Keynotes and plenaries

Keynote Address: Truth telling and the media – the role of journalism in "narrowing the space for permissible lies" about colonisation

In the wake of the failed Voice to Parliament referendum, Australians are indifferent at best to First Nations people and histories. What is truth-telling in this context? What can it achieve? Truth is not social or institutional reform. The challenge is to break through the indifference that comes from the paradoxically comfortable space Australians live in, between knowing and not-knowing about colonial atrocities.

Truth-telling must take many different forms to be effective. International research shows big picture truth commissions designed or directed by the state, with strict terms of reference, reporting deadlines, limited budgets and limited judicial authority don't help healing, if that is ever their purpose, and can further traumatise survivors if they are not supported properly to participate. I will discuss my 2023 Churchill Fellowship research into how the public discourse has changed (or not) in other countries where truth-seeking processes are operating, including the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Norway.

But truth commissions can narrow the space for permissible lies about our past. The Bringing them Home inquiry is an example. The truth of the Stolen Generations history is part of the public consciousness today. This is a significant achievement, but how many of its recommendations have been implemented since it was released almost 30 years ago?

Place-based truth-telling is a powerful way to break through indifference. It can bring the truth of the past to people in their home places, where it is much harder to ignore. This challenging work is being done by descendants from all sides, on-country, facing the uncomfortable truth together.

Professor Lorena Allam

Keynote Address: Changing Minds – Propaganda, Persuasion, and the British and Australian Media

In an age of fake news, we need to rethink histories of propaganda and disinformation. The power of the mass media to change minds, or to reinforce existing beliefs and prejudices, is something that now, in Britain, Australia, and around the world, seems more concerning than ever before. And historians are now changing their own minds about this topic. For quite a while, studying propaganda seemed deeply unfashionable. Historians began to think instead in terms of 'soft power', 'cultural diplomacy' and 'public diplomacy'. Now, however, we may need to replace such euphemisms with a more forthright vocabulary, to help us develop a better understanding of how propaganda and persuasion have shaped the media policies of democracies as well as dictatorships over the last century. In this keynote I will survey the history of propaganda in the UK, Australia, and the wider world, and suggest how rethinking this history may help us address the challenges we now face both as citizens and as historians.

Professor Simon Potter

Plenary: Uncertain Descents – History, Intimacy and Transformation

The 'practice' of family history is often maligned by academic historians, framed as a comforting and conservative retreat from more challenging or contested national and colonial narratives. Given the relational complexity of most families, this is, perhaps, a surprising assumption. The idea of the family as respite rather than contest is made possible by a set of fantasies rather than the lived realities of most family pasts and presents. Indeed, as Tanya Evans has argued, family historians sometimes become radical agents who break family silences and reveal long concealed secrets. What happens, then, when academic historians engage interrogate and investigate their own genealogies? What disruptions and reorganisations might the complexities of descent, genealogy and family produce for the practice of scholarly history?

This panel brings together three historians who have changed their mind, about the past and how we might relate to it, through an engagement with family history. Catherine Freyne will explore how an examination of her father's closeted past reframed her understanding of LGBTQ history and opened her eyes to the intergenerational workings of queer trauma, including their effects in her own life. Andrew May reflects on his earlier work on his Great Great Grandfather, a Welsh missionary in the Khasi Hills of north-east India. He will explore the differences between being careful about a community and being accountable to one, and the possibilities and limitations that emerged through this research. Anna Clark will recount the experience of researching the writing of Australian History in the context of her own genealogical connection to a key figure within it, Manning Clark. What insights and explanations for changes in Australian historiography were made possible by sitting at your grandfather's desk? Each panellist will speak for 15 minutes, followed by plenty of time for discussion with the panel and then questions from the floor.

Catherine Freyne
Andrew May
Anna Clark
Leigh Boucher (chair)

President's Plenary: History in Australian Schools – Crisis and Continuity?

The future of the history discipline in Australian universities depends on dynamic and rigorous history programs in Australian schools with healthy enrolments. Indeed, the fate of university history will increasingly depend on enrolments from pre-service teachers meeting their requirements for history teaching. History in secondary schools is a crucial issue for the Australian Historical Association.

This year, the History Teachers' Association of New South Wales (HTANSW) released a discussion paper on the state of history education in Australian secondary schools. It comes twenty years after the 2006 report developed by Tony Taylor and Anna Clark ('An overview of the teaching and learning of Australian history in schools') produced for the Australian History Summit convened by then-Prime Minister John Howard.

Together, these two documents enable us to track broad longitudinal patterns and trends in the state of history education over two decades, and to trace the uneven impact of the Australian National curriculum in history, which was rolled out across the 2010s.

This plenary will discuss the findings of the new discussion paper and unpack its implications for history education in secondary schools and universities.

Jonathon Dallimore, Executive Officer (professional services), HTANSW
Anna Clark, co-author of the 2006 study and Professor of History at UTS
Megan Tucker, Senior History Teacher, Vice-President of the HTASA and HTAA representative, AHA Executive
Kerri Garrard, School of Education, Deakin University

Roundtables

Aboriginal history in Sydney parks: changing approaches to heritage management?
Indigenous Histories

This roundtable shares our recent research documenting the Aboriginal history of two very different and much-loved Sydney parks, undertaken on behalf of Greater Sydney Parklands. We share our findings and the process of compiling this history, reflecting on the role of place-based histories in shaping the future management and use of parklands and the possibility of Country as a framework for telling stories of place and people over time. We discuss the limited and diverse archive which informed our work, and the challenges of working within the heritage management framework and in locations where challenging and contested histories are encountered.

Heidi Norman (University of New South Wales), Naomi Parry (University of New South Wales), Anne Maree Payne (University of New South Wales)

AHA Teaching and Learning Session: A Workshop on Changing Minds of Teachers and Learners in the Age of GenAI

Show me the data! Using paradata and historians' agency to authenticate AI use in research
Deborah Lee-Talbot

As major technology partnerships and internal academic initiatives introduce generative AI to universities, I ask how can educators assess student work while building methodological sophistication rather than simply banning AI or policing plagiarism.

This 35-minute workshop introduces historians to the concept of paradata. A complementary research concept to metadata, paradata is documentation that reveals the processes behind data creation and interpretation. By illuminating the ""hidden labour"" that shapes history research, students learn to analyse existing paradata (like digitization workflows, AI transcription metadata, and archival processing notes) to understand how sources are shaped, while simultaneously creating their own paradata by documenting research decisions, AI tool usage, and interpretive choices. Using this method can deepen students' understanding of historical practice, improve research skills, and foster critical engagement with archival practice.

This workshop addresses concerns that AI integration diminishes scholarly standards by making invisible labour visible. Through case study analysis of the University of Melbourne Archives' use of Transkribus and the Shire of Yarra Ranges de Pury diary manual transcription project, participants will examine how educators can guide students to critically evaluate AI-generated metadata (Transkribus) while developing rigorous documentation practices in manual transcription work (de Pury). Participants will analyse sample paradata from the Transkribus and de Pury projects to identify areas where educators can apply the concept of paradata in the classroom. The session concludes with discussion of how paradata helps students develop their skills and interpretive authority as historians.

To be followed by a roundtable discussion, with Nancy Cushing, Deborah Lee-Talbot, Ruby Ekkel, Amanda Wells, and Megan Tucker.

Changing minds, shifting perspectives: thinking about Soviet history from Australia after 2022

General

Australia was once home to significant Soviet Union expertise. After the end of the Cold War, however, this field of study has been allowed to wither. It was only from 2014, after the illegal annexation of Crimea, and in particular after Russia's full scale assault on Ukraine in 2022, that public interest in the successor states of the Soviet Union has picked up. This new interest happens at a unique time, when many young scholars from the post-Soviet space are displaced because of war and when "outsider" scholars rethink their approaches in light of the current war. This panel brings together historians of several generations and diverse national origins, all connected to the Research Initiative on Post-Soviet Space (RIPSS) at the University of Melbourne. It asks those who moved from elsewhere, how their displacement to Australia shaped their view of Soviet history. Others will reflect on how the full-scale invasion of Ukraine changed their minds about their field of research and teaching. Rather than a traditional panel, this will be a relatively free-floating group discussion.

Mark Edele (The University of Melbourne), Julie Fedor (The University of Melbourne), Oleg Beyda (The University of Melbourne), Iryna Skubii (The University of Melbourne), Natasha Wilson (The University of Melbourne)

Culture, Cosmos, Country: embedding First Nations knowledges in ancient Mediterranean studies – case studies from the Australian National University
Teaching the Ancient Mediterranean World in Australia, Today

Embedding First Nations perspectives is one of the Australian National University's incoming graduate attributes. Academics from the ANU Centre for Classical Studies have been collaborating with First Nations scholars to co-develop innovative learning experiences and interventions that seek to reframe ancient Mediterranean studies within the Australian context. This panel session will share two case studies and then open the floor for meaningful dialogue and exchange of ideas.

The first case study is a collaboration between Walgalu (Wolgal, Wolgalu)/ Wiradjuri artist, cultural practitioner and lecturer from the ANU School of Art and Design Aidan Hartshorn, and Lecturer in Classics and Curator of the ANU Classics Museum Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney. Beginning in 2023 as a part of the ARTefacts exhibition, Aidan created a series of works that (re)invaded the museum space, recontextualising the Classics Museum collection and interrogating colonial museum practices. The collaboration has now expanded into the teaching and outreach program to include cultural demonstrations, hands-on workshops, discussion panels and research outputs. Through Aidan's interventions, undergraduate students, staff, First Nations secondary students, and the general public have been engaged in a process of reinterpreting and interrogating the ancient Mediterranean and the colonial reception of 'the classical', bringing to light a range of often hidden assumptions concerning value, material, ethics, property, ownership, culture, and time.

The second case study arises within an Australian Research Council Discovery Project: Night Vision in the Late Ancient Mediterranean (UD/ACU/ANU). Night Vision aims to create a new history of wakeful nighttime activities in the late ancient world, enriching the cultural knowledge of the night for the Australian community. In 2025, the focus of the project was 'Night Sky', involving a unique STEM-humanities collaboration between academics focused on the ancient Mediterranean and Mount Stromlo Observatory. Peter Swanton, a Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay man and PhD scholar in the ANU Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics, and Dr Tatiana Bur of the ANU Centre for Classical Studies, will share their collaboration which has led to the creation of educational content demonstrating how astronomy involves both stories and science of the stars, creating opportunities to reflect critically on the Western astronomical tradition. Core to this collaboration is the interaction between the sources of the late ancient Mediterranean and Indigenous astronomical knowledge.

Aidan, Georgia, Peter and Tatiana will share their projects, their perspectives, and their experiences, passing on lessons learned and areas for future development that may be

of practical use to others aiming to engage in similar projects. The floor will then be opened for questions, discussion and dialogue with panel attendees.

Aidan Hartshorn (Australian National University), Georgia Pike-Rowney (Australian National University), Tatiana Bur (Australian National University), Peter Swanton (Australian National University)

From *Invasion to Embassy* to *Georges River Blues*: Reflecting on the work of Heather Goodall

Indigenous Histories and Green Stream

In January 2026, the history community lost a powerhouse in Emerita Professor Heather Goodall. From her first book—*Invasion to Embassy*—to her last—*Georges River Blues*—Heather's impact on historians working across Indigenous history, water history, refuge histories, histories of cross-cultural interaction, colonial history and more has been immense. Over many decades, Heather's research has shaped various fields of historical scholarship, while her tireless activism and advocacy has contributed to highlighting the plights of various communities across Australia and beyond. In this roundtable—co-hosted by the AHA's Green Stream and Indigenous Histories stream—six scholars who worked closely with Heather over the years reflect on her life and legacy, discussing the importance of her key works to the development of Australian historical scholarship.

Jessica Urwin (University of Tasmania), Ruth Morgan (Australian National University), Heidi Norman (University of New South Wales)

Grandparenting in Australia: changing minds across generations
General

When preparing the material for our provisional website on the history of grandparenting in Australia, we decided we should include a photograph of each team member as a child, with their grandparents. This is because, since the first time we started discussing our grant application together, it was immediately apparent that our own personal and emotional involvement, as grandchildren, parents and grandparents, was going to be part of this history, and was going to influence the ways in which we approached and developed the research. It felt impossible to detach ourselves from the research without compromising its integrity. This roundtable will provide an opportunity to reflect with the audience on the multilayered processes through which the researchers' personal stories come to be intertwined with broader histories of the family.

First, we interviewed each other as part of the oral history component of the project. We imagined this as a way of overcoming the distinction between the researcher and the informant, and developing a methodology based on genuine conversations in which the scholarly and the personal are constantly and openly juxtaposed and, at times, contrasted. Then, we reflected critically not only on the recorded interviews among our research team, but on how our own preconceptions about grandparenting have been confirmed, complicated or challenged by the collection of demographic and archival data, oral histories, and focus groups. Finally, we considered how the research itself came to reshape our own memories and understanding of being children, grandchildren, parents and grandparents.

We welcome the convenors' invitation to propose panels that do not necessarily follow the usual format and focus instead on producing engagement and discussion. We have envisaged a roundtable in which each team member will have 3 minutes to presents one main idea about grandparenting, as it has evolved from early discussions on the project to the present critical analysis of research data. The lead investigator Francesco Ricatti will then chair a 30 minute open discussion among the team, on the complex intertwining of personal memories and research in transgenerational family history. The last 30 minutes will be devoted to an open discussion with the audience, which will be invited not simply to ask questions but to share brief yet important aspects of their lived experiences in transgenerational family care.

Liz Allen (Australian National University), Alexandra Dellios (Australian National University), Tanya Evans (Macquarie University), Emily Gallagher (Australian National University), Nathalie Nguyen (Monash University)

The Future of Gender Studies (Opening Plenary for AWHN Stream)
Australian Women's History Network

At a time when the field is increasing under siege, but in other ways simultaneously flourishing, this panel will reflect on the past, present and possible futures of Gender Studies in Australia – both as field of teaching and of research. This discussion is shaped by both local and global developments. In the US, universities are abolishing gender studies programs in response to Donald Trump's attacks on DEI generally and specifically within universities, encapsulated in his 2025 executive order 'Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.' As Joan Wallace Scott has recently observed, in the context of the release of the Epstein files, the abolition of gender studies is a way of further guaranteeing impunity to the elite men documented in these files. She further noted that 'this suppression of gender studies is not only an attempt to suppress a critical analytical tool, but also knowledge itself.' In Australia, there is an unevenness to the current state of things. Gender Studies is thriving at some universities, at the same time as it is being abolished or diminished in others. A key question the panel will address is: What can we do to ensure the future of this vital field.

Barbara Baird will give a brief history and update on Women's/Gender Studies programs at the three universities where she has worked - Flinders University, Adelaide University and the University of Tasmania. These three case studies show the institutional and research and teaching subject matter diversity of Women's/Gender Studies in Australian universities and will update listeners on their current standing. After delving more deeply into the current situation at Flinders she will shift to more general but tentative observations and propositions about how Women's/Gender Studies is being understood and managed in our universities. She is concerned to link the standing of Women's/Gender Studies with an all-of-a-sudden accelerated escalation of the corporatisation of our universities, neoliberal approaches to knowledge and the rise of the far right. Her conclusion will be a celebration of the solidarity and love experienced among teachers, students and supporters of Women's/Gender Studies that sustains our work and our spirits.

Rebecca Sheehan will speak on the very recent dismantling of Gender Studies at Macquarie University, where she was convenor of the program. This occurred during the last major wave of restructuring and jobs cut at Macquarie and was raised during the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the University Sector. She will speak to the ways in which this was justified in relation to intersectionality and in the context of broader cuts to the humanities.

Cassie Byrnes will discuss the current state of Gender Studies at the University of Queensland, as well as in Queensland more broadly. Despite housing one of the longest running Gender Studies programs in the country, UQ cut the program in 2014 with the removal of the major. In 2026, we have reintroduced the Gender Studies Major to UQ, making it the only university in the state to offer this program. This was made possible through student and staff collaborative efforts to show the importance of the discipline. Yet, other universities are facing significant cuts to their programs, demonstrating the unevenness of priorities and funding in the current higher education space. If only Group of Eight universities have access to such critical disciplinary interventions, then we seek to reproduce educational inequalities that Gender Studies has long sought to abolish.

