them. I certainly think it is time to consider some professional development activities and would love to get some ideas about the needs of the practitioners (and aspiring practitioners) in our midst. While historians definitely get better as we get older, it is important that we nurture up-and-coming professional historians.

It has been useful to collaborate with other organisations over the last year. I'm excited that we might be able to arrange some joint hybrid events with the Royal Australian Historical Society in the near future. I am also grateful for the work of the national body. Lucy Bracey attended the Australian Historical Association conference in Adelaide in July, and spoke on behalf of the national PHA in her capacity as president. As she has said in the latest issue of *Historia*, it is important that historians are advocates, rather than passive witnesses to history. This is especially the case in a world that sometimes seems to be post-truth.

Public history, in all its forms, remains wildly popular and professional history is strong in NSW. The

UTS Centre for Public History, Museums of History NSW and State Records, the History Council, the RAHS, the State Library of NSW and the City of Sydney are among the organisations that produce lively work that engages the public while maintaining high standards. The backgrounds of our new members reflect a wide array of interests and passions and I must say, it is wonderful to be part of an organisation that truly has something for everyone. I'm looking forward to getting out and about a bit next year, finding out more about what makes our members tick, and reinforcing the good reputation of this organisation.

With that thought, I conclude this brief survey of my first year as president of the PHA NSW-ACT Branch.

Naomi Parry Duncan, President

3.2 Secretary & Public Officer's Report

Since the AGM on 20 September 2023 the executive committee has met every six weeks with a longer break in summer. There were a total of eight meetings, all of which were held online. The committee is currently made up of members based in Sydney, Canberra and Katoomba, making online meetings the preferred method.

Minutes of previous meetings are saved on the shared Google Drive and can be requested for viewing by contacting the Secretary or Administration Officer.

As Secretary I was able to delegate most administrative tasks to the Administration Officer. This paid position is held by Nina Mohdzaini who provided consistent and vital support to myself and the committee.

With the assistance of the Admin Officer, the committee sent out a newsletter to members following each of the meetings, plus some additional special notices. I hope members continue to share news, achievements and opportunities with other members through the PHA newsletter by contacting the Secretary or Admin Officer.

Our Admin Officer also compiles and sends out the three-weekly National Jobs Bulletin on behalf of Professional Historians Australia. Since the 2023 AGM, 15 Bulletins (up to 25 August) were circulated, advertising a total of 264 jobs to PHA members across Australia. The majority of those jobs were in the heritage sector (122), followed by the museum sector (82) and history sector (45). There was also an increase in fellowships / scholarships (15). Compared to last year, there were more jobs advertised through our employment bulletin for members.

In the past year, 12 small jobs (up until 25 August) were advertised through the Small Jobs Bulletin on an ad hoc basis.

All correspondence, with the exception of one membership renewal, now comes via email. Following a formal agreement with the Royal Australian Historical Society, all non-electronic mail can be sent to the PHA NSW & ACT c/- History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000.

The correspondence received and answered by the secretary includes people wanting to get in touch with past or current members; enquiries about how to advertise for a historian to do work and how to write a project brief; and upcoming events.

2023–24 was my second year as Secretary & Public Officer on the executive committee of PHA NSW & ACT. Taking on this role has given me the opportunity to expand my professional network in NSW while also being of service to other historians and the profession. I am grateful for the warm welcome, support, and guidance I have received from members of the committee.

Alison Wishart, Secretary & Public Officer

3.3 Treasurer's Report

This year showed a healthy development of the finances of the PHA NSW-ACT. A major contributing factor was that few extraordinary expenses like last FY's purchase and implementation of Wild Apricot were necessary. Another factor was that fewer events took place, and event expenditure fell considerably. The capitation fee increase speaks for a healthy increase in membership numbers. Most of the more significant expenses decided by the current committee, especially the website transfer to a new provider, will impact the 2024/25 FY. Because this report is based on the PHA NSW-ACT bank account transfers, STRIPE fees are already deducted and not included in this calculation. The STRIPE fees for this FY were \$259.79.

