

Society of Australian Genealogists
ABN 45 029 698 871 ACN 000 049 678

Directors' Report for Year Ended 31 December 2021

Context for this report

The Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG) is registered with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission* (ACNC) as charity ABN 45 029 698 871.

This Directors' Report is provided to Members, and to the public, as a communication from the Directors to address the accountability to members requirements under the ACNC's *Governance Standard 2*. Additional communications include the annual financial statements and the Annual Information Statement to the ACNC.

The Directors' Report follows the format of section 300B of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) applicable to a company limited by guarantee that is not registered with the ACNC as a charity.

The Directors' Report for the year ended 31 December 2021 notes the progress with responses in adjusting to continuing complexities arising from the COVID pandemic. The complexities were further complicated by issues arising from the extended wet weather that had implications for SAG's premises.

Objectives

Short term objectives

1. To adjust to the evolving requirements and circumstances arising from the COVID pandemic.
2. To deal with practical issues arising from extreme and extended wet weather.
3. To improve efficiencies across operations.
4. To plan for, and adjust to, staff changes.
5. To broaden the capabilities and perspectives of the Board.
6. To plan the recognition of SAG's 90 years of family history research.

Long term objectives

1. To foster and to develop a comprehensive collection of family history research resources.
2. To develop an accessible archive of members' research output and submitted material from estates, other societies and the broader community.
3. To develop and to implement educational courses and research programs that enhance understanding and appreciation of family history.
4. To attract, directly and through collaborating with like-minded organisations, a broadening range of the community to an understanding of family history research and, by so doing, to assist individuals to gain a better understanding of themselves.
5. To foster the community's understanding and awareness of the social cohesion that can flow from an appreciation of family history in Australia's multicultural society.
6. To modernise and to digitise family history services available to researchers through SAG's facilities.

Strategies

Strategies for achieving the short term objectives

1. To interpret cautiously, while following rigorously, government health guidelines for COVID, reflecting the risks facing many users of SAG's services.
2. To be responsive to urgent issues rather than be pro-active, to reflect the current constrained capacity of management.
3. To focus effort on sequential, progressive and accumulative actions to reflect the current constrained capacity of management.
4. To recruit in specifically targeted and manageable steps.
5. To utilise voluntary support where practicable.

Strategies for achieving long term objectives

1. To build continually the knowledge base in ways that enhance the scope, quality, practicality and accessibility of resources.
2. To focus on the long term, based on sound, expert advice.
3. To pace development realistically against the resources available.
4. To be mindful of the revolutionary nature of the digitising world.
5. To collaborate willingly to enhance capabilities.
6. To focus on quality, relevance and applicability.

Principal activities during the year

The impact of the COVID pandemic and the various public health restrictions continued to impose a substantial impact on activities. Despite the constraints and the inefficiencies, SAG achieved progress during the period.

1. **Formal qualifications** – despite being hampered by the constraints on access and limitations due to lockdowns, solid cohorts of students graduated with their *Diploma of Family Historical Studies* and completed their *Certificate of Genealogical Research*.
2. **Short courses** – a wide range of specific topic short courses relevant to family history research were conducted online including an increase in DNA courses.
3. **Virtual conferences** – covered topics as diverse as applicable technology to First Nations Ancestors to Scottish Ancestors to Central European Ancestors.
4. **Ideas exchanges** – included online meet-the-author events and panel discussions covering topics raised by participants such as DNA, Canada and archives.
5. **Advocacy** – had particular focus on access to cemetery and burial records and to the review of the Privacy Act.
6. **Research support** – provided a range of support services to researchers including having volunteers search out answers to specific questions.
7. **Fundraising** – pursued the annual appeal and encouraged bequests.
8. **Recruiting Members** – used contacts with researchers to encourage the take up of membership to facilitate mutual support within the research community.
9. **Library collection** – continued to expand the range of materials available to researchers.
10. **Archives** – continued to receive and to catalogue material, from researchers and others, into the archive collection and to make the archives accessible to researchers.

