

President's Report for the Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 7.30pm

As I report to you this year I do so with a much more positive outlook for the Newcastle Family History Society.

The past few years have had their challenges. Our Society, like so many other Family History Societies, has felt the negative impact of diminishing numbers of members and visitors, rising overheads, and the aftermath of Covid which has brought considerable change. It has also brought a great deal of uncertainty.

These years have taught us that it is essential to adapt the way we function so that we embrace change in a positive manner to better serve the needs of our members and the community. The NFHS is always keen to espouse new things which will help us move forward.

We do not have to look far to find innovative ways in which our Society excels. Our initiative to offer hybrid monthly meetings together with recorded presentations on our YouTube Channel provides excellent opportunities for members to access our wonderful guest speakers. Our new podcasting initiative also provides a new and exciting way to share information and expertise with our members and the family history community in general. We have a lot of followers from other Societies, and even from overseas! We showcase Newcastle as a society of excellence.

Our NFHS website keeps everyone abreast of our activities and provides our members with up-to-date reports on our Management Committee Meetings, our financial activities, membership, correspondence, and quarterly reports from each of our groups. Our many exchange journals are now also available to read at home via the Members' Area of the website. We now also have a second website entitled ***Female Convicts of the Hunter Valley*** which provides information about this important part of our history which has been so thoroughly researched by Society members.

Our online shop now offers downloadable publications which is a giant step forward towards greater sales. Purchasers have immediate downloads with no postage costs. There is also no cost to the Society and a lot less work for our Publications Officer.

For these advances in our technology, we owe a debt of thanks to the expertise and commitment of our IT Officer and our Webmaster.

It is pleasing to note that our membership is increasing on a monthly basis, and we are finding enthusiastic new members attending our Special Interest Groups, courses, and excursions. We are also finding a return to busy Thursday afternoons at the Society. Our increased membership is often a direct result of open days, tours or courses which have been run at or by the Society where visitors have recognised how we can help them with their family history pursuits.

I want to extend a sincere thank you to all the groups who work so hard to keep our society functioning at such a high level. The eTeam, the Library Group, Snippers, Publications, the Sandgate Group, and the Research Group, all contribute to our family history knowledge. Special Interest Groups bring us together and create a sense of community around our shared love of family history. A huge thank you to the library volunteers who give their time so freely. I also want to acknowledge those who handle the technology, communications, and financial matters - your contributions are essential in keeping the society running efficiently. I am incredibly grateful to all those who contribute so much of their time to making our society run so smoothly.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to the outgoing Management Committee members who have always worked together in a collegial manner to ensure that our Society functions at its optimum at all times. Our incoming Committee, to be elected shortly, will continue to ensure that the NFHS operates at its best throughout the remainder of this year and well into 2025 with a team of committed members leading the way.

Mel Woodford

President, NFHS

May 2023-May 2024