Roland Leikauf, Treasurer

PHA NSW & ACT Income and Expenditure Report			
INCOME	Previous Year	INCOME	Reporting Year
	2022–23		2023–24
Income Various		Income Various	
Membership subscriptions	\$17,508.84	Income Various - Membership subscriptions - Direct Transfer	\$4,805.00
Copyright Agency Australia	\$101.07	Income Various - Membership subscriptions - Stripe	\$11,505.92
PHA Australia National Jobs Bulletin	\$840.00	Income Various - PHA Australia National Jobs Bulletin Contribution	\$840.00
CommBiz fee refund	\$0.01		
Total Income Various	\$18,449.92	Income Events	\$17,150.92
Income Events			
History in July	\$15.91		
Christmas Party	\$260.21	Income Events - Christmas Party	\$199.50
History Matters (share from Oral History NSW)	---		

National Reconciliation Week	\$1,177.57	Income Events - Reconciliation Week	\$306.46
Total Income Events	\$1,453.69	Total Income Events	\$505.96
TOTAL INCOME	\$19,903.61	TOTAL INCOME	\$17,656.88
EXPENDITURE		EXPENDITURE	
Expenditure Admin		Expenditure Admin	
Administration Officer	\$3,071.25	Expenditure Admin - Administration Officer	\$3,613.75
Professional Historians Australia Capitation Fee	\$3,150.00	Expenditure Admin - PHA Australia Capitation Fee	\$3,360.00
Insurance	---	Expenditure Admin - Insurance	\$980.00
Governance (Fair Trading & external advice)	\$55.00	Expenditure Admin - Governance (Fair Trading & external advice)	\$224.50
Bank fees	\$6.00	Expenditure Admin - Bank fees	\$62.53
Website Domain name (DDNS)	---	Expenditure Admin - Website Domain name (DDNS)	\$35.00
Website hosting (Ventra IP)	\$129.64	Expenditure Admin - Website hosting (Ventra IP)	\$192.00
Website maintenance (Let's Build a Website)	\$588.00	Expenditure Admin - Website maintenance (Let's Build a Website)	\$773.00
Website software licences	\$149.07		
Wild Apricot subscription (2-year plan)	\$2,009.97		
Scans of PHA archives (ADEC Preview Solutions)	\$601.02		

Membership refunds (double payments, etc)	\$542.93	Expenditure Admin - Membership refunds (double payments etc)	\$90.00
Total Expenditure Admin	\$10,302.88	Total Expenditure Admin	\$9,330.78
Expenditure Events		Expenditure Events	
History in July			
Reimbursements (cancelled in 2022)	\$17.68		
Subtotal Expenditure History in July	\$17.68		
Christmas Party		Christmas Party	
Catering	\$609.99	Catering	212.52
Refund ticket	\$15.00		
Subtotal Expenditure Christmas Party	\$624.99	Subtotal Expenditure Christmas Party	\$212.52
History Matters			
Fees for speakers and chairs	---		
Subtotal Expenditure History Matters	---		
Other Events		Other Events	
History for Children speaker fee	\$200.00		
PHA December Bowlo Event	---		
National Reconciliation Week	---	Expenditure Events - Reconciliation Week	277.55
History in the Pub	\$93.17		
Subtotal Expenditure Other Events	\$293.17	Subtotal Expenditure Other Events	\$277.55
Total Expenditure Events	\$935.84	Total Expenditure Events	\$490.07

Expenditure Memberships, Prizes & Donations			
History Council of NSW membership	\$250.00	Expenditure MPD - History Council of NSW membership	\$250.00
Applied History Award contribution	\$500.00	Expenditure MPD - Applied History Award	\$1,000.00
RAHS membership	\$163.00	Expenditure MPD - RAHS membership	\$163.00
Donation to Reconciliation Australia	\$500.00	Expenditure MPD - Donation Reconciliation Australia	\$1,177.57
Total Expenditure Memberships and Prizes	\$1,413.00	Total Expenditure Memberships and Prizes	\$2,590.57
Expenditure Wild Apricot Implementation			
WA implementation (Advance AM)	\$4,345.00		
Website integration (Let's Build a Website)	\$360.00		
Total Expenditure Wild Apricot Implementation	\$4,705.00		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$17,356.72		\$12,411.42
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$2,546.89	SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$5,245.46
OPENING BALANCE	\$37,643.84		\$40,190.73
CLOSING BALANCE	\$40,190.73		\$45,436.19

3.4 Membership Officer's Report

Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024 the PHA NSW & ACT was pleased to welcome six new members at the professional level (MPHA) and two at the Graduate Level (GPHA):

- Allison O'Sullivan
- Maria Glaros
- Olivia Turner
- Tess Gardner
- Juanita Kwok
- Kath Kenny

At the graduate level:

- Maximilian Reid
- Mel Marland

At 30 June 2024, the total number of active memberships in all three membership categories was 111. (Note - this does not include two unpaid/lapsed members, one of which has since chosen to renew.)

