

New Zealand Historical Association

President's Report 2018.

The New Zealand Historical Association exists 'to promote historical study, teaching and research'. In reviewing the year's work, we can note some success and some reasonable efforts. Whether we achieve, overall, an 'excellence' or merely an 'achieved' is open to members to decide.

We have been fortunate to engage Hayden Thorne as an administrative assistant. Hayden is a postgraduate student in History at Victoria University of Wellington, and discharges his administrative role with exemplary efficiency. As communication is a priority for our organisation, Hayden has done excellent work in producing the monthly newsletter. Another significant dimension of communication is the NZHA website, and Oliver Skinner has done very good work in refreshing and maintaining the website.

In terms of advocacy, our major effort has been with reference to the National Archival and Library Institutions Ministerial Group. As members may recall, this was established via the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Culture & Heritage, to review the National Library, Archives New Zealand, and Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision. The most important issues, from our point of view, were the resourcing and organisational structure of the National Library and Archives New Zealand. As an Association, our paper to the Ministerial Group advocated for independence of the National Library and Archives New Zealand from the Department of Internal Affairs, with the Chief Archivist as an Officer of Parliament – that is, of status similar to the Ombudsman. This, indeed, was the policy of the Labour Party in the 2018 election, but the policy has not made it into the coalition government's policy agreements.

Archives are, as we all know, part of cultural heritage. They are essential raw material for historical scholarship. Moreover, official archives are essential to democratic norms of accountability. It is difficult to see how these considerations can guide the management of archives (and the printed, pictorial, and documentary heritage which is the province of the National Library) if the responsible officials are subordinate figures in a large department. There is also evidence that the absorption into Internal Affairs has significantly reduced funding.

At the time of writing, there is no word of what the Ministerial Group may recommend. The NZHA executive and council will of course watch for developments and respond appropriately.

The Association has also lent its support to calls by the New Zealand History Teachers' Association for more and better teaching of New Zealand's colonial history in secondary schools. In June I supported Graeme Ball, the NZHTA president, Mark Sheehan from Victoria University of Wellington's School of Education, and Dame Claudia Orange, in their presentation to the Māori Affairs Select Committee. I look forward to enhancing our relationship with the NZHTA.

Other major work during this year has been planning for the NZHA conference in November 2019. A committee, including Cybèle Locke, Charlotte Macdonald, Georgia Cervin, Oliver Skinner, Bronwyn Labrum, Tim Shoebridge, Arini Loader, Kate Hunter, Leanne Tamaki, and Hayden Thorne, has worked to identify and invite keynote speakers, to develop themes, and

organise the venue and catering. The Call for Papers has been issued, and we look forward to November 2019.

Lastly, members will notice that this meeting is asked to support a constitutional amendment. The amendment will simplify our financial reporting requirements, to the minimum standard required by the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. As well as being useful in itself, it might be noted that the present wording, referring to ‘audit’, means much more than it did 30 or 40 years ago. In those days (I surmise) some friendly accounting lecturer might do the books in an evening and be compensated with a distilled product of Scotland. Now, ‘audit’ means engaging the professional services of a firm of chartered accountants. The cost and complexity of this has meant that for some years our Association’s accounts have not been presented to the Registrar. As a result, we were actually struck off the Register of Incorporated Societies at the end of last year. Fortunately, an appeal to the Registrar’s office saw us re-registered, on the basis that proper accounts would be provided in due course. I record my gratitude to the staff in the Registrar’s office for frequent assistance, and to Georgia Cervin, our current treasurer, and John Leckie and Aroha Harris (past treasurer and president), for getting the accounts sorted.

Our current membership stands at 137. This is down slightly on 2017 (164 members) but is well up on the last non-conference year (117 members in 2016). 98 of the memberships expire at the end of 2018, with 34 expiring in 2019, and a further 4 in 2020. Given the requirement that all conference presenters be NZHA members, we envisage that our membership will grow in 2019, and the executive plans to be active in recruiting new members, particularly from outside of the academic world.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Executive – Cybèle Locke (Secretary), Oliver Skinner (web co-ordinator), Georgia Cervin (Treasurer) – and the Council (Aroha Harris, Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, Felicity Barnes, Geoff Watson, Katie Pickles, Nēpia Mahuika, and Tim Shoebridge) for their efforts this year.

Jim McAloon

President.