

PHA NSW & ACT

Professional Historians Association

NEW SOUTH WALES AND AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



Annual Report 2025-26

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1. PHA NSW & ACT background and objectives

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

Website – www.phansw.org.au

Email – phansw.history@gmail.com

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 40th PHA NSW & ACT Committee 2025-26

Chair	Lisa Murray
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 – Lisa Murray

It has been a positive and productive year for the Professional Historians' Association (NSW & ACT) Management Committee. Everyone has worked together to promote our organisation and support our members.

I want to thank the Committee for volunteering their time for our organisation and for their commitment throughout 2025-26 in assessing memberships, organising events and training opportunities, advocating for history, and keeping people informed. I also want to acknowledge volunteers Jane Kelso and Christine Yeats for representing the PHA on the Mitchell Library Consultative Committee and RAHS Library and Archives Strategic Review Working Party respectively. You will read about each person's contributions in the reports that follow.

In my first year in the position of Chair, I wanted to focus on our communications with members. I have tried to make the monthly e-newsletter a bit more informative about industry issues and opportunities for members. And I have tried to encourage members to attend (or at least be aware of) our six-weekly Management Committee meetings, so that they can participate or raise issues. The door is always open, and we welcome communication and input from our members.

Acknowledging that we often hear news with short lead times, the Committee resolved to establish a LinkedIn organisation profile. This provides another opportunity to alert members and other interested people to relevant industry news as well as promoting our association. Thanks to our

Website Officer Phillip Jaworski for setting this up. Content is managed by Phillip and myself as administrators. The Facebook Group is also still active with the Secretary, Alison Wishart posting content. We have, however, retreated from Twitter as it has become increasingly toxic. If you are interested in assisting with social media posts, please get in touch. It is helpful to have at least two administrators monitoring and posting on each platform.

We have also tried to reactivate the blog on our website. We used the end of the calendar year to highlight public outputs of our members, as well as publishing PHA conference reports from our bursary recipients, and drawing attention to the state government's new writing and literature strategy. We also paid tribute to our member Heather Goodall, who sadly died this year.

Advocacy is another key area to ensure the skills and views of professional historians are seen and heard in government, in the GLAM sector and the wider community. I have had the opportunity this year to represent the organisation at several events and meetings. I spoke at the launch of Pauline Curby's book, *Woollooware – a grand position*; attended consultation meetings concerning the refurbishment of the State Archives reading room, and a review of the Heritage Curtilages policy (1996), as well as regular National Archives of Australia (NSW) consultative committee meetings; and represented the PHA at the History Symposium hosted by Museums of History NSW at which the state government's new Heritage Strategy was launched.

Promoting job opportunities is another form of advocacy undertaken by our organisation. For several years our Administrative Assistant Nina Mohd Zaini has coordinated and issued the National Jobs Bulletin on behalf of Professional Historians Australia. This arrangement ceased in June 2026, following the national body's appointment of their own administrative assistant. The National Jobs Bulletin continues to be issued regularly to all members by Professional Historians Australia, while PHA (NSW & ACT) continues to facilitate a small jobs email list for our NSW & ACT members. Recognising the outstanding contributions made by public historians within the field of history and within the broader community is one of the organisation's objectives. With this in mind, the Committee resolved to once again sponsor the History Council of NSW's Public History Award in 2026.

The year has had some administrative and technical challenges. Changes to superannuation laws on 1 July alerted us to other superannuation provisions which we needed to address for our administrative assistant. This has taken up quite a bit of time for our Secretary, Alison Wishart and Treasurer, Roland Leikauf. Glitches with the functionality and search capacity of members' profiles on our website have also required ongoing investigation by our Website Officer, Phillip Jaworski, liaising with our web host. The work-arounds required highlight the age of our website software. The new management committee will look in the coming year at the feasibility of a website upgrade.