Sydney: Migrant City?
Histories of Migration and Mobility (AMHN)

Sydney is celebrated as a multicultural city. This panel puts Sydney's Multiculturalism to the test through new migrant histories and stories. We ask the question: is Sydney truly a migrant city or does anglo privilege still define access and inclusion? Each panelist will reflect on a Sydney community or suburb, tracing place, people and politics to expose the power dynamics at play in Sydney life more broadly.

Zora Simic will discuss Werriwee in the Whitlam years and after, highlighting the extensive Yugoslav migration to the area. Sophie Loy-Wilson will speak to 'Many Chinese Sydneys'. Leigh Boucher will explore the politics of multiculturalism in Sydney's queer 'community' in the 1980s and 1990s, and the place of migrants in its memory and history. Niro Kandasamy will focus on Toongabbie and Pendle Hill to trace Sydney's Sri Lankan history. James Findlay will talk about migrant Sydney on film and TV. Andonis Piperoglou will speak to limits of ethnic singularity in migration history via an exploration of Sydney's many Greek diasporas. Talei Mangioni will outline the dynamics of Pasifika Sydney.

Together we seek to unpick neat historical narratives imposed on Sydney's past by our political representatives in favour of a more complex set of stories encompassing the lived reality of diversity and survival in Australia's Emerald City.

Sophie Loy-Wilson (The University of Sydney), Leigh Boucher (Macquarie University), Zora Simic (University of New South Wales), James Findlay (The University of Sydney), Andonis Piperoglou (The University of Melbourne)

Teaching, publishing and practicing Intellectual History in Australia
Intellectual History

Intellectual history is a vibrant field that produces complex histories of thinkers, writers, scientists, and scholars whose ideas have shaped our world over the longue durée. Yet it's international reputation, associated with the 'Cambridge School' or Lovejoy's controversial 'history of ideas,' has left it a neglected subdiscipline in the Australian academy. In reality, intellectual history in Australia encompasses a far wider reach across disciplines like politics and international relations, literary studies, sociology, philosophy, economics, and cultural studies. In contrast to research conducted in Europe and the United States, Australian intellectual historians have established a distinctive reputation for employing innovative methods to analyse wider sources across the academy and public sphere. In this roundtable, members of the Australian Intellectual History Network discuss some of the major themes, strengths and challenges of their diverse disciplinary practice in Australia.

Bruce Buchan (Giffith University), Koen Stapelbroek (James Cook University), Kate Fullagar (Australian Catholic University), Jarrod Hore (University of New South Wales), Julie McIntyre (The University of Newcastle)

The Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme: reconsidering the expansion of Australian higher education

Histories of Capitalism

The Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS) was introduced during World War II to provide ex-servicemen and women with vocational opportunities as part of a broader repatriation scheme to ease their return to civilian life and employment. Sometimes referred to as 'Australia's GI Bill', over 330,000 veterans participated in the CRTS between 1944 and 1951. While the great majority of CRTS students undertook vocational training, some 25,000 graduated from Australian universities. The scheme's financial provisions for tuition and living expenses enabled a generation of students, who otherwise lacked means, to gain university education and as a result to experience rapid social and economic mobility in the post-war decades.

The CRTS was a core component of the Curtin-Chifley governments' postwar reconstruction planning, with the expansion of Australia's higher education and research capacity tied to the national interests of a modernizing, industrial economy. Yet while the scheme increased capacity and provided opportunities, its limitations also shaped the change that it brought.

This panel draws upon an ARC-funded project, which has examined and compiled a database of the records of thousands of CRTS university enrolments in Australia, to reconsider the impact of the CRTS scheme and the government investment in higher education. Our research asks how Commonwealth government policies reshaped Australian universities after World War II and underpinned their continued growth. What did the CRTS mean for the students who benefited from its provisions? How did the presence of veterans on university campuses change the experience of being a student? Who did the CRTS include, or exclude?

Speakers will reflect on the way our research has revealed gaps in the familiar narratives in the history of higher education, begging a detailed reconsideration of how the CRTS reveals a much bigger national story.

Julia Horne (The University of Sydney), Kate Darian-Smith (The University of Melbourne), Stephen Garton (The University of Sydney), James Waghorne (The University of Melbourne)

The digital pivot: shaping collections and histories in our born-digital present
Public and Professional History (ACPH & PHA)

We are now a quarter of the way through the twenty-first century – the first to be born digitally native. Many governments and organisations produce only digital records, generating petabytes of data in the form of apps, games, images, algorithms, social media and audiovisual content. Foreshadowed by Donna Haraway's extended subjectivities, individuals are now inextricably immersed in digital environments: our traces are scattered across a multitude of public, semi-public and private spaces. Comprising panellists from across cultural, community and tertiary institutions, this session considers the changes in archival practice required to collect and interpret our digital connectivity. We ask whether any of this material will be accessible 20 years from now – and in what formats? What will it look like to recover and emulate historic data environments? Given that we are already aware of gaps in our collecting strategies and capabilities, can they ever be recovered? How will the historians and curators of the future change their practices to re-tell the current century? This session will alternate between conversations among the panellists and on-screen demonstrations of selected data environments that archivists and researchers are working in. The panel will also reflect on the challenges and opportunities of engaging with this contemporary cultural record. The fundamental provocation that we put to the conference is: are we ready for this ontological shift in our collecting approaches and research practices? Furthermore, who is leading the way and how can we participate in this evolving expertise?

Peter Hobbins (State Library of New South Wales), Matthew Burgess (State Library of New South Wales), Keiran Hegarty (Deakin University), Meagan Loader (National Film and Sound Archive), Alison Wishart (Woollahra Council)

Planned panels

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HISTORY: WHERE DO I START, AND YOUR ADVICE SOUGHT

Improving the Safety of AI-Generated Histories: What's the Problem?, and Your Advice Sought

Marnie Hughes-Warrington

Histories are made by artificial intelligence every moment around the globe. These histories are not always safe, and they do not always reflect robust reasoning. Questions about the past can prompt the generation of information about illegal activities, self-harm, pornography, hate, or forms of violence in ways that do not reflect the virtuosity of historians in engaging with difficult and traumatic pasts. Effective solutions have not been found. Universal filters have led to legitimate historical material being prohibited, or the generation of anachronistic results. Existing risk frameworks tend to conflate historical reasoning with short recall questions or the translation of sources, and politically or ethically sensitive questions are not included. This means that complex or persistent historical enquiries may challenge both the safety and performance of models over time. Most importantly, the expertise of historians has yet to be recognised in AI safety and reasoning research and development. Australia is a promising site for this work given its globally novel combination of deep historiographical traditions, track record in digital history, and innovative approaches to historiography at senior secondary level. In this session Marnie will introduce key safety issues with AI-generated histories, outline suggested remedies that involve historians, and seek the advice of those attending on how historians can be recognised, engaged, and celebrated for this work. Considerations include the construction of testing systems that minimise exposure to explicitly harmful materials, respect for intellectual property, approaches to dissemination, and ensuring good coverage of Australia's expertise. Your advice is welcome.

'AI? I don't use AI! But you can pry my spell-checker from my cold, dead hands': Rethinking Digital Literacy and Analysing Policy about AI usage in humanities journals

Deborah Lee-Talbot

Historians use algorithmic tools daily, yet there is also some panic amongst professionals about using AI in research. The capacity to generate text, speech and images based on user prompts, and a ubiquitous presence thanks to unregulated distribution, Gen-AI is now a potential tool for a range of researchers. Subsequently, to preserve academic principles and practice, humanities journals have sought to address use of Gen-AI through reactive policy development. Based on analysis of select policies

from journals in Australia, Canada, the United States and United Kingdom (Nov 2022 to Jan 2026), I argue that explicit acknowledgement of algorithmic dependencies and digital literacy is essential for developing realistic AI policies. Making our methodologies visible in both policies and publications will help us maintain core principles and practices as publishers and universities increasingly implement AI-platforms. This paper invites discussion on how historians can collectively develop such polices.

What is at stake at the commodity frontier? Theory, history, and the end of the world

Matthew Ryan

In 2021 Sven Beckert and colleagues put forward a breathtaking statement: 'The history of the making of the modern world is a history of the expansion of commodity frontiers.' In this view, commodity frontiers are 'processes and sites of the incorporation of resources' – and at stake is not only our understanding of world history over six centuries, but also our understanding of many contemporary dilemmas. Over the past decade, the commodity frontier agenda has become a generative meeting place for historians of many persuasions, especially environmental history and the New Histories of Capitalism approach. But what a commodity frontier is – and especially how and why we should study them – is far from settled. This paper considers these historiographic, epistemological, and ultimately political questions. It does so by cross-fertilising Beckert's capacious, empirical approach to commodity frontiers and global capitalism with a prior articulation of those concepts – that of Jason W Moore, and the broader project of eco-Marxist world history. Revealed are stakes even higher than Beckert et al suggest: not only our understanding of the past and present, but the very possibility of a future.

What is Australian food? Capitalism, agriculture, retail and environments

Julie McIntyre

Despite being a major global food producer, Australian food prices have risen sharply in recent years (e.g. *The Guardian*, 8/4/24). Mass-market food production is environmentally unsustainable (Muir, 2010; Massy 2017; Broome et al 2019) and threatened by climate change (e.g. ABC 1/12/25). But do these consequences stem from historical ambitions to become a major food producer and, if so, how? Jason W Moore argues that "Cheap Nature" (ecologies expropriated from First Peoples in settler colonial nations), and advances in science and technology, by the late 20th century contributed to "Cheap Food". Then from the early 2000s food stopped getting cheaper (Moore 2015). It is therefore relevant to notice that the global cheap food threshold coincided with the definition of Australia's industrial food complex. In the year 2000 the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Economics (ABARE 2000) re-defined the food industry as a single composite market-based system for administrative policy making. According to the state, food moved along divergent pathways in this system, or supply web, as raw or processed, and across varied distribution networks: wholesale or retail; domestic or export sale. Yet, more than markets were involved. Food was designed, produced, distributed and sold to a mass market via a complex of both socio-economic and environmental connections.

This paper argues for a conceptual framework that applies histories of capitalism, agriculture, retail and environments to open discussion about why and how private and public organisations and institutions transformed 'food' into an integrated and iterative system that continues to shape Australia's food future.

Food capitalism: From family farms and corner shops to a single, composite market-based industrial food system, 1944-2025

Matthew Bailey

This paper presents evidence for a proposed interdisciplinary conceptual framework to study food capitalism in Australia. Daugbjerg & Swinbank (2012) argue that in the post-war period, industrialised countries shifted from the social engineering of family farming and "agricultural exceptionalism" towards market liberalism. This was accompanied by the intensification of farming methods and food production. At the same time retailing in Australia, which distributed food to consumers, concentrated and scaled. This pattern of co-evolution was already recognised: before the war, industrial production was found to be growing in scale and sophistication in response to the expansion of retail chains (Industrial Commission of NSW, 1939). After the war, the grocery chains, having outcompeted independent grocers, were themselves rendered obsolete by supermarkets. By the year 2000, as Australian manufacturing declined, food processing remained a major industry (ABARE 2000) and employer, and Australia had the largest concentration of grocery retail in the world (Merrett, 2020). Today Coles and Woolworths garner 67% of grocery sales (ACCC, 2025). Plus, concurrently with the rise of the Australian movements for nature conservation, capital-intensive scientific agriculture increased. Food farming is now concentrated into commodity species of grain, grasses, nuts, fruit and livestock that require an extensive environmental footprint: 55% of land use and 74% of water consumption (ABARES 2025). By undertaking this first historical study of inter-connected economic and environmental facets of the industry in the postwar era, we can begin to visualise how 'food' has been structured (and recursively restructured) into a system, amid global exogenous forces.

CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS: HOW FAMILY EMOTIONS CAN TELL A NEW (HI)STORY OF NATIONALISM

Family as Nation: Intergenerational Emotion as Collective Feeling

Katie Barclay

What does love of the nation consist of? Scholars of nationalism have pointed to a mutual investment in a shared cultural heritage, a unifying language, and a willingness to view one's neighbour as one's brother. Both implicitly and explicitly, national identity is also rooted in metaphors of family and biological inheritance. Some people are more likely to 'look' of a nation than others, and some have a 'stronger' claim to a nation that rests in a generational transmission of identity through the family. This paper argues that metaphors of family extend beyond such naïve examples however. Indeed, the deployment of family to narrate the history of the nation and its members has been routine in historical writings by both professional and amateur scholars. Familial feeling is regularly deployed to articulate and justify accounts of the nation and its boundaries and so the family and its historically-contingent psychodramas provide a rich set of narratives to articulate the nature of collective emotion.

Constructing an Irish Feminist Genealogy to Create Emotional Justice in the Archive

Molly Fletcher

This paper contributes to the recovery process of women's roles in the Irish nationalist movements by analysing the very different political writings of three prominent women: Anna Parnell (1852-1911), Marion Duggan (1884-1943) and Dorothy Macardle (1889-1958). My aim is twofold. Through constructing my own archive of periodical articles, novels and memoirs, I attempt to achieve what Marika Cifor calls 'emotional justice' in the archives, namely grasping 'traces of voices, affects and experiences of those denied by power that would otherwise be lost to the archival record'. The texts that I have chosen record women's feelings about the political movements they subscribed to, as well as their place in those intersecting campaigns. Secondly, guided by Lucia Sorbera's theorising, I strive to create a genealogy of an early branch of Irish feminism, whereby experiences, aspirations and affects connect feminists to those who came before them and those coming after. Understanding that current feminists continue the mission of previous generations, but also that each generation is influenced by their own historical context, I argue that the nationalist moment each woman wrote from significantly shaped how they utilised emotions in their rhetoric. I apply an emotion framing to Irish history to simultaneously construct a feminist genealogy and expose women's distinctive affective nationalist visions while mired in masculinist nationalist politics.

‘I have felt about it just as I would about a real baby conceived in love’: Affective Citizenship, Motherhood, and Suffragism
Rachel Macpherson

Motherhood has been a potent historical-cultural symbol, equally valorised and weaponised by social movements. Feminist historians, such as Marilyn Lake and Patricia Grimshaw, have long since argued that maternal frontier feminism was crucial to colonial suffragism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many women legitimised their claims for citizenship through their often racialised national and imperial duty as mothers. Motherhood was also a reality for many suffragists. Elizabeth Cady Stanton brought up eight children, although she often wrote about how it curtailed her time for political work. For others, rearing children or getting married was not conducive to their activism and political lives. For some, it was their choice to be child-free. For others, it was not. Whether real or imagined, motherhood evoked a highly recognisable set of emotional rules and norms. In this paper, I analyse how a selection of childfree suffragists in the US viewed the physical and emotional role of motherhood. I also uncover the ways in which they traded on the affective connection associated with the maternal to characterise their work for the nation, including Ellis Meredith’s framing of her writing, in a letter to her own mother, as ‘a real baby conceived in love and longed for and dreamed of and prepared for’. Informed by scholarship on emotions, affective citizenship and the feminist concept of political grammar, I further complicate our historical understanding of the place and function of the maternal in feminist politics.

Imperial Historians and the Emotional Job of Remaking the Family of Empire
Sharon Crozier-De Rosa

The family, as a concept or a practice, has long been used as a historical-cultural symbol. As a metaphor, it has functioned as an implicit hierarchy through mirroring typical family relations in a patriarchal society. Therefore, it has been employed to support assertions about the nature of relationships in and between nation-states. Over time, different forms of kinship have also evoked their own sets of emotional rules and norms. This has made it possible for people to refer to family and intergenerational relations to elicit particular feelings. These feelings are not neutral. Rather, they produce affective narratives that can be deployed to bolster a range of historical and political claims. In this paper, I analyse how imperial historians of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century strategized the new discipline of imperial history as a space for crafting an emotional attachment to Englishness that would serve to connect imagined white Britishers—metropolitan, but also colonial—to each other, as well as to their adventurous ancestors and future descendants. I investigate how these scholars—male representatives of elite bastions of reason and knowledge, such as the universities of Cambridge and Oxford—drew inspiration from advances in the natural sciences and defied what were newly deemed

‘scientific’ approaches to history to situate the familial imaginary within an affective domain to strengthen the potential impact of the moral and the political claims embedded in their writings.

