

PHA NSW & ACT

Professional Historians Association

NEW SOUTH WALES AND AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



Annual Report 2024–25

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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 (PHA NSW & ACT) 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 Aust) (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 39th PHA NSW & ACT committee 2024–25

Chair	Naomi Parry Duncan
Deputy chair & PHA Aust delegate	Jeff Hopkins-Weise
Secretary and Public Officer	Alison Wishart
Treasurer & PHA Aust delegate	Roland Leikauf
Member (Memberships)	Jacqui Newling
Member (Website)	Phillip Jaworski
Member (Events) (from Feb 2024)	Lauren Samuelsson
Administration officer (part-time)	Nina Mohd Zaini

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. Committee reports

3.1 Chair’s report – Naomi Parry Duncan

It has been a busy year for the committee of the Professional Historians’ Association of NSW & ACT. I must thank everyone who has helped to sail this very fine ship! Our administration officer Nina Mohd Zaini is our anchor, and we can’t thank her enough for her work in putting out the branch newsletter, *Small Jobs Bulletin*, *National Jobs Bulletin*, handling the back end, and being the first port of call for all manner of inquiries. Thanks Nina!

I am going to stop with the nautical metaphors now, but PHA NSW & ACT is very fortunate in its committee. This is a fabulous organisation – collegial, encouraging, and supportive, yet committed to excellence and intellectual rigor. Deputy chair Jeff Hopkins-Weise has supported me throughout the year and has always been ready to check the constitution and ensure we are operating with due diligence. Our secretary Alison Wishart has responded to hundreds of emails and been incredibly organised and energetic, even though she is currently living and working overseas! Phillip Jaworski has improved the back end of our website and updated information, and has transitioned us to a new hosting service, and Jacqui Newling has done a great job as membership coordinator. Our treasurer Roland Leikauf has ensured the organisation has run well and has met its obligations to the ATO, which has required a great deal of research and labour. Our newest member, Lauren Samuelsson, has proven a dab hand at organising popular and valuable events.

Our year’s activities have been guided by the results of our 2024 membership survey. This showed us that while many of our members live in Sydney, we have many regional and ACT members and we need to do more for them. Respondents enjoy socialising and networking and have also asked for professional development events, so the committee has worked hard on this – we recruited Lauren to the committee to focus on this task.

In February we partnered with the Oral History Association of NSW to hold a very successful hybrid event, ‘Working as a freelance historian and/or oral historian’, with panellists Paul Irish, Martina

Mueller and Margaret Leask. In June, Lauren organised an online event, 'History on the Radio: crafting history for audio audiences', with panellists Meg Foster, Kathy Prokhovnik and Minna Muhlen-Schulte. Our hybrid AGM in September will be preceded by an address from the eminent historian of China, Linda Jaivin, called 'Bombard the Headquarters! From Mao to Musk'. Hybrid events are crucial for broad access, but it is great to gather face-to-face and we hope to venture into regional NSW much more in coming years.

We provided two bursaries this year to support PHA members who are travelling to Darwin for the PHA Aus national conference from 25–26 October. Congratulations to Jacqui Newling and Allison Sullivan, and thank you for representing the NSW & ACT chapter up north. Roland Leikauf and Jeff Hopkins-Weise will be up there as well, in their role as delegates to the national body and both will be presenting papers. Francesca Beddie and Stephen Gapps will also be flying the flag for the PHA NSW & ACT chapter.

Advocacy is something I feel proud of this year. In May, I attended the inaugural Museums of History Forum on History, which is an exciting development in the history and GLAM sector and is intended to strengthen our networks across both sectors and within creative institutions. In June, we collaborated with the PHA Vic-Tas and the national PHA to object on heritage grounds to the enormous AFL stadium that is proposed for the Hobart waterfront in the Tasmanian Planning Commission process of assessing a Project of State Significance. I addressed a hearing on the matter in July, and we wait to see if the new Tasmanian Parliament will shift on this issue.