Three Committee members are standing down at the AGM, after serving two consecutive two-year terms. This is a feature of our constitution aimed at encouraging a wide range of involvement by members and regular turn-over of the Committee. On behalf of members, I would like to extend sincere thanks to Jeff Hopkins-Weise (Deputy Chair and Professional Historians Australia delegate), Alison Wishart (Secretary and Public Officer) and Roland Leikauf (Treasurer and Professional Historians Australia delegate) for their unstinting service. They have made valuable contributions in support of our organisation.

Our administrative assistant, Nina Mohd Zaini, is also finishing up with us at the end of August 2026. She has provided support to the management committee and the organisation for five years. On behalf of the current and previous Committees, as well as our members, I want to acknowledge and thank Nina for all her work which kept the PHA (NSW & ACT) humming along. Her efficient and unflappable manner made everything sail so smoothly. As a volunteer management group, the Committees have been extremely appreciative of her support.

I am pleased to report we have successfully recruited a new administrative assistant, Kate Brittain. Kate joined our organisation as an Associate Historian earlier this year and works part-time at Heritage 21. Kate will take up the reigns at the end of August and the AGM will be her first meeting. I hope you will all make her feel welcome.

2025-26 has been a challenging year for community cohesion in Australia, as well as many other countries. As historians it is incumbent on us to shine a light on our nation's histories and our communities, to foster empathy and historical understanding not division within our society. We all have different projects, approaches and interpretations. What binds us together is our commitment to high standards of professional and ethical practices among public historians. I look forward to serving a second year as Chair, working with a refreshed management committee and representing the membership of the PHA (NSW & ACT).

3.2 Secretary and public officer's report – Alison Wishart

Since the AGM on 15 September 2025, the Executive Committee has met eight times – about every six weeks – with a longer break over the Christmas holiday period. The Committee is currently made up of members based in Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong; 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.

I am grateful that I can delegate some of the administrative tasks to Nina Mohd Zaini, our administrative assistant. Nina has resigned from this role effective 31 August 2026 and she will be missed. She has worked for the PHA for five years and has been an anchor through changes of membership on the committee.

I have worked with the president to recruit a new administrative assistant and am pleased that Kate Brittain, a PHA member currently working part-time in the heritage sector, has accepted this role. I have also worked with the PHA treasurer to ensure that we are complying with the current legislation in the way we pay superannuation to the administrative assistant.

With the assistance of the administrative assistant, the committee sent out a monthly e-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 e-newsletter by contacting the secretary or administrative assistant.

Until May 2026, our administrative assistant compiled and distributed the *National Jobs Bulletins* every three weeks on behalf of Professional Historians Australia. Between 15 September 2025 and 14 May 2026, 12 bulletins were circulated to PHA members, advertising a total of 155 jobs. The majority of those jobs were in the museum sector (63), followed by the heritage sector (57) and history sector (29). There were also six fellowships/scholarships advertised. In the same period, 12 small jobs were advertised on an *ad hoc* basis through the *Small Jobs Bulletin*.

All correspondence for the PHA 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.

Correspondence includes people wanting to get in touch with past or current members; questions 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.

2025-26 was my fourth and final year as secretary and public officer for PHA NSW & ACT. I have worked with three different presidents: Peter Hobbins, Naomi Parry-Duncan and Lisa Murray. It has been an enjoyable learning curve and provided a wonderful opportunity to get to know some professional historians while also serving our community.

3.3 Treasurer's report – Roland Leikauf

Like last financial year, new challenges arose for the PHA NSW & ACT this year. Fulfilling past and future superannuation requirements required a significant investment of effort and proved to be an extensive project. An outside company was employed to provide advice for navigating superannuation legislation and ATO requirements and to help set up the necessary accounts. On the positive side, the Not-For-Profit (NFP) self-review tax return reporting requirements can now be fulfilled by the Treasurer and Committee of PHA NSW & ACT. A tax agent will only be required if the ATO decides to ask for a full tax return.

This treasurer's report separately lists fees paid to the STRIPE payment service for the first time. These fees are paid when payments are made by credit or debit card through our Wild Apricot membership website.

In general, modest spending combined with a slow but steady increase in memberships mean that PHA ACT & NSW faces the upcoming years with stable finances and a good outlook for the future.