Japan's Pacific mandate and its inter-colonial trading in a broad history of global resource governance, 1920-45

Tomoko Akami

The recent US invasion of Venezuela and its threat to annex Greenland were 'outrageous' for the standard norm of the sovereignty as of the 2020s. They nonetheless prompt us to ponder what resources (or the resources in what 'jurisdiction') were understood as ok for a major power(s) to 'grab' and claim their exclusive access, and how this understanding changed from an era of empires to that of national-sovereign states. This paper identifies the mandate system under the League of Nations as this transitional stage of the norms for a state for accessing raw materials in the lands of former or current colonial territories, and examine the changes and non-changes of these norms, using the Japanese Pacific mandate as a case study. The Japanese metropole trading with colonial Asia, especially maritime 'Southeast Asia', which was called 'outer South Seas': Soto Nanyo, increased significantly around the time of the First World War. This was why the Japanese imperial state demanded an 'open door' policy from the new Pacific mandate under Australia after the war. The Japanese mandate of the Pacific islands was called as 'inner South Seas': Uchi Nanyo, and seen not only as a naval security frontline, but also as a stepping stone to resource-rich maritime colonial 'outer Pacific'. Paying an attention to the often neglected inter-colonial (and mandate) trade relations, the paper examines how Japanese experts and officials regarded its Pacific mandate and its relations to the other economies under the colonial and mandate administrations in the region, what the League's oversight meant, and how the norms of the state actions for the access and development of raw materials changed (or unchanged) before 1938 and after (when the Japanese state left the Permanent Mandate Commission of the League).

An Epistemological Genealogy and Explanation of Matriarchal Anti-Colonial Resistance within the Land Tenure System in the Marshall Islands

Desmond Narain Doulatram

This paper provides an overview of the history of Ri-Majel (Indigenous Marshallese) matrilineal clan culture and how attempts to reclaim it are evident within the post-colonial Republic of the Marshall Islands. The land tenure system in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has evolved significantly in its interpretation, in the telling and retelling of the practices and applications that have dictated and continue to dictate primary ownership. Archives reflect the shift from matriarchal to patriarchal conditions under pressure from missionaries (1857 onward) and during the German colonial period (1885-1914). This colonial cultural conditioning continued under the Japanese mandate (1914-1945) and the American Trusteeship period (1945-1986). Nonetheless, against the

backdrop of the geopolitically valuable and lucrative nature of Micronesian military complexes and the key strategic location of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Ri-Majel (Indigenous Marshallese) culture and its associated history of land ownership and culture have been reinterpreted to foreground earlier and continuing customary priorities. Matriarchal principles preceding the German period have been solidified within the current Customary Laws of the Marshall Islands to reframe colonially imposed patriarchal regulations to better reflect enduring local forms of matriarchy. This has happened to ensure that the Compact of Free Association, meant to enact the RMI's constitution, reflects and perpetuates local forms of cultural intimacy and maintains Ri-Majel agency. One such customary application pointed to in this paper is the Ralik Act that preserves and reconfirms these customary practices, shifting emphasis away from colonial patrilineal traditions of the bloodline called Botoktok back to the matrilineal traditions of the Bwij. This has enabled powerful figures (Iroij) from the Western Chain in Ralik to solidify their ongoing resistance to neo-colonial rule and its patriarchal assumptions and ensure the continuation of the dominant concept of matriarchal ownership and lineage underlying jowi (clan) culture that has long served as a basis to colonial resistance.

Not 'mere aliens': US Courts, the 'Fallout Suit,' and Marshall Islanders in the Age of Nuclear Testing

Prudence Flowers

Between 1958-1960, Pauling et al. v. McElroy et al. (known as the 'fallout suit') made its way through the US court system. The case, brought against representatives of the US government, centred on the legality of American nuclear weapons testing. The named plaintiffs were Linus Pauling, a Nobel Laureate in Chemistry and American peace activist, and Dwight Heine, an educator from the Marshall Islands who, over the course of the 1950s, had become the face of Marshallese resistance to US nuclear testing in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Although Pauling and Heine were unsuccessful, the case reflects a broader history of Marshallese appeals to and engagement with American and global audiences in the 1950s.

This paper argues that Marshallese participation in the lawsuit can be understood as a challenge to the authority of the UN Trusteeship Council, which had failed to act on their past petitions. It also locates Marshall Islanders as both symbols to be utilised as well as participants within an emerging international peace movement. For the case, which centred on the environmental and health consequences of nuclear weapons, radiation, and fallout, brought together a global cross section of plaintiffs, the largest groups of whom were from the Marshall Islands, the US, and Japan. Lastly, it analyses the lawsuit as an attempt by the Marshallese to claim their legal status and rights as subjects within

the US's Pacific Empire and to simultaneously establish the harms associated with the nuclear age.

The KGB Down Under: Understanding the Skripov and Morrison Affairs of 1963
Jesse Seeberg-Gordon

1959 saw the restoration of diplomatic relations between Australia and the Soviet Union, which had been ruptured five years prior following the infamous Petrov spy affair. And yet, immediately upon re-opening its embassy in Canberra, Moscow again filled its ranks with confirmed and suspected KGB agents. By February 1963, the most senior of these, Ivan Skripov, was declared persona non grata for his intelligence activities in Australia. Adding insult to injury, Australian diplomat Bill Morrison was then expelled from the Australian Embassy in Moscow a few months later, following a retaliatory KGB entrapment. The operation was apparently facilitated by a close associate of both Morrison personally and the Australian Embassy. Obviously, the scandals were a slight by Moscow against the newly restored diplomatic relationship. But what, exactly, did they mean? What can they tell us about how the Soviet Union, a global communist superpower, perceived Australia, an Indo-Pacific middle power, and about Australia's place in the post-war world order more broadly? This paper will investigate such questions and what bearing this episode had on the Australian Cold War.

Women's Work in the Shadows: Espionage, Gender, and Labour in the Petrov Affair
Ebony Nilsson

After Evdokia Petrova, recently defected Soviet intelligence officer, testified at the Royal Commission on Espionage in 1954, readers of The Argus learnt from their morning news that she was, in fact, 'not just a clerk'. While many newspapers described her in housewifely terms, emphasising her fashion and make-up choices, details of Petrova's career and work emerged throughout this 1950s spy scandal. She was not the only female intelligence officer involved, either. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), also had female employees whose labour contributed to domestic intelligence work. Joan Doherty, one of ASIO's earliest recruits, listened and transcribed from tapped phone lines – but also took the Petrovs on vacation during the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. Other women were not formally employed by either side, but interacted with espionage in the line of, or around, their other work. This paper will examine women's involvement in the 1954 Petrov Affair. It explores how adding espionage to the frame – treating intelligence work as labour – might shift our understanding of women and work in 1950s Australia.

Explaining the trigger for the British colonisation of Australia: intelligence, empire, and the return of strategy
Kate Fullagar

The British government had been discussing the possibility of colonising New South Wales from at least 1779. Few scholars have explained until now why these discussions finally turned into plans around 1786, which in turn eventuated in the first fleet's departure for Botany Bay in 1787. This paper argues that the turning point was a piece of intelligence received by the Admiralty in 1784. The intelligence revealed the potential for French rivalry in the South Pacific. Intriguingly, it was sent by a woman spy master, who had been selling information to the British for nearly 15 years. My paper discusses the life and work of this woman – Marguerite Wolters. She was based in Rotterdam, managing assets from Madrid to Vienna to Constantinople. The discussion sheds lights on how espionage worked in Britain before the advent of a centralised state system like MI6. More importantly, it returns focus to the long-thrashed-out debate over the origins of Australian colonial foundation. Wolters's intelligence lends weight to the political-strategy-leaning thesis over the excess-convict-driven thesis. It also reminds us of the imperial and global contexts of early Australian history, so often reduced to a proto-nationalist story. Histories of espionage in Australia's eighteenth century links the era productively to the twentieth century, when spying was more commonly assumed to drive change.

The 1897 Flag Incident: Japanese Migrant Workers and Japanese Question in Spain's Asian Empire

Kristie Flannery

In the late nineteenth-century, the small town of San Isidro de Garapan in Saipan became the site of an incident that sparked international conflict between Japan and Spain, who claimed sovereignty over the Micronesian island. On the first day of January, a group of Japanese farm workers held a party in Garapan to celebrate the new year, decorating their house with flags, including the Japanese flag. The resident Spanish friar was annoyed that no Spanish flag was displayed. After he chastised the Japanese for this oversight, they planted a crudely-made paper Spanish flag in the dirt, which made the friar even more irate. His subsequent complaints to Spanish colonial officials led to the imprisonment of one of the Japanese revellers. This in turn generated formal protests from the Japanese ambassador in Manila and the president of the Tokyo-based company that employed the prisoner. Spanish responses to the rapidly-escalating incident involved multiple levels of government across the globe—colonial officials in the Marianas and the Philippines, the Spanish legation in Japan, and government ministers in Madrid. Internal communications recovered from the archive reveal Spanish anxieties about the Japanese presence in the Marianas less than two years after Japan's annexation of Taiwan, and plans to shore up the weak Spanish presence in the islands in the face of great power rivalry. Analysing this case sheds light on competing visions of empire in the Pacific before the First World War.

An Australian Stone in the Pacific Shoe: Anglo-German Conflict Resolution in Micronesia before 1914

Matthew Fitzpatrick

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Hamburg-based Jaluit Company enjoyed something close to a trade monopoly over much of the Marshall Islands, a situation unchanged by Germany's acquisition of the Caroline Islands. With British interests concentrated elsewhere in the Pacific, this state of affairs seemed set to continue until, in the first years of the twentieth century, the Australian shipping firm Burns Philp complained to the British that its access to Micronesian markets was being repeatedly blocked by the Germans. A short but noisy international trade dispute ensued against the backdrop of Marshallese worker strikes and natural disasters. It ended when, Germany promised to alter trade conditions in the region and offer the Australian firm compensation for lost earnings.

As interesting as this dispute is for the light it sheds on the observation of global free trade agreements prior to the First World War, this paper draws on archival material from

Britain, Germany and Australia to highlight the negotiation process between Britain and Germany. These negotiations focused largely on finding a joint solution that would satisfy the Australian firm and its political sponsors in the newly formed Australian parliament. The incident shows, this paper argues, how Australia's burgeoning economic nationalism was being projected into the Pacific and reveals how this new form of power projection was viewed by the British and the Germans.

A Palauan bai in the Humboldt Forum - A case study in the legacy of German anthropology in Micronesia

Melinda Steele

Augustin Krämer (1865-1941) is one the most famous names in German anthropology, well known for his extensive travels all across the German Pacific colonies, but especially Micronesia. As the leader of the Hamburg South Seas Expedition to Micronesia in 1909-1910, Krämer produced five full volumes on the islands of Palau, the highest output for a single location across the entire expedition. Such is the ongoing legacy of Krämer in Palau, that these volumes have been translated into English as part of an international museum project, so that modern Palauans might have the opportunity to learn more about their own history. Krämer was particularly fascinated by the bai, a type of meeting house decorated with artworks depicting Palauan traditional stories. Together with his wife, Elisabeth Krämer-Bannow, he documented hundreds of bai across Palau, under the assumption that the artworks and their stories would not survive prolonged contact with Western ""civilisation"". Yet, the bai has today become an important symbol of culture and nationhood for the modern Republic of Palau.

This paper will explore the history and legacy of German anthropology in the region of Micronesia, through the case study of Palau and work of Augustin Krämer. In a quintessential example of ""salvage anthropology"", Krämer commissioned a replica bai in 1907 for the Ethnology Museum of Berlin, which is today on display in the controversial Humboldt Forum. With museums worldwide now facing more important questions on colonial repatriation and restitution, this paper considers how the exhibition of a bai in Berlin addresses the history and legacy of Germany colonialism, and the role of Palauan voices in the reclaiming and repurposing of anthropological narratives and material collections from the colonial period

A Laboratory for Reform and Dissent: Latin American Area Studies, Soviet Academic and Foreign Policy Institutions, and Left-Wing Opposition in the Soviet Union in the Brezhnev Years
Natasha Wilson

This paper examines the largest network of underground left-wing opposition to the Soviet regime in the Brezhnev years, which operated inside Moscow's premier foreign policy institute, the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. The paper focuses on how these oppositionists drew on the scientific training and knowledge production of Soviet Latin American studies to formulate proposed reforms for the Soviet Union in the early-1980s. In doing so, it provides a case study of how East-South/Second-Third World connections developed in academic spheres and stimulated political activism in the climate of the global Cold War.

Language, Thinking, Comrade Stalin: Soviet Debates on the Limitations of Marxism
Georgy Mamedov

In this paper, I will look at two philosophical debates that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1950s. First, the so-called Soviet Linguistic Controversy, a public forum in Pravda on Nikolai Marr's "New Theory of Language" that was marked by Stalin's intervention, which was later summarised in a pamphlet titled "Marxism and Problems of Linguistics." Second, the heated debate at MGU and the Institute of Philosophy in 1954-55 was sparked by Evald Ilyenkov's "Theses on the Subject of Philosophy." While highlighting the significance of both events, historians of Soviet Marxism tend to treat them separately. The established perspective on the Linguistic Controversy suggests that while Stalin's intervention had an overall positive effect on Soviet linguistics, the Marxist premise of his critique of Marr was flawed and driven by political considerations. Ilyenkov's "Theses", on the other hand, mark the watershed moment in the history of post-Stalinist philosophy, giving way to what will become known as "Creative Soviet Marxism." Following primary sources and recent historiography on post-war and late socialism, I want to suggest a contextual and conceptual continuity between these two discussions. While both debates address the epistemological limits of Marxism in dealing with phenomena such as language and thinking, they indicate strikingly different approaches to overcoming these limits. Approaching these discussions historically, I aim to propose a more nuanced and complex understanding of late Soviet Marxism and its relevance to the current moment.

Class Struggle on the Art Front: Creative Practice in China's Cultural Revolution
Minerva Inwald

During China's Cultural Revolution, rebel groups held professional artists captive in makeshift prisons and subjected them to violent public denunciations. This brutality was justified by rebels' unorthodox conception of class struggle, which placed the worker, peasant, and soldier 'masses' in an antagonistic battle with professional artists. This paper examines how rebels translated their unconventional theories of class struggle into creative works. Denouncing professional artists for (supposedly) belittling the artistic skills of the masses, rebels celebrated the rejection of technical expertise in artmaking practice. Exploring these experiments in reimagining the visual arts through the prism of class struggle, this paper reveals how notions of class conflict shaped artistic culture in Mao's China.

“Boat Persons” at the Border: Re-configurations of Race and Refuge in the Aftermath of the American/Australian War in Vietnam
Tandee Wang

This paper juxtaposes two specific instantiations of the “boat person” in the late 1970s and early 1980s—Southeast Asian refugees in Australia’s tropical north, and Cuban and Haitian refugees in the US Caribbean south. While the prominence of the “boat person” was part of a global and regional response to refuge after the Vietnam War, this paper focuses on particularity of the “boat person” as racialized border threat in two white settler colonies with pronounced histories of racial exclusion at their borders. The particular “boat people” examined in this paper arrived at a crucial conjuncture: they came in the wake of the recent abolition of race-restrictive immigration policies (1965 in the US, 1973 in Australia) and were crucial in the development of novel architectures of refugee management in the late Cold War that increasingly systematized and universalized refugee processing (DORS 1977 in Australia, and Refugee Act of 1980 in US).

The paper asks, then, how did the “boat person” of the late Cold War reconfigure the relationship between the categories of race and refuge? This paper builds on analytics arising from critical refugee studies in the US that analyze the inextricable relationship between US militarism and imperialism (in Southeast Asia and Latin America) from subsequent refugee movements (Espiritu), and Australian theorizations that situate the articulation of racialized anxieties to the beach as border (Perera; Moreton-Robinson). Through the critical juxtaposition posed, the paper attempts to change our minds about possible ways we frame and approach histories of refugee and Asian Australians.

“A mighty love story”: Japanese war bride marriages and their recurring legacy in Asian-Australian history
Anna Wilkinson

Serviceman Gordon Parker and Cherry Sakuramoto married during the Occupation of Japan. In 1952, after four years of lobbying the Australian government for an exemption to the White Australia Policy, the couple’s arrival was characterised by the media as a “mighty love story”.

