

**To be received: President's Report**

**Ngā mihi ki a koutou, arā, ki a tātou.**

I start this report with my gratitude for the local NZHA team – the Executive, Auckland members, and Executive Assistant Jennifer Ashton – who attends to the daily business of NZHA, and also to those beyond Auckland who contribute to the tasks that keep us engaged in national conversations and commitments: the members who wrote submissions on proposed disposals at Archives New Zealand, or the National Library's and National Archives strategic directions; who attend Royal Society constituent organisation meetings for us; and who lobby for the importance of New Zealand history in your many endeavours.

I have special thanks for Raewyn Dalziel who has been a source of sound advice and generous support to me as President, someone I have been able to look to as a model of leadership.

In my 2016 President's report, I hoped I have been mindful that our members belong to many different groups and organisations, and not just the universities. I aimed to have whanaungatanga, inclusivity, and communication feature during Auckland's turn at the helm of NZHA. The electronic newsletter and maintaining the website have been our key instruments of communication, and I believe they have served us effectively.

**1.0 Advocacy and Promotion**

As usual, the Association has dealt with a range of issues in the public domain.

***1.1 Department of Internal Affairs: National Archives and National Library***

Archives New Zealand notifications to dispose of certain government records continued to be an issue for us this year. Most recently, Katie Pickles led a submission on the notification of Capital & Coast DHB (Wellington Hospital) patient records from 1921 to 1946. Also, in November 2016, we responded to Archives New Zealand's discussion document on its future role, which looks forward to 2057. I thank Cybele Locke, Geoff Watson, and Jennifer Ashton for their roles in ensuring we met the tight deadline for feedback.

I thank Barbara Brookes, Margaret Tennant, Charlotte Macdonald, and Katie Pickles for recent email discussions about Archives and Libraries issues. In preparing for the AGM, they have brought two particular concerns to light:

- the ongoing issue of Archives disposals, and our ability (or not) to influence the ultimate decisions made; and
- ensuring reasonable and ethical access conditions that are balanced with rather than hindered issues of privacy, which can be inflexible and sometimes overly fixated on privacy.

These – and protecting and valuing records more generally – are matters of long-term concern. I encourage discussion that has us consider strategies to get us ahead of the position from which we often act, that of respondents to actions initiated by the institutions

we wish to influence. Perhaps a suggestion from Barbara that we develop a NZHA statement on the importance of archives will be a good starting point for such an exercise.

### ***1.2 Royal Society of New Zealand***

We continue to be an active constituent organisation (CO) of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Our colleagues in Wellington – Charlotte Macdonald, Cybele Locke, and Jim McAloon – have represented us well. It is clearly another forum in which concerns about key research institutions like National Archives, and the National and Alexander Turnbull Libraries can be raised and discussed. We are well represented at the CO gatherings because our Wellington-based colleagues are so supportive. However, we have yet to directly address the question that Katie asked in 2015 about ring-fencing a position on the executive for RSNZ business. I wonder if a DIA officer (covering National Archives, the National Library, and the Alexander Turnbull Library) might similarly be appointed. I discuss these possibilities below.

### **2.0 Membership**

As of 13 November 2017, we had 156 financial members. This figure is up from last year's count of 117 at 13 October 2016. Most memberships expire at the end of this year, and the constitution requires that renewals be undertaken by 31 March 2018. Thirty-six memberships will expire at the end of 2018, and one will expire at the end of 2019. Fifteen members are students; two are institutions.

### **3.0 Communications**

We get some good activity around the website, the electronic newsletter and – more recently – the NZHA Twitter account. I thank Hirini Kaa for leading that piece of work and maintaining our presence across those platforms. We have good traffic, with visits to the website fluctuating between more than 100 on some days to fewer than 30 on others. Most visitors look at more than one page. In other words, they do not land and then move quickly on to another website. The Histories Meet website saw traffic flowing between the two websites, and the Twitter account facilitated visits to the NZHA website.

A few people have given feedback about the newsletter, all of it positive and encouraging. Also, the analytics show us that most recipients actually open, rather than delete or ignore, the newsletter. In my view, the newsletter has been at its best when we have had input from at least one of the regions. Again, I am thankful to Council and other members who have produced those regional contributions for us.

