

# History Transmitted Connect - Consider - Challenge

## Professional Historians Australia Online Conference

18-19 September, 2021



Professional  
Historians  
Australia



PHA QLD



# *History Transmitted*

## Connect - Consider - Challenge

COVID-19 has changed the way we are gathering.  
It has not changed the reason.

Welcome to the Professional Historians Australia 2021 Online Conference! We are delighted to be sharing this exciting conference with you, and coming together despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The historian's job in the 21st century is richer than ever before. Technological advances have created new audiences with diverse needs, and allowed historians to chart and chronicle the past in ways that have never before been conceived. These developments in our profession have created new challenges and new learnings, which will be interrogated in this year's conference, hosted online by Professional Historians Association (Queensland) due to the impact of COVID-19 on Australian borders.

Read on to explore the conference programme, abstracts and speaker biographies. We can't wait to see you all online!

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# *Keynote Speaker:*

## Professor Melanie Nolan

### Tinkering with the Temple of Fame: The National Centre of Biography and the Australian Dictionary of Biography

“The gates of fame are open wide,  
Its halls are always full;  
And some go in by the door marked Push  
And some by the door marked Pull.”  
Anonymous

#### **Abstract:**

Many members of Professional Historians Australia have contributed to and used the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB). The ADB is a national cultural institution which was institutionalised in 1958 when its first employee was appointed. The first volume of the ADB was published in 1966, volume 19 was published this year and we expect volume 20 to appear by 2026. The ADB has not been, and is not, static, however. Over time the ADB has been refitted. It went online in 2006 and, while we continue to publish hardcopies, the ADB is now much more than a book online. Moreover, we are planning for systematic revision after we complete vol. 20. In this presentation, I will review the ADB's current cultural journey amid the transition to a digital environment, the matter of diversity and the rise of transnationalism. I review, then, how we are 'tinkering' with the temple of Australian fame.

#### **Biography:**

Melanie Nolan is Professor of History, Director of the National Centre of Biography and General Editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography in the School of History at the Australian National University. Her work includes *Kin* (2005) a collective biography of a working-class family which won the 2006 ARANZ Ian Wards Prize and was short-listed for the Ernest Scott Prize. She chairs the Editorial Board of ANU.Lives, the ANU Press's series in biography, is on the Editorial Board of the Australian Journal of Biography and History, and is currently under contract with Routledge for a manuscript about historians' biographical practices.

*Saturday 18 September*

9.30	Log on and meet other delegates
9.45	<p>Welcome Carmel Black, President, PHA</p> <p><b>First Session: Keynote</b> <b>Tinkering with the Temple of Fame: The National Centre of Biography and the ADB</b> Melanie Nolan, Professor of History, Director of the National Centre of Biography and General Editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, School of History, Australian National University</p>
11.15	Break
11.25	<p><b>Second Session: <i>Challenge, Connect, Consider</i></b></p> <p><b>Polyangulating the dots: Searching for convicts and emancipists in free settlement Queensland</b> Jan Richardson</p> <p><b>Hodgepodge: Telling war stories</b> Indyana Z Horobin</p> <p><b>History transmitted: Professional family memoirs</b> Bill Metcalf</p>
1.00	Break
1.30	<p><b>Third Session: <i>Connect, Consider</i></b></p> <p><b>The Mercer Lane mosaic: Public art aiding cyclone recovery</b> Bianka Balanzategui</p> <p><b>How to write a history when the community doesn't care</b> Katherine Sheedy and Fiona Poulton</p>
2.35	Break
2.45	<p><b>Fourth Session: <i>Challenge, Connect</i></b></p> <p><b>Nominating a precinct to the Queensland Heritage Register: You want to list what? And that too?</b> Judith Nissen and Colin Hester</p> <p><b>So many pasts within the past: Commemorative history considered</b> Jennifer Harrison</p>
3.50	<p><b>Drinks at home and entertainment</b></p> <p><b>Death by stupidity</b> Jonathan Richards</p>