This paper argues that the public acceptance of Cherry was not merely a celebration of cross-cultural romance in the post-war period, but also a familiar trope through which Australians made sense of their country’s position in the changing Asian region. It examines why the narrative of Japanese war brides re-emerged in public discourse during the late 1990s, and how it was deployed to demonstrate historic racial tolerance nearing

the end of the White Australia era. Through my interviews with war brides and their children, it is clear that women were active in this narrative. Through their roles as housewives and later employment in Japanese-centric work, women were able to solidify their position as goodwill ambassadors in the second half of the twentieth century. In conclusion, I consider why Australians continue to impose such ideas on Japanese war bride histories, and question why subsequent Asian-Australian war bride marriages from Cold War have been largely ignored.

Printed and inked: The creation of contemporary Asian art from Australia, late twentieth century
Chloe Ho

It is well-established that postwar artistic activity had led to the global rise and recognition of art and artists from the global South, including from Asia or of Asian heritage. Pivotal exhibitions such as Magiciens de le Terre in Centre Pompidou, Paris, Traditions/Tensions in Asia Centre, New York, Asia-Pacific Triennial in Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, and international travelling exhibitions such as Cities on the Move had been accompanied by rigorous symposia and critical reflections by both scholars and artists expanded the reach and lasting impacts of these important shows. Crucially, these events were accompanied by high quality edited volumes on the programme, allowing for rapid and extensive book exchange and extended referencing long after the exhibitions have ended.

In the background were quarterly fine art magazines that were important platforms for rendering and disseminating images of Asian modern and contemporary art and exhibitions for new audiences. Thinking through the means and modes of print production for Gordon and Breach's Australian publishing arm in the 1990s, especially Art and Australia and Art and Asia Pacific, this paper argues that beyond the events and exhibitions, the quality of the Australian magazine produced Asian art as a persuasive descriptor, positioning Australia as the home for "Asian" art."

Collection renewal strategies: How do Australian culture-specific museums create a connected heritage future through their collecting practices?
Vanessa Shia

This paper examines how culture-specific museums in Australia use their collecting practices to capture the diverse stories and experiences within their communities. Drawing on three Chinese Australian museums as case studies from a broader comparative research project, it explores how researching collecting practices can unpack assumptions about history and heritage within culture-specific museum contexts. Within a shared heritage, community members' historical experiences and cultural backgrounds can still differ significantly, and an emphasis on a single narrative

or aspect of heritage may risk overlooking or marginalising parts of the community. The project began with the intention of identifying gaps in museum collections and developing a framework to support their relevance as communities evolve. As the research progressed, the focus shifted from identifying gaps in collections to examining how ideas of history and cultural heritage are constructed within culture-specific museums. Collecting practices were approached not as tools for filling absences, but as processes in which assumptions about heritage, history, and community dynamics are articulated and negotiated. Through reflecting on this research process, the paper considers how museum professionals, community members and researchers can learn from one another by engaging with questions about what is collected, why collecting takes place, and who holds decision-making authority. This reflective approach facilitates more inclusive ways of understanding the complexity and dynamic nature of cultural heritage.

The Blood and the Bone: economics and emotion in Sydney's Chinese Australian market gardens
Sophie Loy-Wilson

This article draws attention to the emotional world of Chinese market gardeners in Australia through Chinese-language sources. Drawing inspiration from feminist labour history, it looks to gardener voices and gardener-authored sources to document the physical and psychological cost of market garden labour on Chinese migrant bodies. We make a case for Chinese language sources in translation, found in court records and Cantonese-language oral histories, as sources for accessing emotions in Chinese Australian labour history. These newly available archives allow Chinese voices to be foregrounded and provide insights into Chinese gardeners' experiences of language isolation, homesickness, family obligation, financial stress, physical pain, psychological distress and anti-Chinese violence. While these archives show the harsher side of market garden work, we equally stress the pride Chinese Australian market gardeners took in their labour, and their intimate bond with the Australian environment.

Spoken in the South: Transitional Chinese Theatre in Pre-War Australia
Josh Stenberg

Research in Chinese diasporic theatre tends to focus on its continuities and its role in preserving tradition, but it is evident that Chinese-language theatre in diaspora—including Australia—also has a part to play in the development of spoken theatre in the 1920s. Based on primary sources from Australia's Sinophone press, this presentation gives a new account of the Australian Chinese community's theatrical activities in decades after Federation, showing how spoken theatre responded to theatre innovation in China as it served the political needs of the local community and complemented the ongoing Cantonese opera scene

Can Sinophone Sydney Talk? A Historical Perspective
Mei-fen Kuo

Building on Shirley Fitzgerald's observation that everyday Chinese life is largely absent from Sydney's historical record, recent scholarship has turned to Chinese-language sources to recover what was previously overlooked. Yet the presence of text does not automatically produce historical voice. Chinese-language materials record not only expression, but also the limits within which speech was shaped, moderated, or deferred. Approaching silence through lived security, the paper traces how Chinese Australians assessed risk and consequence in different historical moments—from racial exclusion to the Cold War—when deciding how to speak, publish, or remain indirect. Using culture

as a toolkit, not as a fixed theoretical framework or an essentialised notion of “Chinese culture,” it shows how everyday practices—such as cafés, student magazines, and visual expression—were selectively mobilised as practical resources for organising social life under constraint. Rather than asking whether Sinophone Sydney could talk, the paper asks how forms of talking and not talking changed over time—and why those shifts matter historically.

Reshaping public understandings of urban landscapes and history through naming
Lisa Murray

Names are functional. They are used for navigation. Names can also be powerful, reflecting the historical and political values of a society's ruling class. The erasure of Indigenous names from the landscape was part and parcel of the dispossession of First Nations people. The cumulative effect today of colonial names applied to city streets, parks and buildings is an urban landscape that is alienating, may be traumatising, and which still denies the presence of First Nations people.

Since 1966, the NSW Geographical Names Board, a state government agency, has been ostensibly responsible for the naming of streets, suburbs and geographical features in the state of New South Wales. However, this state agency relies upon local government to demonstrate community support for naming proposals. This paper will explore the practicalities of naming and re-naming processes at a local government level.

In the 2010s, the City of Sydney local government area was undergoing rapid urban development, through a process of de-industrialisation and the residential development of "brown sites". This presented an opportunity for large-scale suburban master planning as former industrial sites were subdivided, including the creation of new streets and parks. Naming proposals became part of the City of Sydney's strategy to promote local histories and build more inclusive historical narratives, particularly addressing the histories of First Nations people and marginalised social groups. The paper will outline the methodology of research and consultation for naming proposals which developed organically over 8 years and ultimately led to the development of the City of Sydney's Naming Policy.

Finding ancestors on the archival frontier
Shane Ingrey, Clare Woolley, and Paul Irish

Many Aboriginal people in coastal Sydney know from family knowledge that this area is part of the traditional Country of their ancestors. Finding archival records to reinforce this knowledge though, can be challenging. At first glance there appear to be many sources, from rich early colonial records of many individuals to government blanket lists a few decades later and the detailed records of the Aborigines Protection Board a generation after that. But it is often hard to trace individuals or generations of families across several categories of records, and unfortunately this has reinforced perceptions that coastal Aboriginal people somehow 'disappeared' from Sydney in the colonial period. Starting last year, the Gujaga Foundation (the peak organisation leading language, cultural workshops and experiences, and consultancy within the La Perouse Aboriginal

community) partnered with the ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures to co-design a series of research projects, including one to research the lives and movements of Aboriginal ancestors between 1788 and 1830. The community led-project sees Aboriginal community researchers collaborating with historians from UNSW and consultancy Coast History. Although in its early stages, we are casting a wide net and developing methods to help make these sets of records 'speak' to each other. In this paper we will discuss this research from the perspective of Aboriginal researchers and external historians and what we are hoping to achieve.

Remembering Sydney's colonial whaling trade 1790-1850
Mark Dunn

For the first half of the nineteenth century, Sydney was a whaling port, a fact now largely forgotten. Whaling histories have often overlooked Sydney's role, focusing instead on the Tasmanian experience and the devastation wrought by the sealing ships in the Bass Strait. From the late 1790s until the mid-1850s Sydney was a bustling maritime town with foreign whaling ships and an increasingly sophisticated local fleet trading from there.

One of the features of whaling in the nineteenth century was the multicultural nature of the crews. Ships roving through the South Pacific would regularly take on new crew from the ports they visited. Ships originating in Sydney often had Aboriginal crew on board, with men from the Sydney district as well as other coastal communities identified amongst their number.

Using first-hand accounts, logbooks and official reports this paper seeks to explore this forgotten trade from a Sydney viewpoint. What was the impact on the developing city and how did Aboriginal men come to be so involved throughout its history.

'What makes the wind blow? A man in the sky': Religion, atheism and nature study in mid-century New South Wales

Ruby Ekkel

In 1952, botanist and educator Thistle Harris undertook a comprehensive investigation of nature study in New South Wales primary schools, surveying classroom practices and collecting thousands of children's written and visual impressions of the natural world as they understood it. Preserved in largely untapped manuscript form at the State Library of New South Wales, this material constitutes a vivid archive of mid-century ideas about nature, science, religion, and education. Harris' own views, too, are on display, making clear her commitment to secular science and atheism, as well as her intellectual investment in a broad literature of nature study theory. Described as 'no sentimental, nature-loving crackpot', she felt that religion was generally antithetical to science, and was frustrated by the enduring role of 'God' or 'the man in the sky' in children's explanations for phenomena like the wind or the stars. This paper argues that the 1952 investigation captures a transitional moment in Australian nature education, wherein older moral and religious frameworks continued to mould pedagogy and thus children's environmental ideas, while figures like Harris pushed for religion's excision from the classroom. By reading Harris both as a reformer and a recorder of plural forms of nature study, the paper intervenes in histories of women as shapers of twentieth-century scientific culture, and points to the oft-overlooked significance of religion (and its discontents) in Australian environmental history.

Irene Crespin's New Horizons: Women, Microfossils, and Government Science in Mid-Century Australia

Jarrod Hore

During the early 1920s and 1930s oil and gas prospecting was transformed by the application of new techniques of geological analysis. In just a few years access to the expertise of micropalaeontologists — those trained in the study of tiny fossils — became important for oil companies over the world. This shift depended on the work of women. In 1921 Esther Applin, Alva Ellisor, and Hedwig Kniker developed a new way of prospecting for oil that relied on laboratory-based microfossil analysis. This breakthrough opened new possibilities for oil exploration and for women's science, since the gender profile of micropaleontology resembled traditionally 'feminine' sciences such as botany or biology. This paper focuses on Irene Crespin (1896–1980), an Australian palaeontologist whose career was shaped by these developments. After instruction in geology and palaeontology in Victoria, Crespin began mapping resources for the federal

government in 1927, and in 1936 she was appointed Commonwealth Palaeontologist. Her investigations connected the interpretation of ancient environments through microfossils with the identification of energy resources in the present, shifting the focus of government geoscience to major commodity frontiers in western and northern Australia. Charting her work reveals important changes in the operations of government science, the state's interest in energy resources, and the ways that gender figured in these domains as well as in the global field of applied geology. The significance lies in understanding Crespin not simply as a beneficiary of micropalaeontology's rise but as someone who helped shape how people came to know environments past and present.

"A new and distinctive Australian Art": Mary Cecil Allen, mid-century women's transnationalism and the quest for desert landscape modernism in Australia
Ingrid Ryan

In 1936, Australian-born painter, American resident, Mary Cecil Allen, embarked on a six-week painting journey through Central Australia during her year-long return visit to Australia. After nine years in the United States, the academically trained artist returned as an adherent of modernism while pastoral landscape painting still dominated the national artistic purview. After her Central Australian journey, Allen concluded that the landscape 'provides problems for the artist that are absolutely new' and 'demands a new outlook and a new technique.' Revisiting Central Australia in 1950, Allen stressed her modernist persuasions once again, positioning the desert as a crucial site for settlers' development of a 'new and distinctive Australian Art.'

Foregrounding Mary Cecil Allen's understudied painting journeys to the Northern Territory, this paper links Allen's global mobility and modernist orientation to her interest in Central Australia. Analysing the artist's published essays, press coverage and personal correspondence, I assess how Allen positioned the antipodean desert as a 'modern' landscape, conducive to the development of self and settler national identities via her internationalist lens. Complementing scholarship on early 20th century Australian women's modernity as a practice of outward migration, I consider modernity's reach into the remote inland. Accordingly, Allen navigated co-existing internationalist and inward looking settler-nativist sensibilities. My analysis of Allen's vanguard desert modernism will illuminate how and why Central Australia got pulled into the exploration of (and ongoing struggle over) modern art in Australia, and her role in establishing the intellectual foundations for Australian desert landscape modernism.

The Right to Remain Silent: Concert Licensing and Sonic Control in the Colony of New South Wales

Julia Russoniello and Toby Martin

In the early decades of the Colony of New South Wales—where the streets were riotous and the drunkenness great—music was viewed as capable of both cultivating order and inciting disorder. In some contexts, it was celebrated as a civilising refinement, in others, it was regarded as a means of challenging authority and gathering together 'low characters'. The introduction of the 1828 Act for Regulating Places of Public Exhibition and Entertainment addressed this tension—requiring any proposed concert to obtain the prior permission of the Colonial Secretary. This ensured that only 'fit and moral' individuals could legally attract an audience. Drawing on nineteenth-century concert licences, both approved and refused, police and government gazettes, concert programs and newspaper accounts, this paper examines entertainments that were permitted and those silenced, arguing that licensing decisions were shaped by broader hegemonic social values.

Within this climate of strict regulation, songs themselves became objects of scrutiny. Some songs were rumoured to be banned outright, while singing others at the wrong place at the wrong time (especially for convicts and those with tickets-of-leave) could result in punishment. Instrumentalists—particularly of popular music such as fiddlers and tambourine players—were also closely monitored by the police. By tracing both the regulation of venues, musicians and repertoire, this paper reframes music as a tool of social and cultural discipline.

Banning Beneath the Underdog and the Cleaving of Sound from Lived Experience in Australian Encounters with Imported Jazz History Texts

Christopher Coady

Charles Mingus' autobiography Beneath the Underdog was banned in 1972 by the Australian National Literature Board of Review [NLB] for graphic depictions of sex. In a similar case a decade earlier, the NLB's predecessor prohibited importation of James Baldwin's novel Another Country, but came to reverse its decision in 1966 after determining the novel's meditation on race in America was of sufficient cultural value to offset the risk of circulating sexual material. Despite Beneath the Underdog's similar emphasis on racial issues, NLB debate about the book's cultural value focused primarily on what Australian's might learn about Mingus' music from the book. In short, desire for a more complete accounting of Mingus' technical abilities on the bass and his "work as a composer" were the indictments that landed Beneath the Underdog on the list of prohibited items.

The NLB's separation of musical practice from Mingus' discussion of lived experience in Beneath the Underdog fits with recent accounts of how the rhetoric of meritocracy and technical proficiency in discussions of jazz in Australia has kept at arm's length the lived experience of Black Americans from local considerations of the music's cultural charge. In this paper, I position the NLB's desire for a certain kind of jazz autobiography within the broader Australian jazz discourse of meritocracy and technical empiricism, and demonstrate how this view constructed a divide between how Australian's made sense of their encounters with Black American music and Black American literature during the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

The Sharp End of the Stick: Policing of Sharpie Fans and Artists in 1970s Melbourne
Murray Lee

Sharpies or Sharps were a prominently (though not exclusively) Melbourne-based youth subculture in the late 1960s and 1970s, known for their distinctive "sharp" tailored fashion, and by the 1970s, a love for the emergent Australian pub rock scene (e.g., Lobby Lloyde, Rose Tattoo, AC/DC). They also had somewhat questionable reputation for violence, and were often the focus of police attention, particularly around live music venues. Based on qualitative research interviews with ex-Sharpies, this paper maps out the dynamics between young people questioning the boundaries of 1970s Australian social values and morality, and police and moral guardians who took up the role of reinforcing those boundaries – even if such policing sometimes meant the exercise of quasi state sanctioned violence. This relatively under researched chapter of Australian history sheds light on the under-explored history of the regulation (moral and legal) of music, musicians and audiences in Australia.