Hirini took the initiative to organise the way we accept items for publication on the website, putting the onus on submitters to provide text and to assure us that their event is of broad relevance to our website readers. These have also become a source of newsletter content as submitters are asked to provide a short, written piece about their event after it has taken place. Though small, these have been helpful steps. Communication nonetheless remains a line of work that requires ongoing attention and support.

#### **4.0 NZHA Prizes**

I thank Felicity Barnes for leading the Executive's work on the NZHA Prizes, and for administering the 2017 prizes with Jennifer Ashton. Felicity developed a paper that lays out prize eligibility, criteria, and processes for administering them, for discussion at the AGM. As tasked at the 2016 AGM, the Executive has also produced a paper on a proposed new award for best contribution to New Zealand history. This year, the prizes were awarded as follows:

- W. H. Oliver Prize: Ben Schrader, *Big Smoke*.
- NZHA Best First Book Prize: Ngarino Ellis, *A Whakapapa of Tradition*.
- Mary Boyd Prize: Vincent O'Malley, 'Recording the incident with a monument'.  
(Highly commended – Michael Stevens, 'A "useful" approach to Māori history' and Jane Adams, 'The coital factor').
- Services to New Zealand History Award: Jock Phillips.

In addition to these, the Auckland History Initiative offered and administered a prize of \$350 for the best student presentation at the conference on the theme of Tāmaki Herenga Waka – Auckland. The winner will be announced later in December.

#### **5.0 Histories Meet (Conference) 2017**

Besides our executive committee members, I would like to thank Raewyn Dalziel and post-graduate student coordinators, Rowan Light and Ryan Anderson, who have been fantastic contributors to our conference organising committee. Rowan and Ryan were also conference volunteers with Tess Mazey-Richardson, Anna Gilderdale, Marco de Jong, Sam Denny, Ella Arbury, Morgan Dalton-Mill, and Candida Keithley. We will report on the conference in full to the incoming Executive in the New Year.

#### **6.0 Appointment of Executive Assistant**

Having the administration position of Executive Assistant has been an enormous help, and I thank the previous Council for setting that up and having us proceed with it. I also thank Jennifer Ashton for doing such a great job in the role. I recommend a transition period in which employment of the outgoing and incoming Executive Assistants overlaps to ensure effective handover of NZHA business, something which I suggest can be handled by the Executive.

To support the Executive Assistant, I undertake to produce a NZHA handbook setting out Executive and Council processes and guidelines, including for: general responsibilities; the Association's membership list, prizes, email accounts, website, newsletter, and Twitter account; and contact details for key stakeholders and associated organisations.

#### **8.0 Reflections on Council and Executive Function and Organisation**

Reflecting on my time as President, I admit to worrying about the sustainability of our current structure in relation to the workload of the Executive and Council. Do we collectively have the energy, resources and availability among our Council and Executive members to respond to all the issues and challenges that are brought before us, especially in the long-term? Deadlines are often unhelpfully tight, and we are all already busy in an organisation that relies on dedicated effort, from a pool of people that has declined in number in recent years, and in circumstances which seems to stretch us further and further. I have no

solutions today, but I hope we can use our communications and gatherings to continue thinking and working on these matters.

In recent years, we have considered the way the Association is structured, including rotation of the Executive. We have chosen to maintain the status quo. Nonetheless, I would like the Association to consider either widening our net, in terms of where we draw our executive members from, or refining our structure. I would like us to at least have the discussion, even though I appreciate it is a version of a discussion we have had before. I specifically suggest that future consideration be given to appointing an RSNZ officer and a DIA (or GLAM) officer. Perhaps those officers do not need to be Executive members, but they could report regularly to the Executive or Council. They could be appointed for a term that differs from the Executive's term, providing a single point of contact that does not have to change every two years.

I sign off as President with these somewhat mundane, but hopefully useful, thoughts. I do not present them as motions, but as points for discussion beyond the 2017 AGM. I acknowledge that they are not necessarily my own, but are iterations of earlier suggestions or in some way build on the work of previous Executives, Councils, and members.

I wish the incoming Executive and Council members the best, and look forward to being of further service to the Association.

**Dr Aroha Harris  
NZHA President (outgoing)  
1 December 2017  
[www.nzha.org.nz](http://www.nzha.org.nz)**