How the activities assisted in achieving the objectives

COVID responses

1. **Policy** - researched, determined, published and implemented a COVID-management policy dealing with the management of facilities and services in order to manage risks associated with COVID.
2. **Online** - continued to conduct most education courses as online courses.
3. **Volunteers** - cautiously welcomed the return of some volunteers to working on archives and researching, in line with the COVID policy.
4. **Library** - restored limited access to the library facilities, in line with the COVID policy.

Wet weather

5. **Library** - liaised with the strata manager regarding addressing leaks in the Kent Street library.
6. **Archives** - liaised with the building owner regarding leaks and mould at Richmond Villa, and storm damage to the garden.

7. **Mould** - increased airing, decluttered archive spaces and treated for surface mould furniture, shelving and leather at Richmond Villa to reduce the risk of loss of some archives.
8. **Dehumidifiers** - installed 2 units to limit humidity in the library to reduce the conditions leading to the risk of mould developing.

Improving efficiencies

9. **Simplifying** - reduced the number of administrative steps in key areas of work including delegating and simplifying the process for formal approval of membership applications.
10. **Online** - continued to encourage the preference for online copies of *Descent*, which both reduces administrative work and cash costs.
11. **Committees** - commenced process of differentiating between Board committees and operational committees where different obligations apply.
12. **Decluttering** - identified and removed from work areas outmoded and/or excess equipment and materials at the library and Richmond Villa thus improving workspaces.
13. **IT systems** - progressed review of IT needs including hardware and systems.

Adjusting to staff changes

14. **Library** – SAG’s long-standing librarian retired, then returned as a volunteer to provide library research support, and a library services manager was recruited to guide the continued development of the library collection and services.
15. **Archives** –an archivist on contract importantly assessed and prepared a report on the scope of, and options for, the archives .
16. **Bookshop** – SAG’s long-standing manager retired. With changes compelled by COVID, the position has not been filled.

Broadening the capabilities and perspectives of the Board

17. **New Directors** – 5 Directors joined the Board bringing a range of relevant and beneficial perspectives and capabilities to the Board including writing and education, strategic planning, academic processes, finance and accounting, governance, board processes, charity and not-for-profit understanding and knowledge of government processes.
18. **Retiring Directors** – 4 Directors, John Dorrian, Alison Wolf and Phil Young and this year John Burke, retired, having provided significant service to SAG –over 3, 16, 6 and 10 years respectively.

Planning for SAG’s 90th

19. **Committee** chaired by Sonya Russell was established to progress ideas for recognising the 90th anniversary in 2022.

Measurement

How performance is measured

The following key performance indicators are used to assess how well SAG is responding to the requirements of family history researchers.

Participation in activities: total participants in all activities, that are measured, provides an indicator of how broadly activities are reaching across the community and how responsive to community requirements are the various activities that SAG offers.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Participants	5239	11 273	+115

Participation to gain formal qualifications: participants in the formal qualifications of the research-based *Diploma in Family Historical Studies* and course-based *Certificate in Genealogical Research* provide a measure of the longer-term quality and capability of family history researchers.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Diploma			
Candidates	12	9	-25
Graduates	8	7	-13
Certificate			
Students	44	34	-23
Graduates	39	30	-23

Participation in short courses: participants in short courses gain an understanding of a specific area of knowledge relevant to family history studies. All courses continue to be provided online due to COVID. Courses cover a wide range of topics ranging from say *Analysing your Ancestry DNA* to *Family History Fundamentals*.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Short courses			
Participants	360	1009	+180

Note: some courses have limits on numbers, a different variety of course is offered in any one year and courses run for varying duration from less than 1 day to multiple sessions across several months.

Participation in special interest groups: to facilitate the free exchange of knowledge of immediate relevance to researchers, SAG facilitates various special interest groups that emerge, expand or decline subject to the specific interests and needs of researchers. Some groups focus on specific areas of research like *Colonial Australia Research* while other groups focus on research methodologies and technologies like *Reunion for Mac*.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Special interest groups			
Number of groups	8	12	+50
Participants	1028	1796	+75

Note: figures indicate tickets across all group meetings with COVID lockdowns impinging on both 2020 and 2021 participation.