The Enlightenment's Enslavement of the Indigenous Dead: Trafficking Slaves and Skulls in the Early Colonisation of Australia
Bruce Buchan

In 1787, as the First Fleet made its way across the Atlantic to colonise Australia, it traversed an ocean made synonymous with the violently forced mobility of enslavement, then reaching an unprecedented scale. Those enslaved were forced into a servitude of immense suffering without consent. Coerced by the threat or commission of often lethal violence, the enslaved were made mobile in ever greater numbers across oceans to foreign shores, to endure and labour for the benefit of European and colonial proprietors. Each of these dimensions of enslavement also applied to the systematic collection, transport, and exploitation of Australia's Indigenous dead. Their bodies, skeletons, skulls or dismembered remains were also made mobile in ever greater numbers, enrolled without consent, often violently, to serve others' benefit. They too laboured long years in foreign shores in service to another master: the Enlightenment's science of race.

Rethinking enslavement through life and death in modern Australia
Gemmia Burden

In September 2023 *The Guardian* published the first in a series of articles about unmarked graves at the former Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home, a notoriously brutal institution established to train Aboriginal boys forcibly removed from their families. These articles highlighted new understandings of stolen generations history while centring survivors' experiences, bringing to mainstream the presence of unmarked burials associated with the forced movement and displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are clear parallels with former residential schools in the United States and Canda, and the ongoing work to locate and protect graves of enslaved people in the United States. Research has shown that burials of people enslaved and exploited were marginalised from western practices, existing outside of cemetery or town boundaries in fields and paddocks attached to missions, reserves, plantations, or institutions. This served to keep people outside of colonial boundaries but accessible for commodification, evident through their theft, trade, and scientific exploitation, where their marginalisation and exploitation in life continued after death. Historical inquiry into ideas of enslavement can reshape understandings of the past, challenging the realities of colonialism and racism and reframing race relations in contemporary society. Bringing together historiography, archival research, and oral histories allows individuals, families, and communities to identify ancestors, supporting repatriation and reunification with kin, community, and Country. Beyond reimagining our shared understanding of the past, these inquiries speak directly to lived experiences today.

Enslaving the spirit: recognition of the Indigenous dead in settler Australia
Amy Way

In November 2017, the 42,000-year-old remains of an Aboriginal man, known to scientists and the broader public as 'Mungo Man,' were finally repatriated to his ancestral Country. After spending over 40 years interned in scientific laboratories, Mungo Man's return to the Willandra Lakes, in New South Wales, was of monumental significance to his descendants: it 'healed their pain' to see their ancestor now 'at peace.' There is a widespread understanding, both in Australia and abroad, of the importance of repatriation for Indigenous peoples, especially repatriating human remains. What were once seen as disembodied 'bones' or scientific 'specimens' are now viewed in line with community perspectives as ancestors or Old People; active, living spirits that retain a presence, consciousness and connection to Country. This paper traces the emergence of settler Australia's understanding of this Aboriginal ancestral humanity and explores how the removal—and repatriation—of ancestors can be viewed through the lens of enslavement; of yet another way Indigenous peoples, including their very spirits and conceptual humanity, were trafficked, imprisoned, and coerced into labour for the settler-colony.

SUNFLOWERS, BLACKBERRIES AND SUGAR: LOCAL (UN)SUSTAINABILITIES, GLOBAL ECONOMIES, LABOUR AND LAND

Bio-Guerillas and Rogue Agronomists: the blackberry in Australia and its enemies
Simon Farley

In 1983, an unknown person smuggled blackberry rust (Phragmidium violaceum) into Australia – one of the nation's most significant biosecurity breaches of the last half-century. Yet unlike most other introductions of novel species in Australia's recent history, this was welcomed by landowners and media commentators, who hoped this clandestine and illegal action would destroy a hated weed, the blackberry plant. The liberator of this fungal pathogen was never identified; official dissemination of the rust as an agent of biological control soon followed, giving a degree of tacit approval to this person's actions.

Actively cultivated and eradicated as a weed - a source of beloved (and lucrative) fruit and an inflictor of wounds - a haven for native and introduced species alike - the blackberry is nothing if not ambivalent. Using this incident as a springboard, this paper will outline how Australians have 'changed their minds' about the blackberry plant over the last two centuries, both cherishing and despising it, contextualising shifting attitudes with reference to deeper settler-colonial struggles over belonging and civilisation.

Sunflower as a Ukrainian cash crop and a global commodity: between decollectivization and sustainable agricultural practices in 1990-2020s
Iryna Skubii

The paper will explore the early and very recent history of decollectivization in Ukrainian countryside following the collapse of the Soviet planned system. These changes resulted in provision of land plats to former collective farmers and renewal of private farming. The stagnation of Ukraine's economy and the need for cash forced many of farmers, especially those with small land holdings, to cultivate sunflower and other soil-extractive crops in monoculture. At the same time, since the early 2000s, Ukraine was the second-largest producer of sunflowers in the world. Looking back at this history of relationships between land and farming practices, this paper poses questions about the history of sunflower cultivation, its role for sustenance of local rural communities, and the impact of global market on environment in Ukraine and globally.

'Permanence is not guaranteed': connections between land legislation, agriculture and access to schooling in rural Australia
Beth Marsden

In early twentieth-century Queensland, applications for new state schools were primarily assessed on the perceived 'permanence' of white settlement. This paper examines how

waves of settlement and agricultural innovation shaped access to state schooling across Queensland between 1900 and 1950. Drawing on inspectors' reports and school application files, it traces how education provision expanded and contracted alongside new farming schemes and land-use experiments. Application for a school at Rocky Point, north of Mossman, that was rejected in the mid-1930s serves as a focal case. Education department inspectors questioned the viability of a school for the district on the grounds that sugar cane farming and a 'curious system of land tenure' did not guarantee permanent settlement. The paper shows how similar assessments over school applications and school closures were linked to changes in agricultural trends across the state. An effect of changing land and labour requirements for different types of farming–such as sugar, wheat, dairy, cotton and citrus–was the marginalisation of First Nations and migrants' groups from state school systems. This paper draws together the history of the relationship of agriculture, land legislation and schooling access in Queensland for the first time.

The ABC and its historiography
Bridget Griffen-Foley

This ARC Linkage Project aims to help bring our national broadcaster's archive to life as the ABC approaches its centenary in 2032. This presentation traces how the broadcaster's history has been commemorated and celebrated to date, via anniversaries, publications and programs. It considers the basis for the archives that were created to enable a 50th anniversary history in 1982–83, ultimately written by the late Professor Ken Inglis. After teasing out the conditions for the commissioning and production of this well-known institutional history. This is the ABC, this paper concludes by reflecting on more recent historiography contesting the ABC as a site for cultural production, as well as the potential for new scholarship and approaches. 'You'll live to be a hundred yet' the poet A.D. Hope had forecast in 'A Birthday Card for Auntie' in 1983 – what might the ABC, and its history, look like in 2032?

The ABC collection at the National Archives: Enabling discoverability
Kylie Andrews

Since 1932 the ABC has served as one of Australia's leading cultural institutions. Its public mandate has resulted in an immense archival legacy, a vast resource containing a multitude of insights into the Australian experience. The ABC collection is maintained by the National Archives of Australia (NAA), with paper records alone totalling more than 5 shelf kilometres. However, more than 90% of this collection was yet to be opened for access or catalogued by the NAA. A key goal of this unique Linkage partnership has been to uncover, declassify, describe, and interpret these records – with a particular focus on those relating to audiences. The project is unearthing previously inaccessible archival material during the broadcaster's first 50 years – the life of the Australian Broadcasting Commission – capturing the voices and opinions of listeners and viewers. This presentation will detail the objectives of the project, describe the nature of the ABC's document archives, and outline the progress being made toward creating an enlarged and more discoverable archive, for those not only interested in media history, but all researchers interested in the social, cultural, and political history of Australia.

'Let's Discuss It': Talking Back with ABC Listening Groups
Kate Evans

This paper discusses the ways in which archival research, and the perspective of a practicing ABC broadcaster, might animate the relationship between a radio series, production processes, and an opinionated and engaged audience – using, as a case study, the ABC's Listening Group broadcasts. These discussion programs first aired mere

days before Australia entered the Second World War, and were designed to start both national and entirely local conversations. But surely, the organisers worried, war concerns meant that whole thing would fail? What terrible timing. Instead, this lively, idiosyncratic, contested project flourished and continued into the mid 1950s – along the way, giving insight into everything from listenability and the actual sound quality of the radio, to the astonishment felt by speakers when audiences challenged their views.

Waste and Wealth in the Work of Edward Gibbon Wakefield
Matthew Birchall

Edward Gibbon Wakefield thought from the ground up. In A Letter from Sydney (1829), Wakefield imagined the reform of Britain's settler colonies and the creation of entirely new colonial societies from scratch. He called it systematic colonisation – a theory that would reshape British imperial policy across the 1830s and 1840s. South Australia and New Zealand were both heavily influenced by Wakefield, and his ideas were debated by intellectual luminaries such as Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill.

This paper examines the place of waste in Wakefield's writings, arguing that it was central to his vision of settler capitalism. I suggest Wakefield's innovation was to make waste count economically. Under systematic colonisation, indigenous land would be appropriated as Crown property, then sold to British settlers as real estate, with proceeds funding further emigration. Waste would be converted into wealth, idle lands into productive assets generating capitalist growth.

Yet the closer Wakefield got to implementing his ideas in South Australia and New Zealand, the more he confronted the inescapable reality of prior occupation. The paper tracks how Wakefield and the companies he inspired grappled with native title and sovereignty. It connects the ideology of waste land to the economic mechanisms that drove dispossession, showing how occupied land was transformed into surveyed lots for sale. In South Australia, native title received nominal recognition; in New Zealand, Māori sovereignty and land ownership proved harder to ignore, forcing the systematic colonisers to confront the limits of their waste land fiction.

Waste Not Want Not: Australian Real Estate Diplomacy in Melanesia
Jasper Ludewig

This paper examines the role of imperial waste land legislation in the construction of Australian legal authority in the Pacific. It focuses on the shipping, logistics, and trading company, Burns Philp & Co.—known as "The Octopus of the North"—which established a sprawling infrastructural network in the Pacific Islands from the late 1800s on. Following federation, the company's Islands Department operated covertly on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of External Affairs, purchasing large swathes of waste land in Melanesia and opening extensive industrial and trading facilities—partially funded by the state—to counter French and German influence in the region.

The paper argues that the cultural and legal encoding of land as waste equipped both Burns Philp & Co. and senior public servants with a moral and economic rationale for Australia's peculiar real estate diplomacy. The legal historian Cait Storr has argued that

analysing the construction of legal authority involves attending to the "thresholds across which the political becomes legal, and to the material forms those thresholds take" (2020: 16). As the case of Burns Philp & Co. reveals, in early-twentieth-century Melanesia, Australian jurisdiction was asserted over a vast yet disaggregated, semi-private yet publicly funded territory of waste lands, securing a sphere of influence for the Commonwealth in lieu of formal colonisation or annexation.

Illegal Improvement and "Fatal Defects": Dispossession of Waste Land in Nineteenth Century New South Wales

Anna Li

This paper examines the role of the built environment in enacting dispossession on the waste lands beyond the Nineteen Counties during the early squatting period. It considers the initial trespass into waste land beyond the Limits of Location as comprising a series of extra-legal improvements and informal dispossession through the generation of ambiguously defined territory and grey, humble architectures. This spatiotemporal layer stood as a distorted productivity on the land that was both in alignment and affront to the ambitions of the state and would go on to generate a network of vast privatised wealth and economic potential that the state could no longer dissent to.

In an archival study of early emigrant guides and handbooks, this paper interrogates the envisioned modes of built improvement and approach to waste land and how their ontology stood in stark contrast to the real, landed interventions on a fragmented frontier. In doing so, this paper will argue that it was these unseeming structures beyond the territorial and legislative parameters of state governance which ultimately proved to have greater determinacy and influence on the development of colonial capitalism as a prelude to a burgeoning wool industry. By repositioning a grey, built environment as central to the development of colonial waste land, this paper stands as part of a broader scholarship seeking to destabilise longstanding narratives around a ubiquitous articulation of colonial statehood through the fallibility of its emergent property system.

Individual papers

Religious School or Security Threat: How Western Narratives Framed Madrassas After 9/11

Arif Ahmad

The religious institutions known as madrassas have historically played a prominent role in Pakistan. These institutions provide Islamic education, focusing on the Quran and Hadith, and have influenced social and political dynamics during key historical events. Following 9/11, madrassas became a focal point of debate in Western media, often framed as potential security threats. This research examines how Western scholarly publications have represented madrassas in the two decades following 9/11. The study analyses dominant narratives about these institutions in Western scholarly literature. Preliminary findings suggest that while madrassas are frequently depicted as sites of radicalisation and security concern, their educational, social, and cultural roles are often overlooked. By comparing these portrayals with the historical and societal functions of madrassas, the study highlights the divergence between Western discourse and local realities, contributing to a broader understanding of the politicisation and securitisation of Islamic educational institutions. This research sheds light on the historical evolution of Western narratives about madrassas, particularly in the post-9/11 context, and offers insights into how scholarly framing shapes perceptions of religious education.

Simulating the Past: Animatronics and Artificial Intelligence

Dr Cate Alexander

This paper contrasts contemporary reactions to AI-animated historical portraits against the public reaction to Walt Disney's Abraham Lincoln animatronic in the 1960s. Through this comparison, I situate contemporary discourses about AI within a longer history of using technology to re-animate the past.

In 1964, Walt Disney debuted his animatronic Lincoln at the New York World's Fair. At the time, there was significant controversy over the figure; I collected and coded these reactions through newspapers, memoirs, and other archival sources. Decades later in 2021, MyHeritage debuted Deep Nostalgia, an AI-powered tool meant for animating family photos. It quickly went viral as the tool was used to animate historical figures, and within one year over 96 million animations had been created (Kopelman & Frosh 2023). To document audience reactions to these AI reanimations, I sampled 20 videos on YouTube and coded the resulting 19,984 comments.

The comparison of these discourses reveals significant overlap in anxieties about the appropriate use of technology, fears of automation replacing human labour, and concerns over historical accuracy. The pushback against Lincoln's animatronic — with

critics calling it creepy, grotesque, and disrespectful — mirror modern responses to AI-portraits. However, some audiences have expressed curiosity, fondness, and positive emotions around these historical simulacra: reportedly, Lincoln's great-grandson was moved to tears, while one of my coded comments stated simply, "I saw it and I stopped breathing, then smiled." I analyze these uses of technology to animate the past and bring it closer through the lens of affect theory (Agnew 2007, Cifor 2021, Landsberg 2015), while also critically examining questions of accessibility and ownership in technological remediation. By situating AI-animations within a longer past, we can better understand what is unique about our current technological moment, what to pay attention to, what we need to ask questions about.

Mangroves, fish and shipping: conflict and coexistence in Brisbane's Moreton Bay, Australia, 1970s-1990s

Dr Athanasios Antonopoulos

The creation and expansion of ports on urban coastlines globally has shaped marine and coastal environments. What particular worlds do they interrupt? How are new and enlarged ports imagined to coexist with, or conflict with, a range of human and more-than-human communities? How does the 'urban' figure in these changes? This paper explores these questions through the case of the Port of Brisbane. From 1824, Brisbane's port was at the city, inland on the banks of the Brisbane River. From the 1960s, a larger container and oil terminal with port was constructed and opened at the mouth of the Brisbane River where it meets Moreton Bay. This construction, and further expansion of the port in the 1980s and 1990s, affected mangroves and important sites for fishing and bait collection. I explore how port operators, government officials, and local residents imagined the port's expansion and related ship traffic – variously through planning documents, environmental impact analysis and other public papers – and conceived of new relationships with, and scales of, the larger marine environment Moreton Bay in the process. The relative visibility or invisibility of large ship traffic, and the city's connection with global processes, will be considered.