PHA NSW & ACT income and expenditure report 2025/26			
INCOME	Previous year (2024–25)	INCOME	Reporting year (2025–26)
Income various		Income various	
Income various – membership subscriptions – direct transfer	\$3,665.00	Income Various - Membership subscriptions - Direct Transfer	\$4,605.00
Income various – membership subscriptions – Stripe	\$11,796.66	Income Various - Membership subscriptions - Stripe	\$11,560.00
Income various – refund for erroneous bank payment	\$1,000.00	Income Various - PHA Australia National Jobs Bulletin Contribution	\$1,934.50
Income various – erroneous bank transfer to our account	\$800.00		
Total income various	\$17,261.66	Total income various	\$18,099.50
Income events		Income events	
Income Events – Christmas party	\$229.79	Income Events - Christmas Party	\$430.00
Income Events – Other Events	\$229.49	Income Events - Other Events	\$250.00
Total income events	\$459.28	Total income events	\$680.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$17,720.94	TOTAL INCOME	\$18,779.50
EXPENDITURE	Reporting year (2024–25)	EXPENDITURE	Reporting year (2025–26)
Expenditure admin		Expenditure admin	
Expenditure admin – administration officer	\$3,337.50	Expenditure Admin - Administration Officer	\$3,220.00
Expenditure Admin - PHA Australia Capitation Fee	\$3,450.00	Expenditure Admin - PHA Australia Capitation Fee	\$3,630.00

Expenditure admin – Insurance	\$440.00
Expenditure admin – Governance (Fair Trading & external advice)	\$276.24
Expenditure admin – Bank fees	\$2.78
Expenditure admin – Website complete	\$1,199.00
Expenditure admin – Wild Apricot subscription (2-year plan)	\$2,531.44
Total expenditure admin	\$11,236.96
Expenditure events	
Expenditure events – Christmas party	\$212.52
Expenditure events – other Events	\$559.12
Total expenditure events	\$771.64
Expenditure – memberships, prizes & donations (MPD)	
Expenditure MPD – History Council NSW membership	\$250.00
Expenditure MPD – RAHS membership	\$163.00
Total expenditure MPD	\$413.00
Expenditure various	
Expenditure various – bursary	\$3,000.00

Expenditure Admin - Insurance	\$440.00
Expenditure Admin - Governance (Fair Trading & external advice)	\$47.00
Expenditure Admin - Bank fees	\$0.56
Expenditure Admin - Website Domain name (DDNS)	\$35.00
Expenditure Admin - Website maintenance	\$1,034.00
Expenditure Admin - Membership refunds (double payments etc)	\$800.00
Expenditure Various - Stripe chargeback	\$45.00
Expenditure - Stripe fees	\$250.60
Total expenditure admin	\$9,502.16
Expenditure events	
Expenditure Events - Christmas Party	\$1,029.93
Expenditure Events - Other Events	\$471.50
Total expenditure events	\$1,501.43
Expenditure – memberships, prizes & donations (MPD)	
Expenditure MPD - History Council of NSW membership	\$250.00
Expenditure MPD - Public History Award	\$1,000.00
Expenditure MPD - RAHS membership	\$163.00
Total expenditure MPD	\$1,413.00
Expenditure various	

Total expenditure various	\$3,000.00		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$15,421.60	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$12,416.59
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$2,299.34	SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$6,362.91
OPENING BALANCE	\$45,436.23	OPENING BALANCE	\$47,735.57
CLOSING BALANCE	\$47,735.57	CLOSING BALANCE	\$54,098.48

3.4 Membership officer's report – Jacqui Newling

There has been a slight increase in membership in 2025-26, welcoming nine new members, while five members elected (or neglected) to renew their memberships for the 2025-26 period.

Membership applications are closely vetted by the NSW/ACT Committee, who are asked to vote or make comments in a motion raised at a general committee meeting, or by e-motion in between scheduled committee meetings.