*Sunday 19 September*

9.30	Log on and meet other delegates
9.45	<b>First Session: <i>Challenge</i></b>  Censoring our past: What are our cultural gatekeepers up to? Ian Britain
10.45	<b>Break</b>
10.55	<b>Second Session: <i>Challenge, Connect</i></b>  Connecting with the Archives: A new approach to understanding correspondence between enquirers and the Australian Red Cross Information Bureau in World War I Sandra Kearney  How do niche histories find and grow their audience? Allison O'Sullivan  Anyone can write history, can't they? (The diary of a detective without a gun) Mary Howells
12.30	<b>Break and Lightning Talk: <i>Connect</i></b>
12.40	<b>Working with unique post-war archives: An examination of the Australian Joint Copying Project, 1953-2021</b> Deb Lee-Talbot
1.00	<b>Third Session: <i>Consider, Challenge</i></b>  Archie Meston, Historian transmitted Jonathan Richards  Panel: Culture in Queensland setting Neville Buch, Timothy Roberts, Deborah Jordan, Anne Monsour
2.40	<b>Break</b>
2.50	<b>Fourth Session: <i>Connect</i></b>  Connecting with leaders Helen Penrose  Working with community organisations: Challenges and opportunities Alicia Cerreto and Jen Rose
4.00	<b>Close of Conference</b>



# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui**

**The Mercer Lane Mosaic: Public art aiding cyclone recovery**

**Saturday, third session**

## **Abstract:**

After Cyclone Yasi and the disastrous flood that followed in 2011, Artslink Queensland funded a public art project to aid recovery. The 42 metre Mercer Lane Mosaic located in the town of Ingham — and dedicated to the cane cutters and the sugar industry of the Herbert River district — was created by 3000 volunteers including tourist, school, disability, and aged care groups.

Using a non-traditional mode of delivery this project challenged the professional historian engaged on the project to connect with a variety of audiences and stakeholders and to consider different view points, methodological approaches and source materials. Large mosaic and interpretative panels detailed the history of a sugar cane growing district from the Dreamtime to 2011 resulting in a visually dramatic and historically informative installation. This paper reflects on the project and how it was received by both the local and wider community and the challenges faced.

## **Biography:**

Dr Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, is a professional historian and historical consultant whose scholarly interests are sugar industry and migration history. She also has a keen personal and professional interest in the local history of the Herbert River district where she has lived since her marriage into a sugar cane farming family. She publishes in various mediums, both scholarly and popular, and conducts local history tours. She has tutored in History and Politics at James Cook University, and presently, as an independent scholar, continues a professional collaboration with James Cook University colleagues.

**Find me online:**

[PHA \(Qld\) Profile](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Ian Britain**

**Censoring our Past: What are our cultural gatekeepers up to?  
Sunday, first session**

## **Abstract:**

The battle against censorship, especially in literature and the arts, was something that liberal-progressives fought hard to wage in Australia up to the 1970s and it appeared to have been generally won thereafter. New forms of this censorship have now emerged and have been instituted by some artistic and literary publishing organisations themselves. The work of some significant contributors to Australia's artistic heritage is being removed from display by major galleries simply on the basis of those artists' 'morally compromised' private lives. A scholarly biography of one of them has been deemed unpublishable by a leading academic press purely because of its edgy subject matter. There can be no defending the egregious personal behavior of artists but need we risk obliterating their creative legacy? In the process, aren't we also blotting out discomfiting reminders of our moral confusions, complacencies and tensions in the past?

## **Biography:**

Dr Ian Britain is a graduate of the ANU, Monash University and the University of Oxford. Now retired, he was (successively) Lecturer in History and Politics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Lecturer in History at the University of Melbourne, ARC Senior Research Fellow (Monash University), and Editor of Meanjin. He is the author of *Fabianism and Culture* (Cambridge UP, 1982) and *Once An Australian: Journeys with Barry Humphries, Germaine Greer, Clive James and Robert Hughes* (Oxford UP, 1997); the co-editor of *The Oxford Book of Australian Schooldays* (OUP, 1997); and the editor of *The Donald Friend Diaries* (Text Publishing, 2010).

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Neville Buch, Timothy Roberts, Dr Deborah Jordan, Dr Anne Monsour**  
**Panel: Culture in Queensland Setting**  
**Sunday, third session**

## **Abstract:**

Without the exceptionalist stance which hovers over the idea of culture in Queensland, panel members will speak to how culture is represented and delivered in their own professional history work. The collective message from the professional experience is that there is a greater diversity in representation which is too hidden by narrower conceptions of Queensland. Those conceptions are actually constructed in global discourses demonstrated by historiographers and philosophers in a wide range of fields, from David Lowenthal, Timothy Fitzgerald, Randall Collins, and many more.