Requests for research assistance: to assist researchers who do not have ready access to SAG’s library collection and archive collection, SAG provides a volunteer-supported research support service. This service has been expanded due to access constraints arising from COVID.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Requests for assistance	212	282	+33
Active volunteers	2	2	0

Additions to the collection: the collection covers library content, contractual access to supplementary library and research resources and the archive collection. Volunteers provide much of the administration of these collection materials; hence COVID has had a dampening impact on the rate of growth of the collection.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Collection			
Library additions	221	158	-29
Archive accession bundles	73	48	-34

For both the library and the archives, most of both collections are not yet digitised (or have restrictions on accessibility) and therefore rely on in-person visits which were severely restricted in both years. For the archive, the figures do not reflect the backlog of thousands of documents that are yet to be accessioned into the MIDAS catalogue. Accession bundles refers to a distinct donation rather than the number of distinct items. The archives collection has more than 65 000 unique items. Progress in accessioning materials was restricted by the various lockdowns and commensurate staffing and volunteer constraints plus technology issues during the year.

There were no changes in contractual linkages during the year, including arrangements with:

First Solutions	NSW Resource Descriptions & Access
NSW State Library	National Library of Australia/Trove
National Archives UK/Discovery	British Newspaper Archive
MyHeritage	Ancestry
Findmypast	The Genealogist
Biographical Database of Australia	
plus the family history societies with which SAG has reciprocal rights.	

Membership: membership is an indication of the community’s commitment to SAG and of SAG’s effectiveness in communicating its purpose to the community in a way that is relevant to the community.

Year ended 31 Dec	2020	2021	% change
Members			
Total	3395	3686	+9
Members who joined	448	491	+10
Members who ceased	649	200	-29

Directors

Details of Directors

The names of each person who has been a Director, and hence a responsible entity under the ACNC Act, at any time during or since the end of the year to 31 Dec 2021 and to the date of this report are listed below.

Name	First appointed	Last elected
Kerry FARMER	14 Feb 2018	1 May 2021
Melissa HULBERT	10 Jun 2015	30 May 2020
Darryl Charles LOW CHOY	1 May 2021	1 May 2021
Betty O'NEILL	1 May 2021	1 May 2021
Janette Louise PELOSI	14 Jun 2017	30 May 2020
Keith Willoughby ROBERTS	12 May 2021	To come before 2022 AGM
Sonya May RUSSELL	11 Aug 2021	To come before 2022 AGM
Philippa Ann SHELLEY JONES	11 May 2019	30 May 2020
Cheryl WRIGHT	1 May 2021	1 May 2021
Ceased		Date ceased
John Leonard BURKE	8 Dec 2012	7 Mar 2022
John Daniel DORRIAN	14 Nov 2018	19 Jun 2021
Alison Margaret WOLF	14 Dec 2005	1 May 2021
Phil YOUNG	12 Aug 2015	1 May 2021

Changes to Directors

Alison Wolf and **Phil Young** did not stand for election at the 2021 AGM so ceased to be a Director with the end of their term at the conclusion of the AGM. **John Dorrian** resigned due to work commitments after taking on a major international role related to the charity for which he worked. **John Burke** resigned for personal reasons. The Board noted with appreciation the contributions made by all 4.

Members elected 3 new Directors at the 2021 AGM bringing a range of relevant skills. **Darryl Low Choy** brought extensive experience in strategic planning, and an

understanding of family history research for the Chinese diaspora. **Betty O'Neill** brought tertiary education experience plus experience as a writer. **Cheryl Wright** brought extensive financial, accounting and business management experience. Subsequent appointments were **Keith Roberts** who brought extensive experience in governance and board operations and in charity and not-for-profit management and **Sonya Russell** who brought experience of the workings of government departments.

Company Secretary

Ruth Graham BA MBA(TechMgmt) MTEM CertHE PGDip(Mgmt) GCertResMgtPolicy MACSCP(Snr) FIML FRSA ARMA was appointed Company Secretary during the year but in that role is not a responsible entity under the ACNC Act.