When an applicant does not have a definitive history qualification, the Committee looks to see if they have adequate work experience as a historian. This is often the case for applicants with qualifications in associated disciplines such as archaeology, heritage and museum studies, archives and information management, or war studies; but historical research or interpretation is part of their working role in the history, heritage or GLAM sector.

In instances when the Committee is not confident that an applicant has the skills, qualifications or experience necessary for the applicant's nominated membership level, the Committee has asked the applicant to provide further evidence of their capabilities, such as samples of their research or report writing, and/or more detail from referees about the nature of the applicant's professional role and work experience. In some cases the committee has asked the applicant to consider accepting a lower-grade accreditation level, with an invitation to upgrade once they have more experience or completed a higher academic degree.

The Committee applies this rigour to ensure that members can be confident that the integrity of their PHA accreditation is of the highest standard.

At 30 June 2026, the total number of active memberships was 119:

- Professional (MPHA): 87
- Associate (APHA): 23
- Graduate (GPHA): 9
- **Total 119**

We welcomed our new members, including one transferring from interstate:

Professional (MPHA):

- Sandra Saravolac
- Srishti Guha
- Barbara Lemon (transferred from VIC&TAS)

Associate (APHA):

- Hollie Barclay-Reynolds
- Kate Brittain
- Catherine Shirley

Graduate (GPHA):

- Kurt Dixon
- Michael Feeney
- Peter de Wiljes

New members receive a Membership Certificate noting their accreditation level and receive the quarterly *Historia* newsletter. They are also invited to provide a professional profile and photo for the Members Profile page on the PHA NSW & ACT website.

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.

Some challenges that required my attention included fixing the [member profile page](#). Members can opt-in to having a profile on the website. The site originally had a simple sorting feature that listed members according to name and membership longevity. Regrettably, the profiles on the website were not created in chronological order, so when using the 'oldest-newest' sort option, older members were not displayed first. The solution to this issue would have required creating custom coding, so the easiest option was to archive and replace the page with an 'advanced sort' feature. This new page allows users to search member profiles according to level of membership and

expertise. The feature, however, experienced caching issues earlier in the year, and required regular maintenance. The caching issue is now resolved, and the member profile page is functioning. The feature is an opt-in benefit of membership, so I highly recommend that members who do not have a profile contact the PHA Administration Officer to discuss adding one to the website.

On the social media front, the PHA NSW-ACT joined [LinkedIn](#) in January 2026. As more users move away from Twitter and Meta-aligned social media, it became necessary to set-up a new social media channel. For a professional organisation such as the PHA, LinkedIn was the obvious choice. I am happy to note that at the time of writing this report, the account has 84 followers and is growing. If you have a project or news you want us to share, please get in touch or tag us online.

Finally, the forthcoming year 2026-27 will be my last year as Website Officer on the PHA NSW-ACT Committee, as I will have to step down due to serving two consecutive two-year terms. I am happy to arrange a meeting for members who might be interested in joining the Committee and taking on the Website Officer role. For Associate and Graduate members in particular, working on the Committee can be a rewarding opportunity to build professional networks and use your skills for the benefit of members.

3.6 Events officer's report – Lauren Samuelsson

What a great year for events! I'd like to thank everybody on the Committee for their ongoing support and help in organising our year of successful events. Special thanks to Phillip Jaworski as our 'History House liaison'—always able to sort out the tech! Thank you also to the many members who have come along to one of our events since September 2025. Without you, our events would not be the successes they have been.

This year we have started a range of new events, which we hope have gone well with the membership.

Firstly, we have upped our socialising. In addition to the annual Christmas Party—which in 2025 we opened up to our history colleagues across Sydney and surrounds—we recently held our first Midwinter Meet Up. Each of these events was well attended and much socialising, catching up and fun was had!

Secondly, we also introduced the Summer Research Showcase, which we hope to make a recurring event. If you have new research you'd love to share, please feel free to reach out!

Finally, we have commenced what we hope will be an ongoing Archives/Collections Series. We started with a session held by Sydney City Archives, and are working on a series introducing our

members to archives that they may not be familiar with or have new collections to share. Keep an eye out for these moving forward.