Gossips, Gasbags, and Grandstanding – The Politics of the A.I.F. on the Western Front

Alessandro Barilaro

Analyses of the politics of command in the Australian Imperial Force in the First World War have been dominated by studies of John Monash and his ascent to Corps Commander. This paper seeks to complicate that apparent teleology through an examination of a whole series of commanders vying for positions, politicians advancing an incipient Australian nationalism, and, crucially, of a British commander seeking acclaim within a country whose desire is to replace him with one of their own. These were

the careerist, gossiping, political creatures which helmed the A.I.F. during the First World War. Infighting and grandstanding were common under the leadership of William Birdwood – Monash's predecessor – and were only stimulated further by the scheming of Charles Bean and Keith Murdoch in their attempts to foil the promotion of John Monash. The paper focuses especially on Cyril Brudenell White, Birdwood's right-hand man, and his centrality to the politics of command. In the months leading up to Monash's appointment, the British Commander-in-Chief, Australian Prime Minister, Australia's political attack dog, and outgoing head of the A.I.F. all sought to implement their desires for Australia's military machine. At the centre of these machinations, Brudenell White's story exposes the multiple and conflicting efforts to exert influence within the A.I.F. more than any other. An analysis of interactions between key figures on the Western Front permits the historian to not only challenge the Anzac story, but understand its significance to the men within it, who reflected not a monolithic encapsulation of being "Australian", but a contested meritocracy teeming with politics.

Ancient History and Archaeology in NSW school education: historical trends and current

Dr Craig Barker

Analyses of the politics of command in the Australian Imperial Force in the First World War have been dominated by studies of John Monash and his ascent to Corps Commander. This paper seeks to complicate that apparent teleology through an examination of a whole series of commanders vying for positions, politicians advancing an incipient Australian nationalism, and, crucially, of a British commander seeking acclaim within a country whose desire is to replace him with one of their own. These were the careerist, gossiping, political creatures which helmed the A.I.F. during the First World War. Infighting and grandstanding were common under the leadership of William Birdwood – Monash's predecessor – and were only stimulated further by the scheming of Charles Bean and Keith Murdoch in their attempts to foil the promotion of John Monash. The paper focuses especially on Cyril Brudenell White, Birdwood's right-hand man, and his centrality to the politics of command. In the months leading up to Monash's appointment, the British Commander-in-Chief, Australian Prime Minister, Australia's political attack dog, and outgoing head of the A.I.F. all sought to implement their desires for Australia's military machine. At the centre of these machinations, Brudenell White's story exposes the multiple and conflicting efforts to exert influence within the A.I.F. more than any other. An analysis of interactions between key figures on the Western Front permits the historian to not only challenge the Anzac story, but understand its significance to the men within it, who reflected not a monolithic encapsulation of being "Australian", but a contested meritocracy teeming with politics.

Changing Minds in Public: Co-Producing Difficult Histories of the British Empire
Peter Baxter

This paper draws on two case studies developed as part of Becoming Brent (2024–25), a heritage-funded programme marking the centenary of the British Empire Exhibition. It explores how co-produced heritage work exposes temporalities through which minds change while institutions lag behind, showing how historical understanding shifts through practice rather than interpretive resolution.

The first case study focuses on Art, Music and Bad Behaviour, a project co-produced with people living with dementia, carers, artists, and residents. Historical meaning emerged through workshops in a public library via art-making, reggae and dub music, poetry, and shared reflection. This process required practitioners to revise assumptions about evidence and authorship as participants shaped questions and interpretations.

The second case study examines Punk-up-the-Publication, a university-funded project applying punk's D.I.Y. ethic to public history. Initial attempts at street-based co-production encountered indifference, prompting a reconsideration of time and failure as conditions of public history. Turning to archival oral histories and collage workshops developed with a decolonisation consultant, the project evolved through creative practices.

Following Antoinette Burton's concept of research stories, the paper treats these projects as analytic accounts of how historical knowledge is produced through contingent encounters. Drawing on Esther Leslie's Benjaminian approach to historical montage and selection, it argues that co-produced heritage work generates more historical meaning than institutions can absorb. This helps explain why changes of mind occur and why institutional transformation is slow. The paper concludes by asking whether similar tensions shape responses to settler-colonial pasts and public memory in Australia.

The Power of Family History Research to 'Change Minds'
Scott Beasley

"What do we do, now that we know?" This question, repeatedly posed by Australian author Kate Grenville in her book Unsettled, marks a transition from historical discovery to ethical responsibility. Knowledge, she suggests, is never neutral; once something is known, it carries with it an obligation to respond. The same question inevitably arises for the growing number of amateur family history researchers who, in uncovering their ancestral stories, must confront and reflect upon the truths of their own Australian histories.

Persistent Australian societal challenges—including entrenched racism, ongoing struggles for Indigenous reconciliation, and the legacies of a suppressed colonial past—suggest that knowledge alone rarely produces meaningful change. What is needed is something more personally impactful to create the space for reflection and transformation. I argue that family history research can provide this deeper engagement for individuals, situated within the context of postcolonizing Australian society.

Drawing on over thirteen years of autoethnographically informed family history research, the paper demonstrates that engagement with family histories has a distinctive capacity to challenge inherited assumptions and narratives, and, in some cases, to generate durable cognitive and ethical change. Situating lived experience alongside scholarship in memory studies, family history, and identity research, the paper examines: (1) the shock of confronting new family history discoveries; (2) the range of responses among those receiving such information; (3) the realisation that new knowledge cannot be "unknown"; and (4) whether such effects are temporary or enduring.

This paper positions family history as a powerful, though uneven, tool for re-examining personal and collective understandings of Australia's history. In doing so, it contributes to debates about family history research and contemporary social responsibility, demonstrating how engagement with ancestral knowledge can both illuminate enduring societal challenges and create the space for personal reflection and change.

From 'walking out' to 'going steady': girlhood and the Americanisation of dating rituals in Liverpool and Melbourne, c. 1950-1970
Harriet Bee

From the romantic sounds of Elvis Presley's Heartbreak Hotel to the lipstick applied in preparation for a date at the milk bar, teenage girls' courtship, leisure, and consumption practices were reshaped by American cultural influence in the wake of the Second World War. This project foregrounds the experiences of young women in Liverpool and Melbourne from 1950 to 1970, highlighting how familial bonds, as well as local socioeconomic and cultural conditions, shaped the adoption and negotiation of American cultural media in their everyday lives.

Traditional narratives often overlook young women as case studies for understanding broader cultural phenomena, while Americanisation is frequently analysed as a uniform, top-down process. Drawing on the critical theories of Herbert Marcuse and Pierre Bourdieu, this paper reconceptualises Americanisation as a phenomenon mediated by the everyday practices of individuals who reshaped the dominant cultural zeitgeist within their local communities.

Methodologically, the paper draws on oral histories, popular music, commercial advertising, and women's magazine columns to recover teenage girls' lived experiences of dating, leisure, and consumption. This cross-source methodology foregrounds voices and agency, revealing how everyday histories of emotions and personal practices shaped wider post-war cultural transformations. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of Liverpool and Melbourne reveals how differences in post-war economic conditions, urban space, and access to disposable income shaped uneven engagements with American culture. By centring teenage girls as active cultural agents, this study challenges narratives of passive cultural reception and highlights everyday courtship practices as meaningful sites of historical agency in post-war cultural change.

Disrupting Skilled Migration Narratives: Premodern female French migrants and their influence on the fashion trades

Dr Sarah Bendall

The influence of France on fashionable material culture across Europe, which began during the reign of Louis XIV (1638-1715) and is still prominent around the world today, has long been acknowledged. While the cultural politics of the era and the influence of French Huguenots, protestant refugees who fled religious persecution, has been the focus of several studies, as well as the lives of individuals who followed famous patrons, little work has been done on the hundreds of skilled French migrants who set up homes and workshops in new locations across Europe and the globe. This paper derives from an archival find, a court case that details the 1684 breakdown in a business partnership of two female couturières (a new trade of the time) living and working in London. This is the earliest known court case of its kind and illuminates the skill, business practices, and professional networks of migrant tradeswomen, revealing details about apprentices, journeymen, and clientele. It is the first of many similar stories that I am uncovering; the desire for the skills of French tradeswomen again played out in Australia over 150 years later when French dressmakers were some of the earliest craftspeople to set up businesses in the Sydney colony.

The Local Life of Global Ideas: Multiculturalism and Interculturalism in Regional Victoria 2008-2022

Ella Birt

While multiculturalism long enjoyed bipartisan support in Australia, it has increasingly been framed as insufficient to hold back global rises in nationalism and populism. In response to these tensions, interculturalism has emerged, framed as a more pragmatic and locally grounded alternative, emphasising interaction and social cohesion. This paper traces the early adoption of interculturalism in the regional city of Ballarat.

Transitioning from multicultural to intercultural frameworks in 2009, this paper traces the evolution of these frameworks in response to local and global events.

While multicultural policy has often been scapegoated as failing to alleviate social cohesion tensions, in this paper I will argue that Ballarat's turn to interculturalism represented not a rupture with multiculturalism, but a process of place-based localisation tied to a historic identity of diversity that had previously existed on the Ballarat goldfields. Instead, through conjuring interculturalism, a shared community language through which local government, organisations, and individuals respond to the local and international has developed.

The embeddedness of policy beyond Council, and the ownership of interculturalism by the community is explored through a case study of a Councillors meeting at the City of Ballarat, focussed on whether the City should call for a ceasefire in Palestine.

By centring regional Victoria, this paper challenges urban focused accounts of multiculturalism's decline and highlights the importance of place, scale, and community through the evolution of intercultural policy in Ballarat.

Silence in the Gaol: Interracial Intimacy, Missing Records, and Microhistorical Method in Late Colonial and Early Federation New South Wales
Joseph Black

Gaol and court materials from late colonial and early Federation New South Wales contain scattered traces of men accused of sodomy, including brief references to intimate encounters involving men from different racial and migrant backgrounds. These traces sit within an archival landscape shaped by omission, selective preservation, and the moral discomfort of officials who often avoided recording the details of male same sex contact. Many relevant records were lost, deliberately discarded, or never created, leaving historians with fragments that are both tantalising and opaque. This paper examines how microhistory can be written when the archive is defined by silence rather than documentation.

Drawing on fragments from gaol registers, newspaper accounts, and related administrative records, I argue that the gaps themselves reveal the racial, legal, and moral frameworks that shaped how male intimacy was policed and understood. The paper proposes a methodological change of mind, treating archival silence as a form of evidence that can illuminate the social and political conditions that produced it.

Unreliable narrators? Using gossip in historical research
Eleanor Black

Gossip as a source of information is tainted by uncertainty, which Sebastian Jobs calls “the risky ‘flip side’ of knowledge”. It can be inconsistent, spiteful and strategic but it can also reveal hidden truths and suggest the emotional and social context of historical events which would not otherwise be accessible to us. Gossip is a tool favoured by those on the fringes of power, such as women and people of colour, which gives voice to the unheard and the discounted. I am researching the way gossip was used by and against the women who lived in the utopian colony Cosme, established in central Paraguay in 1894 by the English journalist William Lane. Cosme, despite its socialist roots and revolutionary ambitions, was an authoritarian society and the colony’s official narrative – shared via newsletters, promotional booklets and a Cosme newspaper – was controlled by a small group of men, who purposely hid uncomfortable facts about their community. There was often a large gap between the official version of events at Cosme and what the women living there could see with their own eyes to be true and chose to gossip about. This paper focuses on one tragic colony occurrence which exposes that gap and allows us to consider reasons for it, and to acknowledge the usefulness of gossip to fill in the outlines of the picture and provide us, one hundred and twenty five years later, with a better understanding of what took place.

Applying Searle to Medicine: The Benefits of Social Reality Theory for the Medical Historian

Tiana Blazevic

In his address to colleagues at the Annual Medical Society Meeting in 1860, Oliver Wendell Holmes Senior, medical reformer, polymath, and poet spoke his truth concerning the state of the medical profession in the 19th century. Holmes paints a vivid picture of the physician in the 19th century, travelling the desolate roads towards their patients, waking in the night to tend to the sick, and braving the harsh weathers of all seasons. This image of the physician offered by Holmes is applicable to the history of the profession in its longue durée. Holmes' opening remarks to his colleagues describes his profession as one filled with curiosity, reasoning, and sometimes ill-reward. Holme’s most salient point in his address, however, is this statement: “The truth is, that medicine, professedly founded on observation, is as sensitive to outside influences, political, religious, philosophical, imaginative, as is the barometer to the changes of atmospheric density.” The institution of medicine is not static and despite the application of the scientific method, medical theories are also a reflection of society. In his work on Social Reality Theory, John R. Searle argues that the observance of natural phenomena, like diseases, can become “institutional realities”. These institutional realities, I argue, permeate the medical education of physicians beginning in the 13th century. I use Searle’s philosophy of mind approach and theory of institutional realities to argue against the view of medieval medicine as “filled with superstitions".

Wardandi Noongar land in 1801: How the Baudin Expedition changed its mind about Rousseau's idea of the 'Natural Man'
Mary Blight

This presentation will discuss how the members of the Baudin Expedition to Australia in 1801 arrived at Geographe Bay in Western Australia in 1801 hoping to meet the 'natural man' or 'noble savage' as theorised by Rousseau. Instead they observed an organised Wardandi society, including a small village of huts, fish trap systems, a fire-shaped landscape, a sacred grove, and warriors ready to counter and control an invasion of strangers on their land or boodjar. This was the first meeting by French explorers with Wardandi Noongar people. This encounter by the French with an organised and foreign culture in Les Terres Australes began the process of their disillusion from the idealised imaginings of Rousseau, which would continue as they voyaged further around Australia. The encounters recorded in the journals of the Baudin expedition show us a unique society at Geographe Bay in the south-west of Western Australia, giving a precious glimpse into Wardandi Noongar boodjar (Country) prior to colonisation. These records also help us trace how the Baudin expedition scientists changed their minds about Rousseau's idea of the Natural Man.

Dichotomous Worlds: The Indigenous Experience during the First World War
Kylie Blundell

The First World War entered Australian lives during a fractious time in domestic race relations. As repression ruled the towns and warfare reigned the frontiers, men from both sides came together, setting aside old hostilities and habits, to fight for one nation. This war's exceptionality created a temporal microcosm in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian soldiers worked in unison in a largely egalitarian environment created by the AIF, while their people at home bore witness to a world of hardships and heartbreak. It was an extraordinary period of dichotomy for Indigenous people.

At war's conclusion this interlude of alliance was exposed as a fleeting, fragile entente with those Indigenous men who experienced its tenuous hope left devastated upon return to Australia. The disillusionment in the country's domestic treatment of returned Indigenous veterans and, indeed, all Indigenous people became the catalyst for an emergent pool of Indigenous activists focussed on Indigenous rights.

This paper examines the elements present for the creation of an expatriated egalitarian martial environment in the First AIF and the Indigenous soldiers' response to it.

'China had reached a very high stage of civilisation when Britain was peopled with naked savages': Chinese democratic engagement and Australian settler

responses, 1850s-1880s
Prof Frank Bongiorno

This paper seeks to do two things. In the first place, it briefly sets out an overview of some of the patterns of Chinese migrants' engagements with the emergent democratic politics in the early decades of responsible government, including petitions, processions, boycotts, passive resistance, trade unionism, and voting in municipal and parliamentary elections. It then draws attention to white liberal panic about supposed Chinese electoral power c. 1880 in Victoria, examining one young politician's efforts to remove the franchise from Chinese residents. He was not just any politician but Dr John Quick, an influential federation founder credited with democratising the Federation process at the Corowa conference of 1893 and, through his later collaboration with Robert Garran, also becoming an influential commentator on the federal constitution for decades. Quick's efforts to 'whiten' Australian democracy during a key period of political contention and mobilisation, the Berryite crisis of 1877-81, invites wider reconsideration of how settler democracies became racialised democracies – becoming more racially exclusive as, through mass mobilisation and party formation, they became more formally 'democratic'.

Will Capitalism Eat Your Journal?
Prof Andrew Bonnell

Academic journal publishing is under pressure on multiple fronts. The field is dominated by large commercial publishers which for many years have realized extraordinarily high profit margins with the assistance of free academic labour - with academics donating their work as writers, editors, and reviewers. The Open Access movement was an attempt to make the system work more in the public interest by giving the public access to publicly-funded research. So far, publishers have succeeded in safeguarding their margins through charging fees to publish "open access" articles, with the potential for some journals to move in the direction of pay to publish. Other challenges include the rise of AI. Is the academic journal publishing model broken, and how can historians in particular mitigate the pressures that are building on academic publishing?