The NSW Government issued a draft Heritage Strategy in July which appeared to privilege housing over heritage, so we encouraged members to contribute to the public consultation process. The finalised strategy, which I saw at the NSW Heritage Forum on 20 August, is indiscernible from the draft. It seems we can look forward to more heritage battles on a local level. Further, the State Significant Development process overrides any Aboriginal cultural heritage protocols. I am all for housing, but I do wonder what the Cumberland Basin will look like when it is strewn with mega towers. Social housing targets seem to be a low priority, further entrenching inequality in a rapidly growing city that already has some of the most expensive housing in the world.

It is a distressing time in universities and historians are very much in the firing line. Our branch and PHA Aus wrote to the Australian National University last month to protest dramatic cuts to the humanities at that institution, including a severe reduction of staffing levels for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, to which many of our members have donated their time. It really seems as though universities and the Australian Government are scared of critical thinking.

When academic history is under attack, the role of professional historians becomes even more important. We welcome our new members who are refugees from academia, and I think it is even more important for the PHA NSW & ACT to advocate for the value of what we do for our nation's culture, while ensuring we are paid fairly for our work as historical consultants.

An important administrative achievement for the organisation has been commencing a strategic planning process. This is still in train, but we have identified goals for the coming year (2025–2026) using our current constitution and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis. PHA NSW & ACT plans to form sub-committees for governance, communications, and other matters, and I encourage members to indicate their interest! We need you! Participating in sub-committees is a good way to get a taste of the organisation, and can be a gateway to joining the committee.

As a broader organisational issue, we need to be sufficiently agile to cope with change at the national level, because PHA Aus is working towards streamlining the state/territory organisations across financial and IT systems. I thank Jeff and Roland for representing us nationally, and keeping us informed about the national organisation.

Finally, my unexpected appointment as chair of the History Council of NSW means I have, for the last couple of months, been chairing two organisations, as well as fulfilling my role on the board of NSW State Archives. This is too much for me and not fair on either committee so I have decided not to contest a second term as chair of PHA NSW & ACT or as a member of this committee. I am very sad to do so, but I have great faith in this organisation. I know the committee will continue to function brilliantly and the organisation is in good hands. It has been an honour to represent you.

3.2 Secretary and public officer's report – Alison Wishart

Since the AGM on 16 September 2024, the executive committee has met every six weeks with a longer break in summer. There were a total of seven regular meetings, and two strategic planning meetings, all of which were held online. The committee is currently made up of members based in Sydney, Canberra, Wollongong, 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 some of the administrative tasks to Nina Mohd Zaini, our part-time administration officer. Having this paid position frees up time for me to manage correspondence and support the work of the executive committee.

With the assistance of the admin officer, the committee sent out a monthly newsletter to members plus some additional special notices. I encourage members to continue to share news, achievements and opportunities with other members through the PHA newsletter by contacting the secretary or admin officer.

Our admin officer compiles and sends out three-weekly *National Jobs Bulletins* on behalf of PHA Aus. Between the last AGM and 25 August, 15 bulletins were circulated to PHA members, advertising a total of 214 jobs. The majority of those jobs were in the heritage sector (85), followed by the museum sector (82) and history sector (44). There were also fellowships/scholarships (3).

In the same period, 7 small jobs were advertised on an *ad hoc* basis through the *Small Jobs Bulletin*. There were 50 fewer jobs advertised through our employment bulletin for members than last year.

All correspondence comes via email. Following a formal agreement with the Royal Australian Historical Society, non-electronic mail can be sent to the PHA NSW & ACT c/- History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000. We must reiterate that we no longer take cheques as these cannot be banked.

Correspondence 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; enquiries about the fees historians can/should charge, and upcoming events.

2024–25 was my third year as secretary and public officer for PHA NSW & ACT. Next year will be my final year, as members can only serve four consecutive years on the committee. 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.