In addition to all of these, we also co-hosted a stream at the 2026 Australian Historical Association Annual Conference held at Macquarie University with the Centre for Public History at UTS. We had a fantastic turnout, with panels scheduled across two days.

As always, if members have any feedback regarding events, do please get in touch.

Event Breakdown

1. Bombard the Headquarters! From Mao to Musk - with Linda Jaivin

15 September 2025

Hybrid - History House, Macquarie Street, Sydney and Online

Attendance: approximately 28 attendees in-person and online. A lively discussion with Linda Jaivin about her most recent book - followed by the last PHA NSW & ACT AGM.

2. Historians' End of Year Extravaganza

11 December 2025

Teddy's Enmore

Attendance: 41 attendees

A purely social gathering! In 2025 we opened up registrations to our historian colleagues across the Sydney area, a very successful venture that we hope to do again in 2026.

3. Summer Research Showcase

28 February 2026

Hybrid - History House, Macquarie Street, Sydney and Online

Attendance: approximately 36 attendees

A fabulous Saturday afternoon event where we heard from colleagues who presented papers at the PHA National Conference in Darwin in October 2025. We thought that a reprise would be welcomed by those of us who could not attend the conference, and it was very well received.

Many thanks to our speakers: Stephen Gapps, Jeff Hopkins-Weise and Jacqui Newling (pictured below). Thanks also to Allison O'Sullivan who was sadly unable to present.



4. The City of Sydney Archives - Archives/Collections Series

28 May 2026

Online

Attendance: approximately 34 attendees

A great start to our Archives/Collections Series, celebrating 50 years of the City of Sydney Archives. Attendees were treated to some tips and tricks on how to use the online platform, as well as being introduced to the wonderful collections available at the archive.

5. Cultural Values Assessments - Transport for NSW

3 June 2026

Online

Attendance: approximately 20 attendees

This session was hosted by Transport for NSW, aimed at familiarising our members with their Cultural Values Assessment processes, with an opportunity for those interested to join Transport for NSW's register of consultants.

6. Australian Historical Association Conference

29 June - 2 July 2026

Macquarie University

Many thanks to our members who participated as speakers or chairs in the ACPH&PHA stream:

- Kylie Christian
- Patricia Curthoys
- Mark Dunn
- Peter Hobbins
- Paul Irish
- Roland Leikauf
- Lisa Murray
- Alison Wishart

Thanks also to our members who represented the PHA in one of the other many and varied streams across the four days of the conference.

7. PHA NSW & ACT Midwinter Meetup

31 July 2026

Nude Lounge, Glebe Hotel

Attendance: 28 registered

It was great to see such a massive turnout—in winter no less—for our most recent social event (photo below)!



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

PHA-Australia AGM: On 24 October 2025, our national body held its AGM in Darwin, on the eve of the national conference. Your delegate, Jeff Hopkins-Weise, was elected the national President for 2025-2026.

Meetings of the PHA national committee have taken place on Saturdays via Zoom. The first meeting was held just over a month after the Darwin AGM on 29 November 2025, and further meetings were held on 28 February, 9 May, and 15 August this year. Over this past year, PHA NSW & ACT was again represented by your two delegates: Dr Roland Leikauf and Jeff Hopkins-Weise.

National conference 2025: PHA NT, with assistance from PHA-Australia, hosted a very successful national conference on Larrakia Country in Darwin on 25-26 October 2025. The theme was *Hot Histories* and around 75 PHA members from across Australia attended, as well as people from the local NT history community. The venue was the Library & Archives Northern Territory, Education and Community Precinct, at Charles Darwin University.

Six members of PHA NSW & ACT either presented papers (Stephen Gapps, Jeff Hopkins-Weise, Francesca Beddie, and Allison Sullivan) or were involved in panel discussions (Roland Leikauf), while Jacqui Newling's paper, 'If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen', was a keynote as part of the conference dinner event. Jacqui and Allison received bursaries from PHA NSW & ACT to attend the national conference, and both have written about their conference experiences:

<https://www.phansw.org.au/2025-pha-national-conference-reports/>. Some of the papers presented by PHA NSW & ACT members have also been published in Issue 9 of our professional journal *Circa*.