Each panel member will address a Queensland project and the challenges for professional history practice. The idea of cultural production is what we are describing, and the idea of representation would be pivotal.

Neville Buch: (Introduction) Challenges of categories, concepts, ideas, of culture, understanding thought patterns in local-regional space for professional history.

Tim Roberts: Challenges of foreignness and intimacy, public spaces/private lives in considering Queensland's queer geography for professional history.

Deborah Jordan: Challenges of foreignness and intimacy, understanding women and peace in professional history.

Anne Monsour: Understanding perception and experience for Syrian-Lebanese immigrants in professional history.

## **Find us online:**

Neville - [Website](#)

Timothy - [PHA \(Qld\) Profile](#)

Deborah - [Academia.edu](#)

Anne - [PHA \(Qld\) Article](#)



# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Neville Buch, Timothy Roberts, Dr Deborah Jordan, Dr Anne Monsour**  
**Panel: Culture in Queensland Setting**  
**Sunday, third session**

## **Biographies:**

Neville Buch is a researcher in philosophic and socio-intellectual history, exploring influential social thinkers in Queensland's past. Dr Buch is Director of the Brisbane Southside History Network and manages the Mapping Brisbane History Project. He is well-published and recognised for his contribution in the histories of both Catholic secondary and state primary education in Queensland, as well as histories in the cultural and religious shaping of Protestant and Catholic organisations. In the last six years Dr Buch has published seven substantive books and research manuscripts, 20 articles and papers, and six scholarly online sites. He has been a Q ANZAC Fellow at the State Library of Queensland (2015-2016).

Timothy Roberts is an art historian specialising in Australian art heritage before 1945, Queensland art, decorative arts, design and material culture. Mr Roberts has studied history and art history at the Universities of Queensland and Sydney, and has served private, institutional and not-for-profit clients in the areas of significance assessment, biographical research and commissioned art histories. Mr Roberts is a leading Queensland historian in Queer art theory, recently published in *Queer Objects*, edited by Chris Brickell and Judith Collard, (Otago University Press; Rutgers University Press; and Manchester University Press). He was 2019-20 Visiting Fellow, Harry Gentle Resource Centre, at Griffith University.

Deborah Jordan is the award-winning historian, biographer, and Petherick Reader at the National Library of Australia. Dr Jordan was a research fellow in History at Monash University, and an associate researcher with the TJ Ryan Foundation at the Queensland University of Technology. She has held research fellowships at The University of Queensland, the National Library, Deakin, and Flinders University, and is author of six commissioned history books and numerous reports. Her selection of their love letters, *Loving Words: Letters of Nettie and Vance Palmer, 1909 - 1914*, was published by Brandl & Schlesinger in 2018.

Anne Monsour is the President of the Australian Lebanese Historical Society. With Paul Convy, Dr Monsour identified and explored places in New South Wales where Lebanese migrants have settled, and acknowledged their integral role in the growth and the development of that State. She has also published papers on the Lebanese experience in rural Queensland and is the author of *Not Quite White: Lebanese and the White Australia Policy 1880 to 1947*. Dr Monsour is the 2019 awardee for the Lord Mayor's Helen Taylor Research Award for Local History for research on Lebanese presence in South Brisbane, Woolloongabba and West End.

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Alicia Cerreto and Jen Rose**

**Working with community organisations: Challenges and opportunities  
Sunday, fourth session**

## **Abstract:**

The histories of community organisations can unlock rich narratives – stories of inspiration, of struggles for equity, rights and empowerment. In researching and presenting these histories, historians navigate a range of ethical and practical challenges:

- Should we be working within a values-set that is compatible with the organisation?
- How does the relationship people have with the organisation impact on their participation in historical research and on audience expectations?
- How does the historian navigate audience demands, particularly in light of changing technologies and the ever-present challenge of budgets?
- What are the potential implications of the stories we tell for organisations and the people who use their services or programmes?

Alicia and Jen will explore these questions and the complexities involved, drawing on recent collaborations with community sector organisations.

## **Biographies:**

Alicia Cerreto is a professional historian with her own consultancy and is the current President of PHA (Vic & Tas). Over the years she has worked with many communities as they explore their histories, and is passionate about writing, teaching and communicating history.

Jen Rose is a historian and social policy consultant. She is a member of PHA (Vic & Tas) and of Oral History Victoria. Jen has a background both in history and in social policy in the community services sector and draws on her experience across these fields to develop histories and social research through her consultancy Well Chosen Words.