3.3 Treasurer's report – Roland Leikauf

This year showed a healthy development of the finances of the PHA NSW & ACT. Income didn't change massively. There was a slight increase in expenditure, owing to the bi-annual subscription to Wild Apricot, our membership and event registration database. The new website hosting service is more expensive than the former solution but now includes both hosting and website maintenance, so we will receive a higher level of service. Costs for events are on the rise again, but as these are a significant part of our service to members, a further increase is both expected and encouraged. Some of our usual income, like the contribution from PHA Aus for compiling the National Jobs Bulletin, has not been received this fiscal year and will most likely be registered twice in 2025–26.

An additional expenditure was our provision of bursaries to support PHA NSW & ACT members whose papers had been accepted for presentation in Darwin at the 'Hot Histories' conference in October 2025. We allocated \$2000 for this purpose, and invited applications from members. Two of our members – Jacqui Newling and Allison O'Sullivan – had their papers accepted, and each received a bursary of \$1000 each, which we hope helps with the costs of travelling to the NT.

The most significant financial change for all PHA branches is a new requirement from the Australian Taxation Office that not-for-profit organisations complete an annual self-review. If taxable income is sufficiently high, a tax return may be required for the relevant financial year. The treasurers from PHA Aus branches are currently exploring how to fulfill this new requirement, which may incur additional costs for all PHA branches. The PHA NSW & ACT committee decided to ask an external tax professional to do our self-review and complete the tax return (if needed) for FY24–25.

PHA NSW & ACT income and expenditure report			
INCOME		INCOME	
	Previous year (2023–24)		Reporting year (2024–25)
Income various		Income various	
Income various – membership subscriptions – direct transfer	\$4,805.00	Income various – membership subscriptions – direct transfer	\$3,665.00
Income various – membership subscriptions – Stripe	\$11,505.92	Income various – membership subscriptions – Stripe	\$11,796.66
Income various – PHA Australia <i>National Jobs Bulletin</i>	\$840.00	Income various – refund for erroneous bank payment	\$1,000.00
		Income various – erroneous bank transfer to our account	\$800.00
Total income various	\$17,150.92	Total income various	\$17,261.66
Income events		Income events	
Income Events – Christmas party	\$199.50	Income Events – Christmas party	\$229.79
Income Events – Reconciliation Week	\$306.46	Income Events – Other Events	\$229.49
Total income events	\$505.96	Total income events	\$459.28
TOTAL INCOME	\$17,656.88	TOTAL INCOME	\$17,720.94

EXPENDITURE	Previous year (2023–24)	EXPENDITURE	Reporting year (2024–25)
Expenditure admin		Expenditure admin	
Expenditure admin – administration officer	\$3,613.75	Expenditure admin – administration officer	\$3,337.50
Expenditure admin – PHA Australia capitation fee	\$3,360.00	Expenditure admin – PHA Australia capitation fee	\$3,450.00
Expenditure admin – insurance	\$980.00	Expenditure admin – insurance	\$440.00
Expenditure admin – governance (Fair Trading & external advice)	\$224.50	Expenditure admin – governance (Fair Trading & external advice)	\$276.24
Expenditure admin – bank fees	\$62.53	Expenditure admin – bank fees	\$2.78
Expenditure admin – website domain name (DDNS)	\$35.00	Expenditure admin – website maintenance complete	\$1,199.00
Expenditure admin – website hosting (Ventra IP)	\$192.00	Expenditure admin – Wild Apricot subscription (2-year plan)	\$2,531.44
Expenditure admin – website maintenance (Let's Build a Website)	\$773.00		
Expenditure admin – membership refunds (double payments etc)	\$90.00		
Total expenditure admin	\$9,330.78	Total expenditure admin	\$11,236.96
Expenditure events		Expenditure events	
Expenditure events – Christmas party	\$212.52	Expenditure events – Christmas party	\$212.52
Expenditure events – Reconciliation Week	277.55	Expenditure events – other Events	\$559.12
Total expenditure events	\$490.07	Total expenditure events	\$771.64
Expenditure – memberships, prizes & donations (MPD)		Expenditure – memberships, prizes & donations (MPD)	
Expenditure MPD – History Council NSW membership	\$250.00	Expenditure MPD – History Council NSW membership	\$250.00
Expenditure MPD – Applied History Award	\$1,000.00	Expenditure MPD – Public History Award	
Expenditure MPD – RAHS membership	\$163.00	Expenditure MPD – RAHS membership	\$163.00
Expenditure MPD – donation Reconciliation Australia	\$1,177.57	Expenditure MPD – donation Reconciliation Australia	
Total expenditure MPD	\$2,590.57	Total expenditure MPD	\$413.00
Expenditure various		Expenditure various	
		Expenditure various – bursary	\$2,000.00
		Expenditure various – failed bank transfer	\$1,000
		Total expenditure various	\$3,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$12,411.42	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$15,421.60
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$5,245.46	SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$2,299.34
OPENING BALANCE	\$40,190.73	OPENING BALANCE	\$45,436.23
CLOSING BALANCE	\$45,436.19	CLOSING BALANCE	\$47,735.57