(L-R) Francesca Beddie, Lucy Bracey (PHA Vic & Tas), Jeff Hopkins-Weise (PHA NSW & ACT) and Sam Wells (PHA NT) at the national conference in Darwin.

National conference 2027: PHA Vic & Tas is hosting PHA's next bi-annual national conference in 2027. PHA Vic & Tas has commenced planning for this event, so keep an eye out for developments and news for next year's conference.

Anniversary: 14 August 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of PHA from its establishment (incorporation in the ACT) in 1996 as the Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations Inc (ACPHA) and of course is now known as Professional Historians Australia. It is hoped that members and branches may offer to do a range of events, oral histories, or other commemorative recordings or other undertakings to help celebrate this milestone from August this year and on into 2027. Delegates to the national committee from all the state/territory branches have been encouraged to liaise with their respective committees to help mark this anniversary. In this vein, PHA President Jeff Hopkins-Weise wrote a personal reflective piece on his own 30+ years as a professional historian, which was uploaded to the PHA website as a *Historia+* piece in late June:
<https://www.historians.org.au/historia-submission-guidelines/2026/6/28/reflecting-on-thirty-years-as-a-professional-historian>

Circa: The peer-reviewed journal of the PHA is published online every two years and usually includes papers that were presented at the national conference. The latest edition (no.9) of *Circa* was released in early April 2026. The editors Francesca Beddie (PHA NSW & ACT) and Elizabeth Offer (PHA Vic & Tas) did a terrific job, and this edition of *Circa* was a superb bumper-size (123-page) release. All PHA members were emailed a link to this issue on 8 April, and along with all past issues, no.9 can be accessed via the national PHA website:

<https://www.historians.org.au/new-issue-of-circa-the-journal-of-professional-historians>

Circa is looking for new editors as Elizabeth Offer has stepped down from the role but will continue on the editorial board. Francesca Beddie also wants to step aside as editor but may stay on in the short-term to induct the new editor(s).

An online *Circa* launch event, which will include the announcement of the winner of the best article prize, is scheduled for the evening of 26 August. This event will also be an opportunity to announce that PHA is seeking new editors for Issue 10 of *Circa*, which will be published after the 2027 national conference.

Historia: Deborah Lee-Talbot (PHA Vic & Tas) has continued to do a terrific job as editor of the quarterly e-newsletter *Historia*. And like past issues of *Circa*, all issues of *Historia* (Issues 1-67) are available on the PHA's website: <https://www.historians.org.au/historia-newsletter>

The 2026 Wilson History Oration: This year's Wilson Oration was hosted by PHA SA and held on the evening of 16 July, with Karen George from PHA SA presenting 'Reflections on Being a Social Justice Historian: Connecting Kin, Locating the Lost and Advocating for Change'. Karen's excellent 2026 Oration is available to watch and listen online via PHA's website:

<https://www.historians.org.au/wilson-history-oration>

Advocacy: Kimberley Meagher (PHA Vic & Tas) and Deborah Lee Talbot (PHA NSW & ACT) on behalf of PHA drafted a submission for the *New National Cultural Policy* which was distributed to the national committee for review and comments prior to being submitted on 24 May.

<https://www.historians.org.au/news/2026/5/25/national-cultural-policy-submission>

National Advocacy Priorities Survey and PHA Advocacy Survey Report: In early June the national committee received the *National PHA Advocacy Survey Report* by Dr David Waldron, who analysed the submissions received from PHA's recent Advocacy Priorities Survey. This report will be made available to all PHA members on the PHA's website and will also be presented in article form in an upcoming issue of *Historia*.

PHA National AI Guidelines: The national body has engaged Dr Deborah Lee Talbot to prepare AI Guidelines for the PHA.