## **Find us online:**

Alicia: [Website](#)

Jen: [LinkedIn](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Jennifer Harrison**

**So many pasts within the past: Commemorative history considered  
Saturday, fourth session**

## **Abstract:**

When PHA(Qld)'s 2009 conference considered the future of history, it was suggested that increasingly government and public support would veer towards **COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY**. Recent Australian historical activity justified this prophecy by comprehensively and imaginatively recording World War 1 experiences, both horrific and glorious - almost excluding any other notable remembrance.

2022 marks two hundred years since the exploration of the embryonic State of Queensland with White strangers searching and settling the Moreton Bay district. Adding to contentious Indigenous displacement and territory usurpation, the penal, military and isolated pattern of society within the initial twenty years, while contributing nearly 4000 life-stories and experiences, also generated complex attitudes and controversial viewpoints. Can different sources and methodological approaches accept 'the convict stain' and its associated disruptions while acknowledging amelioration and advancement? Will the anniversary stimulate national imagination or merely attract local curiosity?

## **Biography:**

Jennifer Harrison is a research fellow with the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at The University of Queensland. She is a founding member of the Professional Historians Association (Queensland) and is actively involved in writing, lecturing and publishing on aspects of Queensland's convict and migration history.

**Find me online:**

[UQ Profile](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Indyana Z Horobin**

**Hodgepodge: Telling war stories**

**Saturday, second session**

## **Abstract:**

Hodgepodge: Telling war stories is a paper engaging with my 2019 Griffith University Honours submission Hodgepodge. Hodgepodge is a biographical micro-novel exploring my grandfather's experience in the Vietnam War. My paper will engage in the key themes featured at 2021's PHA conference. It will explore the grand-paternal and generational connections present in the story. This focus point will be juxtaposed with how I phrased the history within the work to connect to a larger audience. I will also explore the various ethical and social considerations taken into account during the process of creating the narrative. The challenges faced when writing Hodgepodge will be my final point, I will engage the audience by exploring difficulties I faced with access, technology, and memory-based historiography, finishing with a final touch on how future historians may overcome such challenges from my personal experience in the biographic/ memoir/history field.

## **Biography:**

Indyana Horobin is a recent Honours graduate in Creative Writing currently in the phase of early career researching. His honours project was a blend of creative non-fiction narrative and exegesis. Indyana's exegesis, *Conversations with a Conscript*, engaged in theories of the Vietnam War, creative writing, and the writing process with a conversational tone. He recently completed the Humanities Undergraduate Research Internship Program with Griffith University, and was engaged in librettist work in the Fresh Lines Symposium 2019 and the New Columbo Asia Pacific Writers internship. He is undertaking a PhD in the field of historical based creative non-fiction.

**Find me online:**

[LinkedIn](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Mary Howells**

**Anyone can write history, can't they? (The diary of a detective without a gun)**

**Sunday, second session**

## **Abstract:**

Everyone's an expert!

I want to write my family history before lunch on Monday!

Is this fire station significant and why?

That fig tree was used to hang South Sea Islanders. The plantation owner was a notorious kidnapper of islanders who owned his own slave ship – Not True – so prove it!

I think the most important attribute of a good applied historian is the ability to think outside the box and be creative in looking for information in the less obvious places; or be a good detective (without a gun). This paper reflects on 25 years of experience, initially in the collection of local history resources and their inclusion in local history, and more recently in writing Queensland Heritage Register citations. The presentation, delivery and access to research outcomes has kept pace with the evolution of the internet and social media, with a greater focus on audience engagement through succinct writing.

## **Biography:**

Mary Howells was Senior Heritage Officer in the Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment and Science from 2008 to 2019. Her research and assessment of places nominated to the Queensland Heritage Register have included chimneys, convents, churches and trees. Heritage tourism was added to the portfolio in 2012. Mary has written more than 700 tourism-focused summaries of heritage places for 'Heritage Explorer', and a Centenary of ANZAC project 'The March of the Dungarees'; both mobile optimised apps. Previously she worked for regional libraries in local studies specialist roles which included publishing local histories and web sites, public speaking and assisting library patrons with research, including genealogy.