3.4 Membership officer's report – Jacqui Newling

Between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, PHA NSW & ACT had the pleasure of welcoming ten new members, including one transferring from interstate:

Professional (MPHA):

- Bruce Carter
- Kylie Christian
- Robyn Dunlop
- Siobhan Lavelle
- Richard Neville
- Shirleene Robinson

Associate (APHA):

- Michelle Blake (transfer from VIC/TAS)
- William Stephens

Graduate (GPHA):

- Jacinta Mackay

At 30 June 2025, the total number of active memberships was 115:

- Professional (MPHA): 88
- Associate (APHA): 20
- Graduate (GPHA): 7

Discussions continue 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.

3.5 Website officer's report – Phillip Jaworski

I am happy to report that the website is functioning as it should. The website is hosted and managed by CodeLab Pty Ltd, who charge an annual fee for this service. The arrangement includes managed hosting with 24-hour customer service, maintenance and security check-ups, and regular backups.

My main role as website officer is to ensure the content on the site reflects the most up to date information. I have prepared a website schedule for handover purposes to ensure the site continues to reflect the most accurate information about the association and its activities.

The website is our main external face to the public and history community. I encourage members to contact the committee to discuss ways to enhance the website. I also encourage members to submit content for publication on the website blog. Consider making a submission about a new project you are working on, a podcast or exhibition, or an important historical issue we should be discussing.

3.6 Events officer's report – Lauren Samuelsson

This was my first year on the committee and I want to thank Alison Wishart for her guidance in taking over this role and in organising the events we have held to date this year. All three events thus far have been successful. The 'Working as a freelance historian and/or oral historian in NSW' event, in partnership with the Oral History Association of NSW, was particularly successful with high in-person attendance at History House.

We have made the recordings of the events available on the PHA Australia YouTube channel so that our members can revisit these important discussions in the future.

Moving forward, we hope to have a more targeted events programme, which we will plan in advance as much as possible. We also intend to take feedback from the membership survey into account, offering a range of different events including lectures, panel discussions and workshops across hybrid and online formats.

We have noticed that during winter the level of interest for 'in-person' events declines, so the programme will reflect this moving forward, offering online events during the colder months.

I have also made links with the newly-appointed PHA VIC & TAS events officer, and we will work together on ensuring that our event offerings are coordinated and that PHA members from across Australia can attend our online/hybrid events.

1. PHA NSW & ACT Christmas gathering

9 December 2024, 5–11 pm

The Terminus, Ultimo

Attendance: approximately 25 members. A purely social event to catch up with fellow historians prior to the summer break.

2. Working as a freelance historian and/or oral historian in NSW

Monday 3 March 2025

History House, Macquarie Street, Sydney and online

Attendance: 25 in-person and 19 online

The PHA NSW & ACT and Oral History Association of NSW partnered to bring an informative discussion about working as a freelance historian and/or oral historian. The panel discussion was chaired by PHA NSW & ACT President Dr Naomi Parry Duncan.

Panel Members:

- Dr Martina Mueller
- Dr Paul Irish – Coast History and Heritage
- Dr Margaret Leask

Members can view the event recording [here](#).