Continuing Directors: qualifications, special responsibilities and experience

Name & Special Responsibilities	Qualifications	Principal Expertise and Experience
Melissa HULBERT President Finance, Risk, Governance & Compliance Committee Education Committee SAG90 Working Group	BSc(Hons)	Astronomer, Programs Co-ordinator MAAS, Sydney Observatory Education specialising in tertiary (Swinburne University, St George & Sutherland Community College & online astronomy & genealogy courses) Experienced in editing & publishing
Janette Louise PELOSI Deputy President Convenor Diploma & Certificate Course Committees Education Committee	BA(Hons) DipIMLib DipIMArchAdmin MinfoStud(Lship) AALIA ASAAP MPHA	Archivist
Cheryl WRIGHT Hon Treasurer Chair Finance, Risk, Governance & Compliance Committee	BEc DipFamHist(UTas) FCPA	Experienced finance & accounting executive

<p>Kerry FARMER Convenor Education Committee Diploma & Certificate Course Committees</p>	<p>BSc BA</p>	<p>Computer programmer & systems analyst Family history educator Director of Australian Studies for National Institute for Genealogical Studies Author of genealogy books and guides</p>
<p>Darryl Charles LOW CHOY Education Committee</p>	<p>AM MBE BA MBltEnv PhD GCertHigEd GDURb&RegPlan MPIA(Fellow) FEIANZ</p>	<p>Professor Emeritus Griffith University MajGen(Rtd) academic career in town planning Military career in Royal Australian Engineers</p>
<p>Betty O’Neill</p>	<p>BA BSc(Hons) MBus GradDipEmploymentRelations Doctorate Creative Arts</p>	<p>Author, lecturer Creative Intelligence University of Technology</p>
<p>Keith Willoughby ROBERTS Finance, Risk, Governance & Compliance Committee</p>	<p>CertAtt(BTC) BCom(Hons) FGIA FCG(CS CGP) FIML MAICD MAPS</p>	<p>Experience as charity manager & as consultant to not-for-profit sector</p>
<p>Sonya May RUSSELL Convenor SAG90 Working Group</p>	<p>BSecAnalysis MMDS psc(j)</p>	<p>Public servant, specialising in strategy and international policy, Government relations, public messaging, and program management</p>
<p>Philippa Ann SHELLEY JONES Convenor Membership Committee & Croker Prize Committee</p>	<p>BA LLB GradDipEd</p>	<p>Legal background & editorial background in the NFP sector Writer, editor, curator and publisher of family histories</p>

Meetings of Directors during the reporting period

	Number of meetings			
	Eligible to attend		Attended	
	Board	FRGCC	Board	FRGCC
Melissa HULBERT	11	2	9	2
John BURKE	11	2	11	2
John DORRIAN	5	0	5	0
Kerry FARMER	11	0	9	0
Darryl LOW CHOY	8	0	8	0
Betty O'NEILL	8	0	6	0
Janette PELOSI	11	0	11	0
Keith ROBERTS	8	2	8	2
Sonya RUSSELL	5	0	5	0
Philippa SHELLEY JONES	11	0	10	0
Alison WOLF	3	0	3	0
Cheryl WRIGHT	9	2	9	2
Phil YOUNG	3	0	3	0

FRGCC Finance Risk Governance & Compliance Committee

Note: other committees are operational committees.

Members Liability

Members' liability is limited. Each member undertakes to contribute an amount not exceeding \$10 to the property of the company if the company is wound up.

Total Members' Liability that members (including previous members) of the company were liable to contribute at 31 Dec 2021 if wound up was \$38 860.

This Directors' Report for Society of Australian Genealogists for year ended 31 Dec 2021 is consistent with Part 1.6 and section 298 of the *Corporations Act 2001*, and regulation 45.10 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*. In the opinion of Directors, the report gives a true and fair review of the state of affairs of the Company at the date of signing and has been prepared consistent with section 300B of the Corporations Act. In accordance with a resolution of the Directors, the report is signed on behalf of all directors.



Melissa Hulbert
President
31 May 2022