



## **OHA PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO AGM, OCTOBER 2022**

Oral History Australia is a national committee with membership comprising each State and Territory association, and a representative from each State and Territory association serving on the OHA Committee. Most of the activity of Oral History Australia occurs at the level of the State and Territory associations, each of which has an active committee that runs state-based events and activities. Indeed, one of the most gratifying segments of the bi-monthly national committee meeting involves reports from each state and territory about their innovative, inclusive and inspirational activities at the regional level.

Over the past year, the main activities at the national level have included:

### **Biennial OHA Conference in Launceston, October 2022**

- Covid restrictions required us to postpone our 2021 conference, to be held in Launceston on 14-16 October 2022. Presentations that were accepted for 2021 were rolled over to 2022 (subject to confirmation by each presenter), and there was a new Call for Presentations which generated additional presenters. The conference theme remained as Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities & Challenges, with US oral historian Mark Cave presenting the introductory keynote and a closing plenary by a panel of Tasmanian Indigenous historians.
- Thanks to Oral History Tasmania, led by Jill Cassidy, for three years of work as host for the Launceston conference (in partnership with OHA, the College of Arts, Law and Education at the University of Tasmania, and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery). Thanks to OHA webmaster Judy Hughes for her work promoting the event, to Annmarie Reid for managing the EasyChair conference proposal system, and to members of the National Program Committee for reviewing proposals: Jill Cassidy, Carolyn Connors, Elisabeth Gondwe, Linda Hunt (of UTas), Elaine Rabbitt, Scott McKinnon and Alistair Thomson.
- Registrations for the conference have been healthy and any resultant profit will be split between OH Tas and OHA.

### **Oral History Australia Awards – 2022**

- The **Hazel de Berg award** was held over in 2021 that it could be awarded at the postponed conference in October 2022. The award winner for 2022 is **Gwlad McLachlan**.
- The **Oral History Australia Book Award 2022** is presented to: **Mia Martin Hobbs**, for *Return to Vietnam: An Oral History of American and Australian Veterans' Journeys*, Cambridge University Press, October 2021. (details at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/return-to-vietnam/7D6FA5E4F3DA3D84BDB36ED94B805219>)
- The **Oral History Australia Media Award 2022** is presented to **Jeannine Baker** for *The Women Who Made Australian Television*, a series of five online multimedia articles researched and written by Jeannine and hosted by the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA).

(details at <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/women-who-made-australian-television-1-beginnings-television>)

- These awards will be presented in a short ceremony prior to the AGM on the Friday evening of the Launceston conference. Citations for the winners will be available via the OHA website. Many thanks to OHA Book Award Judging Panel members Peg Fraser, Beth Robertson, Scott McKinnon and Maria Savvidis, to OHA Media Award Judging Panel members Elisabeth Gondwe, Anisa Puri and Hamish Sewell, and to Hazel de Berg award judges Karen George, Helen Klaebe and Shirleene Robinson. Thanks also to Hazel's daughter Di Ritch for her continuing financial support for the award, in the form of a beautiful trophy.

### **OHA Journal**

- Editors Skye Krichauff and Carla Pascoe Leahy have consolidated several changes in format and content which have helped make *Studies in Oral History* one of the world's best oral history journals.
- Issue 43, 2021 ('Oral History, Place and the Environment') was published to coincide with the October 2021 AGM. Issue 44, 2022 ('Migrant Voices: Community Collaboration and Telling Migration Histories', theme issue editors Alexandra Dellios and Maria Savvidis) will be launched at the Launceston conference in October 2022.
- Articles for peer review for the 2023 issue of the journal are now being accepted. The theme for the issue, No. 45, is 'Oral History in Troubling Times; Opportunities and Challenges', the same as the theme of the 2022 OHA Biennial Conference. The deadline for submission is 25 November 2022.
- National Committee continues to pay the cost of a copy editor, Katie Connolly, to ease the workload of the journal editors, and the journal designer Karen Wallis.
- thanks to our journal editors Carla and Skye and Reviews Editor Gemmia Burden, to 2022 theme issue editors Alexandra Dellios and Maria Savvidis, to OHA webmaster Judy Hughes, to chair of the Editorial Committee, Alex Dellios, and to new and continuing members of the Committee.

### **Oral History Handbook**

- Beth Robinson is working on a new, 6<sup>th</sup> edition of this Australian handbook, which will be published by the South Australian / NT association and should be available in 2023. The Handbook will continue to be hard copy, though a section about recording technologies may be available online.

### **OHA website**

- Judy Hughes continues her terrific job keeping the redesigned national website up to date; coordinating with state and territory association websites to ensure shared resources and to avoid too much overlap or repetition; and coordinating national communications.
- The biennial conference website was developed by Judy as part of the main OHA website.
- The WA association website uses the same design as the national website, and several other state and territory associations are currently planning to adopt the common design.
- Judy has secured the .au domain for our continuing use.

### **Capitation fee**

- in the 2021-22 financial year state and territory associations paid the reduced capitation fee of \$10 per member. Due to a stable and healthy bank balance, and reduced costs now the journal is fully online, the OHA Committee had agreed in 2021 to reduce the capitation fee from \$15 per head to \$10 per head, and thus enable state and territory associations to use more of their resources for local activities.

### **OHA Bank accounts**

- I want to thank our Treasurer Kyra Edwards who has been working hard over the last couple of years to move the OHA accounts from the CBA to ANZ, which provides more flexible and appropriate support for a small national voluntary organization.

### **OHA committee decisions**

- Alongside his hard work as OHA Secretary, David Sweet has been developing a listing of OHA committee decisions over the past 5 years, so that our institutional memory will be aided by a recorded digest of decisions.

### **Saving our Stories**

- Since I started as OHA President I've been highlighting the issue of community, professional and academic oral history recordings that may be lost because they are not preserved in a secure, future-proof state or national repository. I've tried, without much success to date, to drum up support from the state or national libraries (and the National & State Library Association) to develop a 'Save our Stories' project along the lines of the British Library 'Save our Sounds' project (which had multi-million pound funding from the British Heritage Lottery Fund). In August 2022 I was invited to talk about the challenge and opportunities for saving Australian oral history recordings at an event in Brisbane titled 'Bringing Data to Life: Co-Designing a Language Data Commons' organised by The Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA) and the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC). Though LDaCA is primarily a project for linguists, its aim of preserving voice recordings potentially aligns with oral history. Following the Brisbane event I have been in early conversation with academics involved in LDaCA about the possibility of a pilot project which might locate, document and preserve oral history recordings in a specific locality, with a view to developing a process and protocols that might be used in a more ambitious project. I'll keep you posted.

Finally, many thanks to all our national committee members, who have been meeting regularly via Zoom (Jill Cassidy, Kyra Edwards, Elisabeth Gondwe, Maria Savvidis, David Sweet, Martin William and myself), and to hard-working officer bearers David (Secretary), Kyra (Treasurer), Maria (Public Officer), Jill (Vice-President) and Judy (Web Officer). Voluntary organisations only thrive because of volunteer time, effort and imagination, and in this regard OHA continues to be blessed.

Alistair Thomson, President OHA