**Find me online:**

[PHA \(Qld\) Profile](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Sandra Kearney**

**Connecting with the Archives: A new approach to understanding  
correspondence and enquirers and the Australian Red Cross Information  
Bureau in World War I  
Sunday, second session**

## **Abstract:**

Letter writers can reveal more about themselves in how they write rather than what they write. Often it is the smallest, stealthiest words that reveals their true emotional and social state. This presentation discusses findings from family correspondence within the Red Cross Wounded and Missing Information Bureau archives pertaining to individual soldiers classed as sick, wounded, missing or killed during the First World War. By challenging accepted views and traditional modes of delivery when dealing with and examining archival written correspondence, it is proposed to show how new technology in the form of a linguistic inquiry word count offers deeper and more relevant analysis of archival material. Letters between family members and the bureau are more informative and differ greatly to the official language or “dialect” of military correspondence. It is proposed this discourse analysis will reveal how the emotional state of families shifted and changed as the war progressed.

## **Biography:**

Sandra Kearney is currently undertaking her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) studies at Flinders University in History. This paper informs part of her thesis research. Her professional interests, curiosity and studies to date have focused on people, their stories, their representation and their experiences within the gaps of historical events that often differ to the celebrated images in the public domain. In addition, she is a member of the Australian Society of Archivists, Treasurer of the Friends of South Australia’s Archives, and is the current secretary of the History Council of South Australia.

**Find me online:**

[ResearchGate](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Deb Lee-Talbot**

**Working with unique post-war archives: An examination of the Australian Joint Copying Project, 1953-2021**  
**Saturday, Lightning Talk**

## **Abstract:**

This presentation discusses the Australian Joint Copying Project, specifically the London Missionary Society materials of the M(iscellaneous)-series. This is a fascinating and complex archive; it commenced as a State-supported archive copying project during the mid-to late twentieth century. With that positioning, the AJCP became a legacy of the colonial era and a decolonisation attempt. The AJCP M-series returned ethnographic, anthropological, linguistic and sociological evidence to the regions and people from across the Pacific. However, these documents seem to have primarily remained within colonial State structures of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. I contend the discourses embedded within the original documentary evidence, combined with the archival processes of the LMS and the AJCP have led to the replication of problematic gendered and racialised pieces of knowledge and stalled the decolonisation of the archive. This presentation highlights the challenges of working with documentary evidence and how this information can be meaningfully reframed for present-day audiences.

## **Biography:**

Deb Lee-Talbot is a Deakin University PhD candidate. Her thesis, 'A Feminist Frontier?', analysing women's experiences on evangelical sites in Oceania, 1861-1907 is driven by the need to improve widespread understanding of women's rights across Oceania. Her research interests are gender issues, the various social and political histories of Oceania, religion, and materiality. When not exploring archives for her thesis, Deb researches the Langi Morgala Museum Pacific collection, co-chairs Deakin's Papua New Guinea Study Group, and is Academic Coordinator for the Contemporary History Research Group. Her archival queries and joys are available on Twitter via @colourful\_hist and the #researchrabbit8 and Instagram @researchrabbit.

**Find me online:**

[Twitter](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Bill Metcalf**

**History transmitted: Professional family memoirs**

**Saturday, second session**

## **Abstract:**

Interest in one's ancestors is almost universal, and is the reason behind genealogical and family history societies, and the multinational Ancestry.Com. Most 'family histories', however, are either dead-boring genealogical tables with little more than names and dates – or rambling exposé of the author's weakly-supported hagiographical treatment of his/her ancestors. Most examined were short of sound and innovative research. In this presentation I shall discuss the research and writing of my latest book, a 'family memoir', *Toil, Travel, Tragedy, Triumph*.

My eclectic research ranged from the usual archival sources to obscure shipping, farming and carpentry study groups around the world. It included the innovative use of DNA testing that led to contact with people around the globe who would otherwise never have been located, providing incredible photos and records. In this presentation I shall also discuss the preparation, presentation and publishing of this Family Memoir.

## **Biography:**

Dr Bill Metcalf is a retired scholar with honorary positions at University of Queensland and Griffith University. He is the author or editor of 11 books, author of 25 chapters in edited books, 7 encyclopaedia articles, 42 peer-refereed journal articles and about 100 articles in magazines. He is International Correspondent for the American-based *Communities* magazine, and has twice been author-in-residence at Writers Centres. In 2018 he was awarded both the John Kerr Medal of Distinction for History, and the Distinguished Scholar Award by the Communal Studies Association with headquarters in USA.

