



# ORAL HISTORY NSW

## President's Report 2020

To say this year has been unexpected, challenging, and unpredictable in so many ways for all of us is an immense understatement. While everyone's health, wellbeing and stability is foremost in our minds, we also felt a palpable void at not being able to meet face to face with many of you through our usual events, and the stimulating discussions and energy that inevitably would arise from them. With a full year of programming mapped out, suddenly meeting in person and physical venues at which to hold our training and events was off the table. I know plans for many of your own projects and interviews were also disrupted or put on hold.

Happily, we continued our work in supporting the promotion, practice and use of oral history, and welcomed 26 new members to Oral History NSW this financial year. We substantially updated our website resources and information, particularly to reflect recommendations for remote interviewing and equipment, as well as sharing regular updates, events, articles and more via our social media and newsletter. Later today, the recipient of the NSW Community History Award will be announced, with the NSW Regional Engagement Grant recipient to be announced later this year.

Our second year of the successful *History Matters* series continued in 2020, collaborating with the Professional Historians Association (NSW & ACT) and generously hosted by the State Library of NSW. I was privileged to work with Lisa Murray (chair, PHA NSW & ACT), Professor Paula Hamilton, and Minna Muhlen-Schulte who brought their expertise, energy, and enthusiasm to developing a monthly program that was stimulating and diverse in highlighting and examining the role of historians and oral history. I would also like to thank all 27 presenters and chairs of these sessions, as well as Rachel Franks and my colleagues at the State Library of NSW for their ongoing support in promoting and hosting the series both in person and online. Attendance at the online sessions noticeably broadened our audience and capacity far beyond numbers we could physically fit into a room on the first Wednesday of every month.

We held our popular *Introduction to Oral History* seminar in person at the start of the year and repeated it online for the first time, presented by Vice President Scott McKinnon. Scott also presented at Oral History Victoria's annual symposium on Oral History and the Environment.

Our Treasurer Andrew Host co-presented our always in-demand workshop *Capturing Memories* alongside Pauline Curby in Gilgandra, Regional NSW. We look forward to eventually resuming in-person training and events, but will also continue to look at ways we can develop and offer training online - with the same high standards, content and interaction as we deliver in person.

We recently initiated regular online drop-in chats via Zoom as a forum for us to connect with each other and discuss, troubleshoot, and share all things oral history. This is an informal way for us to stay in touch, be inspired and share what are working on, no matter the distance.

Last year saw the departure of our long-time *Network News* editor Francis Good. We all appreciate how much detail and care he consistently put into the newsletter over the years, and I certainly thought about his dedication as I found myself putting together half a dozen issues of the newsletter in 2020. I am pleased to report that we recently welcomed our new editor Gwyn McClelland from the University of New England, Armidale.

The newsletter, website, social media and other ways we come together, serve to share and communicate with each other the issues, highlights, projects and best practices of oral history. In this community of practice, we can all learn from each other.

I would like to end with the team of people that make all this a reality. Oral History NSW is a voluntary committee, and it would not be possible without the dedication, passion, professionalism, and generosity of my fellow committee members who balance committee duties with their own demanding full-time work and lives. I would like to extend my deepest and sincerest thanks to Vice President Scott McKinnon, Treasurer and Membership Andrew Host, Secretary Kylie Andrews, Public Officer Isobelle Barret Meyering, Alexandra Dellios, Shirleene Robinson, Minna Muhlen-Schulte and Gwyn McClelland.

Our committee members are spread across the ACT, Regional NSW and metropolitan Sydney – and we want to ensure our wider membership is reflected in the programming of future activities, highlights, and communications. We thank our members for their continued support, particularly during this year, and encourage you to stay in touch and share with us your projects, feedback, questions and your ideas, so we can continue to best support and engage our dynamic oral history community.

**Maria Savvidis**  
**President**  
**Oral History NSW**