3. History on the radio: crafting history for audio audiences

Tuesday 10 June 2025

Online

Attendance: approximately 22 members

This panel discussion focused on practical advice on how best to get your history heard. It brought together three speakers with experience in crafting history for radio and podcasts. The session was chaired by Dr Naomi Parry Duncan.

Panel members:

- Minna Muhlen-Schulte
- Meg Foster
- Kathy Prokhovnik

Members can view the event recording [here](#).

3.7 Professional Historians Australia delegates – Jeff Hopkins-Weise and Roland Leikauf

Our national body's committee PHA Aus meets quarterly online on Saturdays via Zoom. Over this past year PHA NSW & ACT has once more been represented by our two delegates, Dr Roland Leikauf and Jeff Hopkins-Weise. Our first national committee meeting took place on 5 October 2024, and this was a lengthy online double-header, with the PHA Aus AGM and the first meeting of the new 2024–25 management committee. Further PHA Aus committee meetings took place on 8 February, 10 May, and our last meeting before the October PHA Aus AGM was on 16 August 2025.

Our national organisation has continued to be ably led by its president, Lucy Bracey (PHA Vic & Tas), with a strong focus on serving members, speaking as a national voice, and promoting the work of professional historians.

PHA has continued to support its reinvigorated online journal *Circa* under the co-editorship of Francesca Beddie and Elizabeth Offer. This journal is now published bi-annually and you can access all the back issues of [Circa](#), including the most recent issue (no. 8) which was published in 2024. Issue no. 9 should be available in March/April 2026 and submissions for this issue are already open and will close at the end of October this year following the PHA's national conference (25–26 October). The editors have recently made *Circa* available via the National Library of Australia's Trove search engine, through the e-deposit scheme.

Deborah Lee-Talbot (PHA Vic & Tas) continues in the role of editor of the quarterly e-Bulletin *Historia* and the archive of all issues up to no.61 (July 2025) is available on the [website](#).

On 5 June 2025, PHA delivered the fourth Bill Wilson Oration online via Zoom. Lucy Hair's presentation, [Revisiting the past: researching Chinese history in Western Australia](#) was attended by 44 people and the recording has had 109 views to date.

PHA updates its [scale of fees](#) guide for members annually, using that year's CPI figures. This scale is intended to apply to the non-permanent engagement of accredited, self-employed, professional historians and includes provision for annual, long service, and sick leave and superannuation, as well as the usual costs of running a business (i.e. office equipment, vehicle, maintenance of a library,

professional memberships and insurances), but is not intended for use by salaried historians. The last update occurred on 16 August using the 30 June 2025 CPI figures.

The membership numbers for our association are healthy and bode well for the future. Most state PHAs report that new membership applications continue to be received. At the committee meeting on 16 August, Malcolm Trill, accreditation secretary from PHA WA, reported that PHA Aus's Australia-wide membership is 524 members, of which 80 per cent or 401 members are at the professional level.

During 2024, PHA Aus undertook a membership survey review across all state/territory branches. A PHA Aus working group was formed to review the results of the survey and the definition of a 'professional historian'. Both your delegates are members of this working group, which will meet again in November after the national conference. The group is working towards nationwide membership fees, accreditation standards, and expectations, but it is expected that this will take some time to achieve. Nationalising membership will make communication and administration easier and cheaper – currently several state branches pay for Wild Apricot subscriptions, whereas if membership was at the national level, we could share one subscription.

A major focus of PHA Aus's activities this past year has been planning the bi-annual national conference, which has the theme [Hot Histories](#). PHA Aus is partnering with the NT history colloquium to hold the conference on 25–26 October 2025 in the recently opened Library & Archives NT, which is located on the Charles Darwin University campus in Darwin on Larrakia Country.

In conjunction with the national conference, the PHA Aus AGM will be held in person in Darwin on the evening of Friday 24 October. All members attending the conference are welcome to attend the AGM, and stay for the pre-conference drinks event.

Following the PHA Aus AGM in October, the first scheduled meeting of the new 2025–26 national committee will take place on Saturday 29 November 2025.