There have also been discussions with other state branches and at the national level of the PHA regarding reviewing the various tiers of membership and establishing uniform criteria and approval processes to better serve existing and future members, and those who may wish to transfer between state branches. The committee looks forward to taking an active role in this process in the coming months.

Jacqui Newling, Membership Officer

3.5 Website Officer's report

Overall website function

The website is our main external face to the public and we are committed to keeping this functioning properly, for the benefit of our members.

Since joining the Committee in October 2023, my focus has been on consolidating the website's maintenance and hosting under a single entity. In July 2024, we signed up for the \$850 per annum Managed Hosting for Small Business Website package provided by CodeLab Pty Ltd. This meant ending the previous arrangement we had with Let's Build a Website for maintenance and Ventra IP for hosting. Under the new arrangement, CodeLab provides managed hosting with 24/7 customer service, maintenance check-ups to keep the website and its plugins up to date, security check-ups and regular backups.

My next steps will be to check that content on the website reflects the most up to date information for members and the public.

Wild Apricot

Advertising events and managing membership payments is conducted through the Wild Apricot platform that is integrated with the website.

Phillip Jaworski, Website Officer

3.6 Events Summary 2023–24

PHA NSW & ACT Christmas Gathering

- 6 December 2023, 5–9 pm
- The Terminus, Ultimo
- Attendance: approximately 20 members

A purely social event to catch up with fellow historians prior to the summer break.

Now more than ever: Reconciliation Action Plans

- 27 May 2024, 6–7 pm
- Registration was open to non-members and about 30 people attended
- Tickets: \$10. All the guest speakers chose to waive their fee, so a donation of \$500 was made to Reconciliation Australia.
- The event was originally planned as a hybrid event – to be held onsite at the Australian National Maritime Museum and online. However, due to the low registrations for the onsite option, the event was just held online.
- The three speakers – Peter Hobbins from the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS); Sharon Veale from GML Heritage; and Brett Adlington from Museums & Galleries of NSW – talked about how their history-focused organisations prepared and implemented Reconciliation Action Plans and how this has impacted on their business and members.
- A recording of the event can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwwqHXLkHvU>

2024 NAIDOC Week History Seminar

The PHA NSW/ACT partnered with the RAHS to prepare an event for NAIDOC Week in Springwood in the Blue Mountains on Friday 12 July. The keynote speaker was to be Emeritus Professor John Maynard, followed by PHA past President and RAHS Councillor Dr Mark Dunn, and Jasmyn Irwin and Emily Hanna from the Museums of History NSW. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to the low number of registrations.

Joint events with the RAHS

The PHA NSW/ACT has been approached by the RAHS to jointly organise and host some events in 2024. The events will be held onsite at History House (133 Macquarie Street, Sydney) and online. This will help to publicise the fact that History House is open again to the public, after COVID and some repairs. Once the RAHS has finished installing and testing the technology to allow them to host hybrid events, these will be planned for later in 2024 and 2025.

Due to the low number of people attending events in person in 2023, we will monitor the attendance to determine if it is better to just offer events online in future.

3.7 Professional Historians Australia (PHA) report from delegates

This past year has seen PHA NSW & ACT again well represented on our national body's committee which meets quarterly online on Saturdays via ZOOM. This past year our state association has been represented at PHA by our two delegates, Dr Roland Leikauf (nominally representing NSW) and Jeff Hopkins-Weise (representing ACT). These national committee meetings occurred on 11 November 2023, 3 February, 4 May, and 20 July 2024.