AGM preparations: PHA's AGM will be held online via Zoom on Saturday 19 September 2026. It is expected that there will be a number of new faces (delegates) representing PHA branch associations during 2026-2027, as long-standing delegates to the national body, Helen Penrose (PHA Vic & Tas), Lucy Bracey (PHA Vic & Tas and past national president), and both the PHA NSW & ACT delegates Roland Leikauf and Jeff Hopkins-Weise (the current national president), will be stepping away from the national committee.

4. PHA NSW & ACT member representatives in external organisations

PHA NSW & ACT members often wear multiple hats. For example: 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, Christine Yeats and Mark Dunn are board members 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.

4.1 National Archives of Australia Sydney Consultative Committee – Lisa Murray

The National Archives of Australia held two NSW Consultative Forums over the last 12 months, in November 2025 and May 2026. These were attended by Lisa Murray, Alison Wishart and Roland Leikauf.

The NAA provides information regarding its current projects, accessions, preservation initiatives and activities at a state and national level. The forum has representatives from several 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. Membership of archive organisations has widened to embrace smaller archives. The forum acts as a conduit for queries, concerns and complaints from members of representative organisations, but is also a chance to brief other aligned organisations of key work.

The forum held in December 2025 was online. The key project presentation was by Nicole Lockwood and Jorge Diez del Corral Dominguez on Reparative Description at the NAA, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement. Nicole and Jorge provided an overview of how the NAA's Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander reparative description developed and what it covered eg. How to enhance records, replacing outdated offensive terminology without removing the context of the record, titling, cultural sensitivity warning, cultural restrictions, etc. Utilising people from the kin and families to restore metadata of photos of people and cultural events was also discussed.

The forum held in May 2026 was hybrid. Roland Leikauf was present in-person and was able to take advantage of the tour of the NAA facilities offered to attendees. Alison Wishart and Lisa Murray attended online. The key project presentation was by Ben Chesterman, Assistant Director, about the NAA's Emerging Technologies: Strategy Implementation Initiative. Essentially this initiative is piloting several projects to test different forms of artificial intelligence, machine learning and automated decision making for archival collections. Three use cases are being pursued: transcription of records; description of records; and access examination. A key challenge is data preparedness (clean and consistent data) for applying machine learning. The NAA acknowledges that governance and ethics is going to be key to managing the success of applying AI to assist with archival collections. All projects are in early phases; results will not be made public for some time.

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

Launch of the online catalogue

A major milestone in improving access to the RAHS Library collection was achieved in July 2025 with the launch of the online library catalogue following the beta launch of Liberty in 2024-2025. By December 2025 more than 27,000 records – around 43 per cent of the library's 63,300 holdings – were searchable online. This has significantly enhanced access, enabling researchers to explore the collection remotely, plan visits more effectively and make informed enquiries. Work continues to expand catalogue coverage, particularly of photographs and manuscripts, further strengthening the library's digital presence.

Student placement program

Supporting the next generation of library, archive and history professionals remains central to the Society's work. In 2025, students from TAFE and Charles Sturt University undertook structured placements, gaining practical experience in cataloguing, collection management, reference services and preservation while working with rare books, manuscripts and archival materials. These placements bridge academic study and professional practice, introducing students to professional standards, metadata creation and the ethical responsibilities of caring for cultural heritage collections.

Library stocktake

Working alongside volunteers and staff, the students verified catalogue records, located missing items and improved collection data. They also reviewed shelving and storage, rehousing materials

where necessary and contributing to the long-term preservation and accessibility of the Society's nationally significant collection. Although largely unseen by library users, this work is essential to the long-term care of heritage collections and provided students with valuable experience in preventive conservation.

Library visits and researcher enquiries

The online catalogue has made it easier for researchers to identify relevant material before contacting the library. We continue to receive enquiries from family historians, local historians, students, authors and academics seeking access to the Society's unique collections.

Planning for 2026- 2027

Now that the online catalogue has been implemented, the next stage is to improve access to more of the Society's unique collections.