4. PHA NSW & ACT member representatives in external organisations

PHA NSW & ACT members often wear multiple hats. Naomi Parry Duncan, Jeff Hopkins-Weise and Rachel Franks are all members of the History Council's executive and participate in the business of the General Committee and various sub-committees. Naomi Parry Duncan is a board member of NSW State Archives, and Alison Wishart is a board member of the Royal Australian Historical Society. Our members also provide us with links to Oral History Australia and to many historical societies and community history and heritage organisations, and we acknowledge their dedication.

The following reports are updates about significant cultural institutions from three of our PHA NSW & ACT members, each of whom have been representing our organisation for many years.

4.1 National Archives of Australia Sydney Consultative Committee – Terry Kass

Terry Kass has represented the PHA on the NAA Sydney Consultative Committee since 2003. He has decided to step down from this role because he feels it is time that younger members of the PHA, who are more attuned to current requirements for historians, are involved.

Meetings of the NAA Sydney Consultative Committee are held two to four times a year and act as a forum in which the NAA provides information regarding its current activities, current accessions, grants and displays. The consultative committee has representatives from a number of family history and historical bodies as well as professional organisations such as the Australian Society of Archivists and parallel organisations such as the City of Sydney Archives. It also acts as a conduit for queries, concerns and complaints from members of representative organisations.

At the December 2024 meeting, the NAA reported on:

- The opening of the new Northern Territory office and a new partnership with Ancestry.com to digitise World War I dossiers and pay cards held in Victoria
- A partnership with FamilySearch to digitise records in the Canberra office. Digitisation of the New South Wales photographic collection is continuing through outside firms contracted to do the work whilst Geoscience Australia is digitising aerial films
- Outsourcing the digitisation of Post Office plans from the nineteenth century and trademark registers plus motion films
- The large volumes of material that are regularly received from the Australian Broadcasting Commission, mostly television and radio broadcast material
- Proactive digitisation, which includes the Post Office series SP32/1, army, pay cards, and immigration files.

From August 2025, Dr Naomi Parry Duncan will represent the PHA on this consultative committee.

4.2 RAHS Library and Archives Strategic Review Working Party – Christine Yeats

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 (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).

News flash!

Although it is outside the reporting cycle for 2024–2025 in July 2025 the RAHS launched a test version of its online catalogue, which currently includes over 25,000 searchable items—representing around 40 per cent of its total collection of 62,000 items. These records include books, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* articles, RAHS *History* magazine articles, RAHS conference papers (1964–1995), newsletters from the affiliated societies, and other serials. To visit the test version of the catalogue go to: <https://www.rahs.org.au/library-catalogues/>.

Summary report on library activities over the past 12 months

Implementation of the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS)

For much of 2024–2025 the focus has been on reviewing and enhancing the catalogue data in preparation for the launch of the new online library catalogue, Liberty, in 2025. As part of this process, the library team has been refining subject headings to improve searchability and ensuring that items in the catalogue align with the RAHS collection policy.

Volunteers

Our dedicated volunteers played an essential role in advancing key projects, including promoting the library collections, shelving, cataloguing, and preparing miscellaneous materials for inclusion in our database. Volunteers also contributed by organising affiliated society newsletters and journals.

Student placements

Over the past twelve months we were delighted to welcome several TAFE and university students completing work placements, providing them with valuable opportunities to learn about managing a library with a diverse and unique collection.

Library visits and advice and assistance to researchers

We receive regular requests for guided tours and presentations on our collections for members of affiliated societies, highlighting the unique resources available in our library. Online queries from researchers increased as well, with requests for *JRAHS* articles and items from our image collection supporting family history projects, academic theses, publications and media releases.

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 2025–2026

- Finalising the implementation of the Liberty system, including reviewing and refining the previous Subject Headings following the release of the test version of its catalogue.
- Improvements to the library layout as part of the building upgrade.

4.3 Mitchell Library Consultative Committee report – Jane Kelso

The Mitchell Library Consultative Committee has met twice in the last year, with updates on a range of issues from library programs, staffing and building works to new acquisitions and initiatives.