Our national organisation has continued to be ably led by President Lucy Bracey (from PHA VIC & TAS), with a strong focus on serving members, speaking as a national voice and promoting the work of professional historians. Key achievements for members include reinvigorating both our journal *Circa* and our quarterly e-Bulletin *Historia* (with Deborah Lee-Talbot as the current editor) and delivering the third Bill Wilson Oration online via ZOOM on 13 June 2024. A recording of Dr Rachel Buchanan's address 'Out of the Straight Jacket: the Art of Anti-Colonial History' is available for members at: <https://www.historians.org.au/wilson-history-oration>

The latest issue of *Circa* (Issue 8 2024) was released in March 2024, and a special online ZOOM meeting took place on 30 July to celebrate its release and to announce the winner of the best essay (Dr Roland Leikauf) and highly commended (Dr Carolyn Rasmussen) awards for articles which are found in *Circa* Issue 8. The quality of this new-look *Circa* issue is a testament to the wonderful work carried out by Francesca Beddie (PHA NSW & ACT) editor, with Elizabeth Offer (PHA Vic & TAS) as co-editor, along with the editorial board which includes one of our delegates, Jeff Hopkins-Weise, who is the PHA representative on this board.

PHA has also made available online all back issues of *Circa* (from Issue 1, 2010, through to Issue 7, 2020), along with this latest 2024 Issue 8 via the national body's website: <https://www.historians.org.au/circa>. Current (Issue No.56, August 2024) and back issues of our quarterly e-Bulletin *Historia* are also available online for reference and review: <https://www.historians.org.au/historia-newsletter>.

PHA is also undertaking ongoing discussions and investigations to unify some, or all, PHA processes and procedures. Increasingly, state/territory branches suggest changes that could be considered for implementation, or problems that could be solved, if greater unification can take place. Initial

investigations have started to assess what other kindred professional bodies in Australia have done or how they have united, operated, and provided services to their members, but this still requires more research. At this early stage of discussions, PHA VIC & TAS has suggested standardising membership levels and processes across all state/territory branches. PHA President Lucy Bracey has recently written to all state-territory associations to begin these discussions.

Another suggestion which promises to offer considerable efficiency, time and cost savings is a unification of membership databases with one Wild Apricot system shared by all state/territory associations. This would also alleviate the need for complicated membership transfers, would simplify the calculation of capitation fees, and streamline reporting. These are all medium to long-term PHA goals and any proposed changes will be raised with all state/territory associations first to gauge reactions and support, and only undertaken thereafter with their support.

PHA is now looking to the next bi-annual national conference which is to be held in Darwin in late 2025 and is supporting initial discussions and planning with PHA NT towards this conference event.

The AGM for PHA this year is being held online via ZOOM on Saturday 5 October 2024. This is to allow all the various state associations to hold their respective AGMs through August and September and for new state management committees to then be able to forward the names for delegates to the national body for the coming 2024-25 year.

Jeff Hopkins-Weise (PHA Vice President & PHA representative on Circa Editorial Board) and Roland Leikauf, PHA NSW & ACT delegates to Professional Historians Australia 2023-24

3.8 RAHS Library and Archives Strategic Review Working Party Report

Purpose of the Library and Archives Strategic Review Working Party

The purpose of the RAHS Library and Archives Strategic Review Working Party is to develop the strategies necessary to ensure the ongoing care and protection of the RAHS Library and Archives Collections. It meets on an ad hoc basis.

Working Party membership

Christine Yeats (PHA Representative), Carol Liston (immediate past President of the RAHS), Suzanne Holohan (RAHS General Manager), Alison Wishart (RAHS Councillor and Local History Librarian), Louise Trott (Archivist) and Donna Newton (RAHS Librarian).

Summary report on library activities over the past 12 month

1. Reopening of History House and the Library

In late 2023 the RAHS Council agreed to rationalise the proposed History House Building Project and focus on repairing the older heritage front part of the building. Following this decision the Library re-opened in the mid-2024 and is now offering a full range of services to in-person and remote users.

We also welcomed our library volunteers back to the Library and we have since recruited additional library volunteers to support a number of projects connected to the online catalogue and to help in promoting our library collections.

2. Advice and assistance to researchers

Although the Library was largely closed for much of the time, over the past 12 months the Librarian continued to provide research advice and assistance to RAHS members and others via email, telephone and the 'Ask a Librarian' service. This included responding to requests for JRAHS articles and items from the image collection for family history research, theses, publications, exhibitions, articles, website entries and media releases.

3. Implementation of the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS)

The staged approach to the roll-out of the online catalogue is continuing and it is hoped that by the end of 2024 users will have access to new online catalogue to find the 25,000 collection items including books, serials, maps, audio-visual materials and items available in our vertical files. There will also be access to the photograph collection. In addition, there is a separate project to upload the library's press clippings, photographs and glass slide collections into Liberty.