**Find me online:**

[UQ Profile](#)



# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

Judith Nissen and Colin Hester

**Nominating a precinct to the Queensland Heritage Register:**

**You want to list what? And that too?**

**Saturday, fourth session**

## **Abstract:**

Mount Crosby has supplied water to Brisbane for almost 130 years. An illustrated account of Mount Crosby's water history will be followed by discussion of the challenges of researching and nominating to the QHR a large precinct comprising a working infrastructure site which occupies a geographically diverse area, under multiple ownerships. Long-time and former residents are quite heavily invested emotionally in the site, as many spent their entire working lives there. Other groups such as Engineering Heritage Qld were supportive and interested, as the precinct falls into their area of interest. The owner of much of the "industrial" property is Seqwater; but there are many other involved parties, not all of whom were necessarily supportive of listing. Some of the challenges of making the successful nomination will be addressed.

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Judith Nissen and Colin Hester**

**Nominating a precinct to the Queensland Heritage Register:**

**You want to list what? And that too?**

**Saturday, fourth session**

## **Biographies:**

Colin Hester is the President of Mount Crosby Historical Society and Head of Environmental Solutions at Urban Utilities. He grew up in Mount Crosby, surrounded by evidence of its important role in water supply and developed an interest in it. Col started work for the BCC Department of Water Supply and Sewerage in 1980 and qualified with a BSc. App. Chem in 1985. He was the Australian Water Association's Queensland Water Professional of the Year in 2017 and is Urban Utilities' unofficial historian. A volunteer board member at the Queensland Writers Centre, Col researches and writes about local history and the heritage of water supply and sewerage systems.

Judith Nissen is a 36-year resident of the Mount Crosby area, and nominator of the precinct to the Queensland Heritage Register. She is an accredited professional historian with more than two decades' freelance experience, including engineering history projects. Commissions for private and corporate clients have included heritage significance assessments, citations and conservation management plans; archives reports; histories of buildings, localities and organisations; research for museum and interpretative exhibitions; and biographical research. Judith served on the PHAQ and PHA management committees in various capacities from 2002 to 2016.

**Find me online:**

Judith: [Website](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Allison O’Sullivan**

**How do niche histories find and grow their audience?**

**Sunday, second session**

## **Abstract:**

This paper engages with the idea of what makes popular history ‘popular.’ It can be easy to head down a research rabbit-hole, producing something of worth but of little interest to a wider audience. In public programming I have often chosen my subjects in response to themes which interest the public. My new role is challenging: to enthuse people about the history of nuns. To many this history sounds dry and irrelevant. The Sisters of Charity have a 180-year history in Australia and are inextricably woven into our past through their work at the Female Factories and Hyde Park Barracks, and foundation of St Vincent’s hospitals. Their impact on our history is impressive and their story fascinates those who encounter it. But how do I get audiences to engage in the first instance? Is a fascinating history without an audience still history?

## **Biography:**

Allison O’Sullivan received her PhD from the University of New South Wales and specialises in the interpretation of colonial and social history through education and public programming in arts and heritage institutions, as well as through online engagement in her persona as The Archive Detective. After several years with Sydney Living Museums, Allison is now the Learning, Engagement and Program Developer for the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre and Archives in Potts Point.

**Find me online:**

[LinkedIn](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Helen Penrose**  
**Connecting with leaders**  
**Sunday, fourth session**

## **Abstract:**

Our work often connects us with past and present leaders of organisations. Australians are demanding better leadership from its government, institutions and organisations. What characteristics should be emulated or avoided? This paper explores some of the particular learnings and discoveries we have made during school history projects. We will set out our observations about and comparisons of effective educational leaders whom we have encountered from the 1850s to the present day.

## **Biography:**

Helen Penrose has a Master's degree in History from The University of Melbourne and is a member and past president of PHA (Vic & Tas). She has worked as a professional historian since 1993 and was a founding director of HistorySmiths in 1994 ([www.historysmiths.com.au](http://www.historysmiths.com.au)). Her recent publications include a history of Brisbane Grammar School. She is currently working on a centenary history of Carey Baptist Grammar School, to be published in 2023.