Refurbishment of the Macquarie Street building to increase capacity, reduce barriers to access and upgrade infrastructure is currently on track to be completed by the end of this year. The Metcalfe Auditorium has been demolished, with much of the material being recycled, and the new ground floor will include a larger bookshop and expanded café with more outdoor seating. In the Bashir Reading Room, all glass barriers will be removed and the void between the two levels will be increased to provide more visual connection. There will be a significant increase in seating capacity – from 482 to 659 – with additional study pods. Lockers and public toilets will be available on both levels, and there will be direct lift access to LG2. The work has been designed in conjunction with the original architect, Andrew Andersons AO, retaining some of the original design elements. For information see [Transforming the Macquarie Street building | State Library of New South Wales](#).

A temporary Bashir Reading Room, café and bookshop have been established in the Mitchell building. Note that the Mitchell Library Reading Room is now much busier. Seating has been increased, and the special collections area will be open on Sundays for general study, with additional security. The barricade around the Tasman Map in the vestibule has been removed, but a conservation plan, with a cleaning program and photo documentation to monitor any changes or issues is in place.

Work is underway on the program to celebrate the State Library's 200th anniversary in 2026, showcasing its development and collections, and examining the way scholarship and collecting engage with the complexities of collection interpretation and representation. A celebration of libraries per se, there will be a range of activities including an exhibition, public programs, interventions around the building and creative residencies. A publication – *The Library That Made Me* – will contain a brief history of the library (from the original subscription library), an essay on the Mitchell Building bronze doors from an indigenous perspective, an anthology series of short essays on the libraries in authors' lives and a 'day in the life' of the library photo essay.

The Hon Bob Debus AM is the new President of the Library Council and there are two new council members: Professor Jennifer Barrett and political journalist and author Troy Bramston. Rani Haywood, formerly with the Metropolitan Opera, has been appointed on a two-year contract as the Director of Experience and Engagement. It was emphasised that this new appointment by no means

diminishes the role of the Mitchell Librarian, who will continue to head the Indigenous Engagement, Learning, and Scholarship teams. The State Library's Strategic Plan 2025–30 has been released. There are no significant changes in direction, but it is more targeted than previous plans, keeping collections at its heart, with five key strategic priorities and measurable outcomes.

The Fellowship Program continues to grow and now includes the Imago Fellowship for creative writing (\$50,000), and a professional development program for Fellows. The latest intake, including Visiting Fellows, was inducted in February. Applications for 2026 closed in July. Intended for scholars and researchers and focussed largely on SLNSW collections, applicants should specify which collection/s they wish to concentrate on.

The State Library is increasingly being offered digital manuscript collections, with 6 per cent of acquisitions in 2024 being born digital (originally created in digital formats), and is spending more on digital storage. It is also trying to encourage donors to list their collections and has produced guidelines for organising and offering material. See: [Collection acquisitions | State Library of New South Wales](#).

Recent acquisition highlights include further papers from Dr Anita Heiss, the only known personal record of the mutiny on board the convict ship *Lady Shore* in 1797, love letters from Matthew Flinders to his wife, the Bruce Mackenzie landscape architecture archive, stories and portraits of civilian rescuers of the 2022 Northern Rivers flood, and interviews from the Nan Tien Temple 30th anniversary oral history project.

All the subdivision plans have been digitised, and the parish maps and town plans collection are now all digitised and available online.

The Library has been trialling a new 'Virtual Reading Room' service, providing remote supervised viewings of original materials. It seems to work well with small collections, such as loose documents and small albums and maps, and has attracted users from around the world. Although yet to be promoted, it is currently available via Ask a Librarian.

The Library is keen to promote its online written transcription platform 'From the Page' and encourage people to sign up as digital volunteers (the audio transcription platform, 'Amplify' was launched in 2018). Current projects include papers from Miles Franklin, the Macarthur and Hassall families, and First Nations language material. When the issue of quality control was raised it was noted that onsite volunteers check each transcription but there will inevitably be things that are indecipherable, so users beware!