The "Gawler Tragedy": Suicide, Same-Sex Love, and Communal Grief Before the Colonial Law, 1879-1881
Jacobin Bosman

Criminal law has been integral to the development of queer legal histories, with other branches of jurisprudence traditionally receiving less attention. This is particularly the case in Australian scholarship, which has made limited inroads into the nineteenth-century. This paper reverses the focus on criminalised sex to imagine a history of sexuality told through the lens of inquests and civil law. It does so through a case study

of the "Gawler Tragedy." In 1879, Ernest Neville and John Adamson committed suicide at their home by the Para River in Gawler, South Australia. Their death rocked Gawler, and fascinated South Australians: the men were well-loved community members, and key figures in the town's flourishing intellectual and artistic societies. When the National Mutual Life Association refused to pay Neville's life insurance policy, the shock of their deaths became woven into a dramatic, protracted civil suit. Neville, according to the Association, was both insane and a fraud. To contest and decide such claims, male legal professionals established an emotive framework through which to interpret the men, both individually and as partners. Central to this framework was a widespread prior knowledge of, and belief in, the significance and sincerity of Neville and Adamson's mutual devotion. The presence of such emotive frameworks suggests that male romantic attachments could be incorporated into wider traditions of mateship and liberal fraternalism. The visibility of such incorporations, however, is more likely located outside the realms of criminal law. This suggests that civil law and public hearings may complicate present understandings of how "queer" sexuality intersected with colonial law.

The Harvest of Sacrifice: 'Public School" spirit and enlistment, 1914–1918
Christopher Bounds

The outbreak of war was greeted as an opportunity for service and patriotic adventure across Australia's independent schools. War exposed philosophical tensions in the curricula of what were considered 'Public Schools': between 'muscular Christianity', military training, and athletic competition. Despite these tensions, ex-students' associations, school magazines, and correspondence between volunteers and their former schools reinforced the value of volunteering among those yet to enlist, ensured that old boys continued to come forward even in 1918, and motivated survivors to endorse significant investment in commemoration.

Charles Bean, himself a product of a Public School, portrayed the Australian soldier as a member of a classless force grounded in egalitarianism and merit. These assertions have been challenged by historians as further light has been shed on the AIF's recruitment and enlistment. Studying King's Roll of Honour suggests that, while class certainly had a direct effect, a combination of ideology, education and geography determined why an ex-student volunteered, into which unit he was directed, his access to promotion, and how service coloured his post-war experience.

In this paper, I analyse enlistments from one school – The King's School, Parramatta – to examine how its ethos and characteristic school population shaped recruitment and service. Nearly half of the eligible ex-students volunteered, and the war had a traumatic impact on the old boy community and the school. The volunteer old boys of King's

retained a corporate identity and formed a ready-made 'fictive community' that asserted their service and loss through public remembrance.

'A position approaching a scandal': The proprietary company in Victoria, 1896-1938
Dr Jodie Boyd

The Victorian Companies Act of 1896 introduced the proprietary limited company, not merely as an innovation in corporate law, but as a legal device purpose-built to preserve private control and limit state intrusion. Although the Act is frequently presented as part of a broader movement toward increased regulation and accountability in limited liability enterprises, the proprietary model instead entrenched a countervailing tradition of opacity and resistance to reform. By legally formalising a structure that insulated business activity from public and governmental scrutiny, it slowed the momentum toward transparency and creditor protection. This paper argues that the proprietary limited company operated as both a legal and discursive mechanism for preserving established economic privileges, tracing its evolution in Victoria and the enduring tension it created between private autonomy and the expanding reach of corporate regulation.

'Anxious to be Genuinely National': Locating the Australian Gay Archives in 1970s Nationalisms
Eli Branagh

This paper reconstructs the emergence of the Australian Gay Archives (AGA) in a broader moment of 'new' nationalisms in Australian politics and history writing. AGA was not the first attempt to establish a national gay archive: activists made several failed attempts throughout the 1970s before a Melbourne-based group finally succeeded in 1978. Early on, this group repeatedly expressed anxiety to be 'genuinely national' in scope and significance. At activist conferences and in correspondence with supporters, they worried about their credibility beyond Victoria and attempted to persuade interstate activists to support AGA to become a national organisation. Why were these members so anxious to 'change the minds' of other gay activists? What were the political and historiographical stakes of changing their minds? This paper argues that, as well as seeking material support from interstate activists, AGA's founders were grappling for purchase in the shifting national imaginaries of the late 1970s. These were the national imaginaries that the broader gay rights movement was seeking recognition in as they increasingly articulated their demands to the state in terms of citizenship. Far from merely documenting gay history, AGA was mutually constituted by the 'movement', its goals, and the terms it used. AGA members' anxieties to be 'genuinely national' reflected a changing tide in gay activism at the end of the decade.

"Half-baked James Bonds": ASIO and the 1969 Hoffman Affair
Dr Melanie Brand

In February of 1969, a sensational spy scandal erupted in Australia. The so-called 'Hoffman affair', with its heady themes of espionage, secrecy and corruption, dominated media headlines for weeks. Yet despite this notoriety, the scandal remains relatively neglected by historians. The publicity generated by the Hoffman affair brought the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) out of the shadows, pushing the secretive organisation firmly into the glare of the media spotlight. In doing so, the Hoffman affair raised pressing questions about the effectiveness of both ASIO's operations and Australia's intelligence oversight mechanisms. Drawing on recently declassified archival files, I will use the Hoffman affair to illuminate the fraught relationship between ASIO, the Gorton Government and the broader Australian public, demonstrating how the affair served as a crucial precursor to the crisis of legitimacy that affected Australia's intelligence machinery in the 1970s.

Transforming Tasmania? Early European voyages and acclimatisation
Dr Claire Brennan

In Ecological Imperialism Alfred Crosby described European vessels encountering New Zealand as "like giant viruses fastening to the sides of a gigantic bacterium and injecting into it their DNA" and traced the start of that process to the Endeavour. While an arresting image, it requires scrutiny. The neo-Europes described by Crosby have undergone immense transformation, but the process was not as simple as contact leading inevitably to transformation. This paper builds on previous examination of eighteen-century acclimatisation efforts in Tahiti and explorer attempts at biotic transformation. Tasmania has certainly been transformed through contact with Europe, but when did that process effectively begin?

"The Queen's exequatur—whatever that may be": Consular representation of foreign powers in colonial Australasia, 1850–1900
Dr André Brett

Between 1850 and 1900, colonial Australasia became integrated into global consular networks. Consuls promoted commercial interests of and trade with the foreign power they represented, provided services to its nationals, disseminated information, and sometimes performed intelligence-gathering roles. Prior to self-government, few foreign powers had accredited consuls to Australasia—mainly France, the United States, and some German states. By the end of the century, approximately 30 powers had representatives in at least one colony, with every continent represented. In general, these were honorary consuls—local settlers, usually businessmen with ties to the accrediting power—but some were salaried from the outset while others were later professionalised, with powers such as Japan and Russia despatching salaried diplomats to Australasia in the 1890s.

Radical Youth: Protest to Change Minds and Change The World
Dr Tim Briedis

The history of youth protest is inextricably linked to the history of the 1960s and 1970s. But I will argue that there is a rich, diverse and vast history of youth radicalism beyond these decades. My paper will explore attempts by young people to change minds and change the world beyond the famed days of the 1960s and 1970s: before and after. I will look at the impressive Melbourne University Labor Club of the 1930s and 1940s, the Eureka Youth League of the 1940s and 1950s, dramatic student occupations of the 1990s and effective call centre organising in the 2010s. I will show that outside of the 1960s and 1970s this youth radicalism was a significant part of the left and of protest movements, and that there is much to take inspiration from today.

Changing my mind about the 'conservative/progressive' binary in the history of feminism
Dr Bridget Brooklyn

In the historiography of feminism, the assumption that feminism is essentially progressive is one I'm sure we all agree with. However, the progressive nature of feminism carries many complications, notably the fact that someone might hold 'progressive' values (such as feminism) along with conservative ones.

Feminist scholars have of course studied feminists of the past whose values and platforms do not resonate with current feminist ideas, but this is often in the spirit more of accommodating perceived foibles or avoiding their more contentious ideas. In the history of Australian feminism, the conservatives are either less well-known than their more progressive coevals, or known simply as 'feminists' (and therefore assumed to be progressive). While this looks healthily inclusive from one angle, from another it demonstrates this avoidance, and leaves unanswered some questions about how conservatism and feminism have worked together.

I will argue that even if we agree that the history of feminist ideas and action has not been a straightforward progress narrative, the temptation to analyse in binary terms persists. I will discuss how I revised my own tendency to label people and actions of the past as either 'feminist' or 'anti (or non)-feminist', and how some revelatory studies and perspectives have demonstrated the limits of such thinking. Applying my discussion to my current work-in-progress, a collective biography of several early- to mid-twentieth-century Australian conservative feminists, I will also seek to explain how I define conservative feminism, and why it should be embraced more wholeheartedly in historical scholarship.

Recently Historic: Tertiary Electronic Arts Education In Western Sydney, and Its Prequel

Monica Brooks

In the face of significant changes in tertiary education over the last decade in Australia, this paper discusses notions of the impacts of corporate interests in government policy in the last 20 years, and how this has shaped programs like the former Bachelor of Electronic Arts, and its associated communities.

The Landscape Intellectual History of Jack McKinney and Judith Wright

Dr Neville Buch

To consider how we might make space for, explain, and even produce changes of heart and mind, one must start with Meredith McKinney and Patricia Clarke's (2004) The Equal Heart and Mind: Letters between Judith Wright and Jack McKinney (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press). These letters provide a rare synthesis of the literary and philosophic mind, revealing an intellectual engagement that revolted against the division of technical and common truth. The submitted paper examines the landscape history of Jack McKinney and Judith Wright around 1966 as a definitive intellectual history statement on Queensland.

Utilizing the landscape poetry of Judith Wright alongside the archival collection and philosophical works of Jack McKinney (1891–1966), this analysis forms an intellectual picture grounded in McKinney's "Original Synthesis of Experience". This epistemological thesis resolves the Cartesian impasse by proving that the "common world-picture" is an interpersonal thing, a social construction synthesized from discontinuous individual experiences via common language.

By applying Dr. Buch's axiom "understanding history is philosophy in practice," the paper explores the "soft side" of city-building—the imaginative processes that imbue urban spaces with meaning beyond material statistics. This framework challenges the pervasive "techné" mindset and the "Queensland character" myth, which historically prioritized utility over intellectual depth. Ultimately, this inquiry reintegrates the Five Intentions—Self, Mind, Reason, Utility, and Love—to restore human authorship and foster a Contributory Economy grounded in Aristotelian flourishing.

Making Australia: Changing Minds on Race and Immigration

Ella Byrne

There is a clear connection between racism in mainstream society and the racism of far-right fringe groups. The far right endeavours to make racism more acceptable to a wider audience and is emboldened when it becomes increasingly prevelant in society. The history of resistance to the far right in Australia over the last forty years shows that the

mainstream community can play an important role in combating the far right when it resists racist rhetoric and ideas.

This discussion examines the interactions between the far-right white nationalist group National Action and the wider community over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. How did the community aim to change minds about racism and bolster support for cultural acceptance and inclusion in a multicultural Australia? What effect did this have on National Action? Conversely, how did far-right groups aim to change the minds of regular Australians to make them more accepting of the far right and its racist rhetoric?

Money and Women and the interior of New South Wales
Dr Paula Jane Byrne

The word 'Mrs' from the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century in no way related to marriage or being a wife. Rather, it referred to a woman in business of some kind or other. I've noted in 1820s Sydney how the 'Mrs' had a particular relationship to the economy and legal officials. When we consider the interior of New South Wales in the 1850s the 'Mrs' is very much present. This paper examines traces of women's lives in the period, their management of the long strings of credit and debt, their travelling alone, their holding court in the bedsteads of their own public houses, their mysterious presence in Aboriginal camps. The Mrs challenges the idea of a masculine interior of course, but she also resituates money for us, undermines what we consider to be the 'economy' or 'money' unravelling our expectations and creating a new disheveled landscape.

A Microhistory of Reproductive Justice
Dr Cassandra Byrnes

Reproductive coercion has historically been facilitated through medical, social, and legal frameworks, but has only recently become a topic of academic investigation. Where most studies thus far have demonstrated the association between reproductive coercion and intimate partner violence, little attention has been given to institutional participation in coercive tactics, beyond clinicians identifying signs of this abuse. This paper will take a microhistory approach, examining archival evidence showing the use of Depo-Provera, a controversial injectable, on vulnerable patients who did not, or could not, consent to its use in the 1970s. One piece of archival material can reveal much about institutional histories of fertility control to highlight attitudes towards race, disability, and incarceration operating systemically until the end of the twentieth century.

Changing Minds About Indigenous Experiences of Soldier Settlement
Rachel Caines

Following both world wars, Australia's soldier settlement schemes were a central element of efforts to support, compensate, and control the influx of repatriated servicemen. Drawing on the closer settlement schemes that sought to expand settler agricultural occupation in regional Australia in the early twentieth century, the soldier settlement schemes enabled returned veterans to apply for land and loans to develop farms on crown land across the country. These schemes also enabled the continued dispossession of Indigenous Australians, particularly in the south-eastern states as reserve land was sold or handed over to the schemes. Historical scholarship has also consistently asserted that Indigenous veterans were systematically excluded from the soldier settlement schemes due to their race.

Drawing on my ongoing PhD research, this paper interrogates the extent to which Indigenous veterans and their families from New South Wales engaged with the state's soldier settlement scheme as applicants and beneficiaries. By reviewing surviving archival files alongside the most recent information on Indigenous First World War servicemen, this research expands upon and complicates previous assertions in relation to the soldier settlement scheme and Indigenous veterans. Using NSW as a case study, this paper explores the themes of my broader thesis – the diversity of individual experiences, the layers of racism faced by Indigenous veterans, the contradictions between multiple government departments, and the tenacity and self-advocacy of many veterans and their families – and seeks to change minds about the realities of Indigenous Australian engagement with the bureaucracy of repatriation following the First World War.

Changing Her Mind, Holding the Line: Gender, Marriage, and the Uneven Work of Transformation in the Life of Bessie Harrison Lee

Dr Jennifer Caligari

This paper examines uneven processes of change through the life of Bessie Harrison Lee, focusing on the ways her thinking about women's public and domestic roles shifted, while other commitments remained strikingly intact. Early in her marriage, Bessie documented a sustained struggle of conscience over whether a married woman ought to prioritise domestic responsibility or public activism. These private doubts, articulated through correspondence and reflective writing, reveal a woman negotiating powerful cultural expectations about gender, respectability, and Christian duty.

Over time, Bessie's position changed decisively. With the encouragement of her husband, whom she consistently presented as an exemplary Christian man, she embraced public speaking, extensive travel, and reform work as legitimate extensions of married womanhood rather than violations of it. Marriage did not curtail her activism; instead, it became a moral framework through which her public authority was justified and sustained. Bessie neither retreated into domesticity nor framed her activism as

exceptional. Rather, she constructed a durable model of female public engagement that endured across her adult life.

Yet this capacity for change was uneven. While Bessie occasionally gestured toward listening to Indigenous grievances, she ultimately endorsed a Christian imperial framework that foreclosed Indigenous sovereignty and rights. This paper argues that the same religious convictions that enabled her reimagining of women's roles also stabilised her colonial worldview. Change, in this case, was not cumulative or progressive, but selective, shaped by emotional, relational, and theological attachments.

By tracing both transformation and refusal within a single life, this paper reflects on why some changes occur quickly while others, though imaginable and desired, never eventuate, offering a historical lens on the limits of persuasion, empathy, and evidence.

The Union Steamship Company and Soft Power in The Pacific
Dr Andrew Cardow

Towards the later part of the 19th century, the Union Steamship Company became one of the few large shipping companies to become actively involved in the cruise market. Although it was established in 1875 as a general carrier, the company deliberately set out to capture as much of the domestic and South Pacific tourist market as it could. Its cruise product was well known and seen as highly desirable by the well-heeled traveling public. The ships plied a course that would be recognised by cruise passengers of late 20th and early 21st century particularly in the Sydney or Melbourne voyages to Fiordland in New Zealand. By entering into the South Pacific, a nascent cruise market, the union met determined competition by companies from the UK, Australia and most importantly by the Maston Line of the USA. In tracing the development and nature of cruise tourism by the union, an often overlooked aspect emerges. The importance of influence the union was developing in their interactions with nations and powers with the region. Through an archival examination of the correspondence files of the union, and contemporaneous newspaper reports of cruises, there emerges an element of soft power.