Priorities for 2026–27 include:

- Undertaking a full review of the manuscript collection and developing a plan to re-catalogue it to current library standards before uploading records to the online catalogue.
- Beginning work on a long-term strategy for the Society's collection of approximately 10,000 historical photographs, including identifying the collections that should be catalogued first.
- Continuing to focus cataloguing on collections that are unique to the RAHS and of greatest value to researchers.
- Starting discussions with the National Library of Australia about harvesting RAHS catalogue records into Trove, making the collections easier for researchers to discover through Australia's national discovery platform.
- Reviewing the library layout as part of the History House lift project, providing an opportunity to improve accessibility, collection storage and the researcher experience.
- Continuing to improve catalogue records and subject headings as new collections are added.

4.3 Mitchell Library Consultative Committee report – Jane Kelso

The Mitchell Library Consultative Committee met once in the last year, with much of the agenda devoted to updates on the refurbished Macquarie Street building and celebration of the State Library's 200th anniversary.

Refurbishment of the Macquarie Street building was completed and opened to the public towards the end of 2026, increasing capacity, improving access and reducing barriers. Improvements include a much larger bookshop, expanded café and direct lift access to both levels of the Bashir Reading Room, which each have lockers available. Visitation has risen in line with a significant increase in seating capacity and study rooms. Security is now based more 'on trust', with a roving security officer, but entry conditions for the Collection Use Area (now on LG2) are similar to those for Special Collections in the Mitchell Reading Room, with no bags allowed.

Celebrations of the State Library's 200th anniversary are in full swing, with a series of activities reflecting on both the Library itself, and the evolving meaning and critical role of libraries more broadly in civil society. The absences in and contested nature of some collections are also being explored through a contemporary lens, including from First Nations' perspectives. The 200th anniversary program includes a series of exhibitions, talks, installations and events, supported by digital content via the SLNSW website and/or the Bloomberg Connects app: stories, a digital timeline, audio guides, podcasts, walking tours, a kids' guide and an online portal where members of the public are invited to share personal stories about libraries. A special program called '[200 years of awe](#)' in September features works by director and choreographer Stephen Page AO; yidaki player and composer William Barton; Artistic Director of the Australian Haydn Ensemble Skye McIntosh and Bell Shakespeare.

A new photography exhibition, *Definitive Dupain*, exploring the work of Max Dupain, will open on 24 August, accompanied by a publication of the same name. From September there will also be an exhibition showcasing the work of photojournalist Lorrie Graham, the first female cadet at the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in the Photography Gallery.

The NSW *Library Act 1939* was amended in June 2026 to include a new 'freedom to collect' provision allowing local libraries to collect and make available library material. Hopefully this will thwart attempts to have material banned. This has been a huge problem in America, but there have also been cases here, in the Cumberland City and Port Macquarie-Hastings council areas. (For further information see: <https://pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/news/amendment-library-act-1939>)

Catalogue identifiers (MMS IDs or reference codes) have been added to manual stack slips, which make up around 40% of collection access requests in Special Collections. These are being used to track requests (items only, not the individual reader) to gain a clearer picture of what is being used and assist with decision making on preservation and digitisation priorities.

The Australian Reference collection in the Special Collections area has been under review to identify gaps and titles that may be available online, ensure items are relevant and up to date, and replace 'unused' titles. The assessment of which books were 'unused' included books used by readers which had to be reshelfed by librarians. If, like me, you have been diligently replacing books on the shelves, you have been doing the wrong thing and distorting their statistics!

The Sir Henry Parkes correspondence has now largely been digitised and is available on the catalogue, and more progress has been made on digitisation of the George Morrison Collection. On advice from the NSW Electoral Commission, access is now only available to electoral rolls prior to 1980 (in line with Ancestry.com).

Four new paid opportunities have been added to the State Library's Fellowship Program: the biennial Ian Stapleton Fellowship for research into any aspect of architecture and the built environment in Australia, two creative residencies, and one artist-in-residence opportunity.

Note that the Consultative Committee Meeting was held before a cyber attack caused an 'extended service disruption'. It took two months to restore all online services, causing universal frustration for staff and public users alike. Fortunately, there was no evidence of a data breach.