In the interim, Excel spreadsheets listing the following collections: books; journal, magazine and conferences; manuscripts; press clippings and glass slides are available on the RAHS website. There are also an additional 10,000 scanned photographs that are not included in these spreadsheets, which researchers can search when they visit the Library.

4. Ongoing library administration

In addition to the ongoing work on the rationalisation of the library collection the librarian is continuing to accession the books, periodicals and other additions for the collection. Regular updates about the library appear in the RAHS History magazine and the eNews.

Planning for 2024/2025

- Completing the implementation of the Liberty system, including reviewing and refining the previous Subject Headings.

- Continuing data and subject clean-up of records from the old systems as they are migrated to Liberty.
- Improve the basement/archives area and the library layout as part of the building improvements.

Christine Yeats, PHA Representative on the RAHS Library Committee

3.9 Mitchell Library Consultative Committee Report

The Mitchell Library Consultative Committee has been resuscitated with revised terms of reference and an expanded membership. It has met twice in the last year, and a number of significant changes have occurred during this period, including the appointment of a new State Librarian, Dr Caroline Butler-Bowdon.

Accessible entry has been enhanced, construction of a 344-seat auditorium underneath the Mitchell Reading Room completed and exhibition spaces have been expanded, including a new Photography Gallery. These were showcased at a successful Open Day in October 2023. The Library also conducted its first real survey since c2017, receiving 2600 responses.

A newsletter has been launched specifically designed for the research community, including information on new acquisitions, upcoming events and programs. See: [Sign up to join the State Library of NSW research community newsletter \(synergymail.com.au\)](mailto:synergymail.com.au)

The Library has been going through a process of identifying records/collections that contain confidential, personal and/or culturally sensitive information – eg Sydney City Mission records, the Salvation Army, Big Brother Movement, Australian Indigenous Ministries. The catalogue is progressively being annotated for both collections that require written authority to view and those that are partly restricted. Note that many of the collections so far identified are still fully or partially restricted.

Procedures have also been updated in response to inconsistencies found in managing access to sensitive collections. A set of guidelines have been developed for readers wanting to access information of a sensitive, personal or confidential nature, developed in association with key stakeholder groups. Whilst containing information on processes, they have also been designed with an empathy-based approach, providing more context, and better preparing readers for what they may find. See: https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/guidelines_accessing_sensitive_collections.pdf

The Library has also opened the Ginibi Room, a private viewing and consultation space room for First Nations visitors and scholars to use.

Digitisation has decreased since the money from the government-funded Digital Excellence Program was exhausted. Strategic priorities now focus on new acquisitions and at-risk collections such as acetate negatives. The Library is surveying and assessing valuable formats, prioritising by current condition and significance, to continue progress within these constraints.

However, a number of key items have been digitised in the last year, including:

- a large number of photographs and negatives from *Walkabout* magazine
- the Tasmanian Papers [Tasmanian Papers, 1803-1890, re the administration of the Tasmanian convict system]
- NSW Governors' Despatches (not all yet uploaded)

The potential for transcription of these records was noted.

Thousands of images from the Hood Collection part II are also now online. Note that they are displayed with a colour bar and not cropped (a cost issue). There was discussion regarding the size of images available on the Library's website for free download and their suitability for reproduction. File storage costs influence images now being uploaded to the website.

Changes have also been made to the catalogue, including altering the image viewer to preview images in a strip running along the bottom, adding symbols and information regarding copyright and Creative Commons, and providing an extra facility to refine searches by 'recently added'.

The website has been revamped following security upgrades (partly in response to recent British Library security issues) and the opportunity has been taken to refresh certain aspects. At the top of each page there are now links to SLNSW sites (eg Eresources), and the Fellowships page now has detailed guidelines for applicants. (Opportunities for Visiting Scholars were also highlighted – an unpaid position, but one with access to a number of benefits.) Other information is also progressively being added, such as a set of fact sheets providing guidance on organising, preserving, storing and caring for personal collections. (See: <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/research-and-collections/building-our-collections/caring-collections/caring-your-collections>)

Jane Kelso, PHA Representative on the Mitchell Library Consultative Committee