## **Find me online:**

[Website](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Dr Jonathan Richards**  
**Archie Meston, Historian transmitted**  
**Sunday, third session**

## **Abstract:**

Queensland journalist Archibald Meston, known for his involvement in Aboriginal administration, considered himself an historian. His series of newspaper articles on the history of Brisbane, Moreton Bay, South Coast and Toowoomba, published during the early 1920s, are seen by some as ‘proper history’. His main interests were heathen mythology and mediaeval history, but he specialised in florid accounts of exploration (particularly his own), the fate of Ludwig Leichhardt and Aboriginal dispossession. Meston praised the ‘calm, dispassionate historian’ but also criticised those who searched in archives: ‘What is the sense or use of digging now in the huge dust heaps of old-forgotten records?’ In 2010, my colleague Bill Metcalf described Meston as ‘ahead of his times as an historian’, and there is still much to disentangle from his vast corpus.

## **Biography:**

A professional historian specialising in Queensland frontier policing, health history and public history, Dr Richards is currently an Adjunct Research Fellow at the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at The University of Queensland. He has spent much of the last three decades fossicking through the Queensland State Archives, looking for lost and hidden gems.

**Find me online:**  
[PHA \(Qld\) Profile](#)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Jan Richardson**

**Polyangulating the dots: Searching for convicts and emancipists in free settlement Queensland  
Saturday, second session**

## **Abstract:**

The 1851 New South Wales census revealed 2,224 convicts and ex-convicts living in the 'Northern Districts', now part of Queensland. Some were convict exiles transported directly to Moreton Bay in 1849 and 1850, but the majority moved north from New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land after Queensland opened to free settlement in 1842. Researchers of Tasmanian convicts have access to the Tasmanian Names Index, Founders & Survivors, and the Female Convicts Research Centre database, but investigating convicts and emancipists in free settlement Queensland is a more difficult proposition. Researchers must polyangulate multiple record sets to create their own databases, cross-referencing New South Wales convict records with Queensland's early convict, court, gaol, hospital and benevolent asylum records, along with birth, marriage and death registrations, Trove's digitised newspaper collection, and online databases ranging from the Prosecution Project and Old Bailey trial records to Ancestry.com and the Digital Panopticon.

## **Biography:**

Jan Richardson is a postgraduate student at UNE. Her MPhil thesis examines female convicts and emancipists from New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land who started new lives in Queensland after the district opened to free settlement in 1842. Her research on women transported from the West Indies to New South Wales was published in *From the Edges of Empire* (Convict Women's Press, 2015). Biographies of these women, along with additional biographies of coloured (non-white) female convicts transported to New South Wales, feature in the accompanying online *Edges of Empire* Biographical Dictionary.

**Find me online:**

[Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu)

# *Abstracts and Speaker Biographies*

**Katherine Sheedy and Fiona Poulton**

**How to write history when the community doesn't care**

**Saturday, third session**

## **Abstract:**

Writing a municipal history has its challenges and Way Back When's experience undertaking a history of a municipality on the outer fringes of Melbourne was no exception. As well as the anticipated challenges of crafting a narrative of such a huge area encompassing so many different stories, stakeholders and years, we encountered additional challenges we were unprepared for. Initially proposed as a 150-year commemorative publication, we first needed to convince our client that the history of their municipality extended well beyond 150 years. During the project we had to work with a variety of different stakeholders, including passionate local history societies (that were at war with each other), Traditional Owner groups, local councillors, council staff, librarians and the general community. We were faced with a divided community of long-term residents who had fond memories of growing up but were largely unhappy with the development of the area, and a large population of recent residents who lived in new estates and were largely isolated from each other and the wider community. On top of all this, we were confronted with overcoming the negative stereotype that overshadowed the entire area. This was summed up neatly by one community member whose response when we asked what makes the area special was: 'nothing, it's shit'.

## **Biographies:**

Katherine Sheedy and Fiona Poulton are professional historians with Way Back When Consulting Historians who love helping communities engage with their past in meaningful ways. With over 15 years' experience, as part of Way Back When they have written over 20 commissioned histories and produced websites, audio documentaries and exhibitions on a range of different topics from bitumen road surfacing, gastroenterology and agricultural societies to schools and hospitals.

## **Find us online:**

Katherine and Fiona: [Website](#)

# Professional Historians Australia

Thank you for coming to our 2021 Online Conference! We hope you feel energised as you prepare to connect, consider and challenge the wonderful field of history!

Under the auspices of Professional Historians Australia, state and territory associations admit members in accordance with nationally recognised accreditation criteria and standards.

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