

New Zealand Historical Association

President's report 2024

For Annual General Meeting 28 February 2025

Ngā mihi atu ki a tātou.

It has been a busy year for the association. As always, we welcome your comments and feedback and look forward to discussions at the annual general meeting. Thank you for your patience in regard to rescheduling this meeting from November 2024 to February 2025.

We heartily thank the previous executive for their hard work and for a successful conference in Ōtautahi/Christchurch in November 2023. We also thank our council for their ongoing support.

When this executive took over the reins at the beginning of 2024 we identified three main goals for the year. These were:

- (1) Increasing the visibility of historians and our work;
- (2) Increasing membership by at least 10% in 2024 and 15% in 2025;
- (3) Partnering with other associations with like-minded goals as the NZHA.

These goals echo the objectives of the association as set out in the existing constitution. In particular, these include objectives to promote ‘**historical study, teaching, and research**’ by ‘**regularly updating the website**’ and in addition by creating a **monthly newsletter** to inform members of a variety of issues, achievements, and opportunities; to raise awareness of historical matters by **expressing our opinions** on matters of public policy which concern historical study; and to ‘**foster[...] contact and co-operation**’ with other associations.

As I explained in my newsletter at the end of 2024, we have met these goals and aim to advance them further this year, along with planning for an exciting, community-building conference in November.

In this report for the rescheduled AGM, I want to focus in particular on the challenges faced by the association, and the wider community of historians we seek to represent and activate. The key word here is *activation* and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and fielding questions about how we might collectively and collegially pursue further engagement with members.

Here are what we see as the major challenges and our responses to these thus far:

1. Declining financial support for history programmes within the academy as well as in the wider profession. Loss of jobs and research funding opportunities.

Responses: Continuing some work on the ‘Future of History’ project initiated by Emerita Professor Charlotte Macdonald in 2023. This has included trying to augment data on academic positions and roles. We could certainly like to expand this effort but doing so will rely on the cooperation of HoPs and others, many of who are overworked.

We have emphasised the dire situation of history programmes and the infrastructures we depend on (e.g. archives and libraries, historical societies etc.) in various submissions we have made to select committees and, most significantly, to the University Advisory Group.

2. Straitened financial situation of the association itself.

Responses: The Treasurer will be outlining the association's financial situation in more detail in his report. We are proposing to increase subscription fees for full members and introduce a smaller fee for post-graduate members.

We believe this is a value-for-money proposition and it will support our capacity to continue the monthly newsletter (which we pay our web convenor and administrator a nominal fee to compile and send out). Higher subscription fees will also enable us to continue to offer travel subsidies to students for the conference; and to offer small monetary awards for the biennial book and article prizes.

This is the first hike in subscription fees in many years. We note that other similar national historical associations request much higher fees. For example, membership of the Australian Historical Association is \$150 per annum for individuals in paid employment.

3. How to sustain and build communities and scholars, teachers, and students of history in such circumstances.

Responses: Members of the NZHA executive have been strongly focused on community-building over the past year.

One notable effort towards building and sustaining the community of members is the creation of a monthly newsletter which includes a summary of activities by the executive and council as well as notices about jobs, fellowships, new books and articles and so on. The newsletter is being opened by a majority of our members. This will continue in 2025.

We have been reaching out to the broadest possible community of historians including NZ based non-NZ historians. We have created a new article prize, named in honour of Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, to recognize the work done by historians working in fields beyond this archipelago.

We have been forging relationships with other associations. As noted in the November newsletter, we have been engaging regularly with PHANZA and have already met once with the representatives from a number of associations to discuss issues of importance with Anahera Morehu, Poumanaaki Chief Archivist of Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga Archives New Zealand and Rachel Esson, Te Pouhuaki National Librarian.

A community of like-minded history and archive associations has met twice since then to discuss issues in common.

We spearheaded a meeting and organised signatures to a press release following Minister Collins' announcement of the halt to Marsden funding for humanities and social science research. This involved contacting presidents of numerous humanities and social sciences associations from across the country. We hope this community will remain active this year.

We have engaged internationally. The Australian Historical Association wrote a statement in support of our press release criticising the Marsden funding decision. As NZHA president, I

have a meeting with the president of the Royal Historical Society in the UK at the end of February to discuss issues of mutual concern.

As NZHA president, I wrote a brief opinion piece that was published in *The Post* and on other media websites on the impact of the Marsden funding cuts and the value of humanities research. This piece garnered some positive responses.

We expect more of this mobilization will be necessary in 2025. We would like to support members in publishing their thoughts on these issues in public venues and encourage you to contact us if you would like specific help in so doing.

Finally, the 2025 conference is organised around the theme of community and we are putting in place various plans to ensure that community building is a central activity at the conference.

4. How we imagine the future for the association, and whether we consider it has a continued role to play in the sector.

Responses: We propose to convene a working group for the purpose of developing a new 'values and identity' statement for the association. Such a statement should certainly incorporate our commitments to Indigenous members and to tikanga.

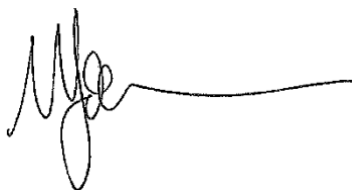
Such a working group might ask, how do we imagine the NZHA in ten years' time? Who will it comprise and represent? What issues and challenges may it be facing?

The working group will propose a statement for inclusion in the constitution at the AGM at the conference in November. **Please let us know if you would like to serve on such a working group.**

This may also require change to the association's name, for instance to the Aotearoa New Zealand Historical Association.

Again, thank you all very much for your support in 2024 and we look forward to discussing many of these issues at the AGM.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miranda Johnson', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Miranda Johnson
12 February 2025