Reflections on a Century of Birth Control Organisations in Australia
A/Prof Jane Carey

At a time when, internationally, reproductive rights are under siege, this paper reflects on the history of Australia's oldest birth control organisation. The NSW-based Family Planning Australia celebrates it centenary this year. It was formed in Sydney as the 'Race Improvement Society' at a meeting of Women's League. Two years later, it became 'The Racial Hygiene Association of NSW' – a name it retained until 1960 when it joined International Planned Parenthood. The Association was involved in promoting sex education, preventing venereal disease, and in educating the public about eugenics. It

opened Australian's first birth control clinic in 1933. Even this brief outline indicates the problematic, and contested, history of Australian campaigns for reproductive rights (a history which extends across and beyond the West). Most scholarship in this area is overwhelmingly shaped by the second wave feminist assumption that birth control is a straightforward matter of women's liberation, rights, agency and choice. But this history (in Australia as elsewhere) has significant darker elements. Globally, many women have experienced birth control (including forced sterilisation) as a site of oppression and coercion not liberation. Australian Indigenous women have forcefully made this point. In the light of contemporary calls for truth-telling about histories of race and colonialism, what are about our obligations to confront these 'difficult' pasts? How can we approach the dual history of birth control as both liberatory and oppressive? This paper argues that doing so will strengthen, not undermine, contemporary activism for reproductive rights.

Women's work for seamen, 1850-1945
Prof Hilary Carey

This paper explores the role of women in welfare work among British and colonial seamen. Women have traditionally been seen as under represented in maritime history, yet there needs to be a change of mind in relation to what women accomplished on shore as well as at the heavily masculine tasks of marine workers at sea. Women's welfare work included temperance activism, raising funds, knitting and needlework, and providing hospitality for sailors visiting port-based homes, missions and institutes in colonial and British ports. Through a case study of the Ladies Harbour lights Guild, founded in Melbourne in 1907 in association with the Anglican Missions to Seamen, this paper will challenge assumptions about the character and significance of women's work for seamen in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

So much more than just a support group for mums: changing views of Australian Breastfeeding Association, formerly known as the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia.
Dr Margaret Carmody

When I first joined the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia, in 1974, I viewed it as a worthwhile community group providing information and support for women who wanted to breastfeed their babies – a radical move in the age of low breastfeeding rates, very little medical knowledge about breastfeeding, perceptions that formula feeding was nutritionally equivalent to breastmilk. Formula feeding fitted nicely with feminist ideas about women's freedom to return to work. The Association advocated mothers' rooming-in with their babies in hospital, provided a telephone counselling service and ran group discussions. In contrast to the local baby health clinics, it was a new, non-institutional approach to maternal education where mothers' experiences were valued, and

information was backed by research. It was a complete contrast to the prevailing scientific approach to breastfeeding education.

Then in 1994, I heard the Founder of the Association, Mary Paton, now Dr Mary Paton AM, talk at a conference at Cooma, NSW. I suddenly saw the Association in the context of Adult Education theory. I understood the profound psychological underpinnings of the approach to breastfeeding. I realised the significance of the connection to the La Leche League in the USA with its foundation in the Cardijn-inspired Family Groups where "like helps like" using the "see judge act" approach.

Sixteen years later, I commenced doctoral studies, examining the Association, and my views changed again. Not only did I analyse it as a provider of education for mothers, but also, using Wenger's theory, as a thriving community of practice.

Debating Destiny: The Trump Presidencies and the Vocabulary of American Exceptionalism and Empire

Dr Daniel Carrigy

Originally coined in1845, the American ideology of Manifest Destiny promoted a profound sense of American empire and righteousness. Proponents of the ideology believed that a divine mandate had been given to the United States to expand its territorial borders at the expense of Native Americans, Mexico, and European powers alike. In recent years, the term has become the subject of profound historiographical ire. Historians point out that, for Native Americans, the term has become synonymous with genocide and forced removal. For this reason, scholars such as Andrew C. Isenberg and Thomas Richards jr. have even called for the term to be abandoned as a conceptual paradigm for explaining American territorial expansion.

Yet, Manifest Destiny has forcefully re-entered the American lexicon as a result of the Trump presidencies. On the eve of Trump's election in 2016, Republican Dr. Ben Carson eagerly declared that the President's ascension to the White House was a "renaissance of Manifest Destiny." Indeed, in his 2020 State of the Union address, Trump declared that his creation of the United States Space Force was an effort to pursue "America's Manifest Destiny in the Stars." Further, Trump's efforts to annex both Canada and Greenland are particularly evocative of aggressive, Manifest Destinarian expansion. Consequently, this paper argues that historians of American imperialism and educators of American history must change their minds about abandoning the term Manifest Destiny. Failure to do so would mean a failure to recognise how the patterns of American empire may be repeating themselves in our present time.

"Invisible Migrants": Women's Role in the Cultural Maintenance and Evolution of the Dutch diaspora in New South Wales

Meagan Carter

Australia's migration policy following World War Two identified the Netherlands as a key source of desirable migrants, after the British. This culminated in a formal migration agreement between Australia and the Netherlands in 1951, beginning a relative influx of Dutch migration into Australia, with many arriving as assisted migrants. The Dutch arrived in a country whose rhetoric positioned them as "invisible", under the assumption that they could assimilate into the Anglo-Australian social order easily. This paper shows that this was not necessarily true for many Dutch women. Dutch women were placed at the nexus between assimilators and cultural caretakers, experiencing a dual pressure of keeping a Dutch home, and becoming active members of the Australian society. Their experiences reflect those of many migrant women in Australia; reconciling their cultural affiliations with their new country's expectations, and resisting pressure to abandon their homeland culture entirely. Dutch women upheld connections to their culture due to their role as homemakers, but also due to their sense of identity as Dutch and Australian. Dutch women, therefore, became cultural cornerstones for their families, maintaining connection to the Netherlands, whilst relinquishing some aspects of their culture in favour of Australian-isms.

Reimagining food memories of the Great War

Dr Burcu Cevik-Compiegne

Food was a recurrent theme in the narratives of the Great War experience for civilians and the military alike, whose sensory worlds and cultural habits were disrupted often in unprecedented ways. These narratives were transformed in popular culture to become keys to remembering and imagining the Great War. Food memories of the war are signifiers of hunger, longing, sacrifice and suffering, as well as survival and comfort. Combining insights from history, anthropology and memory studies, this paper will examine interconnected processes of remembering and imagining food in war in the postmemory era. I will use the case studies of Anzac biscuits in the Australian popular culture and the ritualised consumption of cracked wheat soup in Turkish commemorative context. Despite historical inaccuracies in both cases, these are widely known examples of how food travels through time (and space) to create embodied forms of commemoration, re-enacting distinct interpretations of war experience. The former celebrates care and affection provided through lovingly home-made biscuits while the latter focuses on neglect and deprivation through a soup that is believed to be the inadequate last meal of thousands of famished soldiers. I will examine different layers of remembering in these commemorative practices, paying particular attention to the underlying ideals of national and militarised masculinities and femininities.

‘A particular formation of nullius’: Coronial investigations into suspicious Aboriginal female deaths in Queensland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Tonia Chalk

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Queensland, suspicious Aboriginal female deaths were recorded in coronial inquests through blood quantum, characterising Aboriginal people as the inevitable dying race. Imagined as a formation of nullius in the inquest - as empty and vacant - Aboriginal women were described by witnesses and officials as drunken, dangerous, and depressed. Yet while the archival record works to bury the deceased in a singular, settler colonial narrative, the witness testimonies enable the dead to be re-imagined through a continuing dialogic performance narrating accounts of the living and the dead, and the dead as living.

The two illustrative examples provided include the death of my Great-great-great-great grandmother, Emily Dunn, in 1890 in Eulo SW Queensland by strychnine poisoning, thought to be suicide, and the suicidal death of Aboriginal domestic, Lily Lymburner in Palm Island in 1944. Emily had been drinking with Aboriginal people on the night she died, and Lily had a bad temper about her husband’s gambling before she drenched herself in kerosene and set herself on fire. When examining the inquest files of these two women a nuanced narrative emerges that challenges the colonial conception of Aboriginal female bodies as a form of nullius. It tells the story of Emily’s and Lily’s identities as Aboriginal wives, mothers, and women navigating the settler colonial space of Queensland.

Swipe Right for Heritage: Mediating Memory and the Cumulative Impacts of Digital Technologies on History and Heritage

Kylie Christian

We have digitised, virtualised, and gamified history. We have placed augmented reality over archaeological sites and stuffed museums into smartphone apps. We have democratised access and celebrated innovation. But somewhere between the QR code and the TikTok tour, did we forget to ask: what are we losing?

This paper investigates the possibility that the heritage sector's enthusiastic embrace of digital technologies represents both our greatest opportunity and our most profound professional blind spot. While digital tools have undeniably expanded public engagement – reaching audiences previously excluded by geography, mobility, or economics – they have simultaneously accelerated a troubling disconnection from the material, the embodied, and the slow.

Drawing on emerging research into the cumulative impacts of digital mediation on heritage places, we will examine how screens increasingly stand between people and the

past. We will interrogate the uncomfortable tension between accessibility metrics and authentic encounter, between viral content and vulnerable places, between changing minds and merely capturing attention.

The paper poses deliberately uncomfortable questions for public historians: When heritage becomes content, do we become complicit in its consumption rather than its conservation? Can an algorithm foster historical consciousness? And if digital technologies are changing how people encounter the past, are they also changing what the past means?

This is not a Luddite's lament. It is an invitation to professional reflexivity, to consider whether, in our rush to innovate, we have adequately considered what genuinely changes minds.

Women's access to healthcare via the 19th century railway system
Alex Christopher

This paper reconsiders the nineteenth-century railway not simply as industrial progress, but as a transformative infrastructure in women's healthcare access. By foregrounding women's embodied experiences within the rail network, it challenges long-standing transport histories that privilege commerce, engineering, and masculine labour over gendered mobility and care.

Drawing on newspaper accounts and hospital records, this research traces instances of women giving birth on trains, travelling in advanced labour, or using rail routes to access lying-in hospitals and charitable institutions. For unmarried pregnant women in particular, the railway offered both concealment and exposure: it enabled discreet travel away from local scrutiny while simultaneously situating reproductive crisis within highly public, mobile spaces.

The train carriage emerges as a liminal site — part domestic, part public — where ideas of respectability, responsibility, and emergency care were negotiated in real time.

By repositioning the railway as a gendered medical corridor, this paper seeks to change how we understand transport history and health care. It questions whether rail mobility shaped women's reproductive experiences and social identities, compelling us to rethink infrastructure not only as material progress, but as a force that altered lives and reshaped cultural attitudes toward women, risk, and care.

Rethinking Conservation in Nineteenth-Century South Australia: The Early Emergence of a Colonial Conservation Consciousness
Dr Sharyn Clarke

This paper explores the evolution of my historiographical interpretation of conservation in nineteenth-century South Australia. In my Honours thesis (1992), I examined the development of the colony's late nineteenth-century conservation movement, focusing primarily on several key male figures of British background drawn from the scientific sphere. Undertaking my Masters on the history of the River Torrens/Karrawirrapari, however, I began to discern earlier and more nuanced conservation voices, along with a Romantic intellectual inheritance. My recent PhD thesis, Protecting South Australia Nature: The Development of a Colonial Conservation Consciousness, marked a significant departure from my earlier conclusions. It shifted attention to the communities and individuals who sought to protect nature well before the emergence of an organised political movement. Furthermore, I found that the later, politically oriented action, was multicultural in composition and included women. It was also shaped by prior developments within the cultural sphere and by earlier activism and intellectual currents. This re-evaluation has also led me to reconsider my earlier assumptions about authorship—an inherently complex and contested question that this paper will briefly examine.

Reading Archival Silence: Unmarried Women Teachers and Liminal Labour in Southeast Queensland Farming Communities, 1890–1901

Jessica Clow

Unmarried women teachers in rural southeast Queensland between 1890 and 1901 occupied a liminal space in colonial society, navigating the boundaries between domestic and public responsibilities, temporary and professional roles, and visibility and marginalisation. Their work was essential to the functioning of frontier schools, though they are underrepresented in the historical record. Archival silence reflects the gendered assumptions, social expectations, and colonial bureaucracy of the period, where women's labour was crucial but largely undocumented.

Drawing upon records from the Queensland Department of Public Instruction, this study reconstructs the professional roles and career trajectories of unmarried women teachers and examines how their roles are marginalised within broader institutional and societal structures. Their experiences reveal how women exercised agency within restricted social and professional contexts, negotiating autonomy and social expectation alongside shaping understandings of women's labour. By foregrounding these women, this study challenges conventional understandings of women's work, professionalisation, and archival visibility in colonial Queensland, demonstrating the importance of recognising both the documented and absent traces of women's labour. It offers new insights into the intersection of gender, labour, and archival silence, reshaping perspectives on women's social and professional contributions to nineteenth-century Australia.

Metakritik as Exemplar-Based Understanding: J.G. Hamann on Enlightenment, Philosophy, Language, and Self-Understanding

Dr Sean Coker

J.G. Hamann's Metakritik revealed Enlightenment philosophers relied on constitutive language—that is, language that actively shapes meaning through metaphor and exemplar-based understanding, rather than merely describing it—to support their arguments without acknowledging the practice or examining its implications. This paper coins the term 'philosophical portraiture' to describe both the unacknowledged practice and Hamann's Metakritik as a response. Building on this, the paper advances three further arguments. Firstly, the paper explains Hamann's neologism 'Andriantoglyph,' showing it to refer to the ekphrastic artwork 'Andrians' in Philostratus' Imagines—a term Hamann coined to lampoon the philosophers' implicit reliance on exemplary models. Secondly, the paper argues that Hamann's novelty lay in his mimetic response: he deployed his own philosophical portrait—a portrait of Socrates in Socratic Memorabilia—to demonstrate the effectiveness of constitutive language as a vehicle for self-understanding, thereby turning the philosophers' underexamined practice against them. Thirdly, the paper argues that three implications follow: (I) Hamann's Metakritik is already present in 1759, with his first publication, (II) the constitutive approach to language, usually attributed to a post-Enlightenment language turn, is shown to be operative, if unacknowledged, within Enlightenment philosophy itself, and (III) the longstanding rivalry between poetry and philosophy must be revisited in light of philosophy's unacknowledged 'poetic' practice.

"The children's health food": Saving lives with Arnott's milk arrowroot biscuits

Gregory Cooke

They saved her life" was just one of many claims about the health benefits of Arnott's milk arrowroot biscuits in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Arnott's promised consumers that their biscuits were the perfect food for strengthening and nourishing children, but they did not ask consumers to take their word for it. Arnott's "Living Pictures" campaign featured thousands of apparently unsolicited testimonials from consumers testifying to the health benefits of their biscuits. These testimonials were usually accompanied by a picture of the child along with their name, age, and address. In industrialised cities across the world in the late nineteenth century there were widespread beliefs in the seemingly inevitable degeneration of humankind and civilisation, and infant mortality rates were high. The lengthening of food supply chains had created anonymity while a lack of regulation meant that consumers could not be certain about the safety or purity of the food they purchased. This time period also saw dramatic changes in the way food was sold, promoted, regulated and also in the kinds of food that people ate. This paper will explore how Arnott's built consumer trust in their

biscuits by exploiting the fears parents had for the health of their children. Examining Arnott's health claims also reveals how food has been underexplored in the larger literature around racial health and social history.

Sally Hemmings Out of the Shadows: Diversifying the Pantheon of United States' Founders

A/Prof Clare Corbould

It took a lot of controversy, but since the late 1990s the truth of Thomas Jefferson having had a decades-long relationship and several children with a woman he enslaved, Sally Hemings, who was also the half-sister of his dead wife, has been widely acknowledged. In this paper, I examine four key cultural works created by African Americans between 1979 and 2025: an historical novel, two stage plays and an abstract sculpture. Together, these works do more than recover Hemings from historical obscurity. They ask, too, what kinds of narrative, theatrical and visual forms are needed to represent a woman whose life and legacy has been subject to repeated attempts at erasure and silencing.

The Year the Bats Changed their Minds: Suburbanisation, Precipitation, and the Migration of the Flying-Foxes to Melbourne

Dr Harrison Croft

Flying-foxes (also 'fruit bats', Pteropus spp.) are highly sensitive to changes in temperature and water availability, and in times of drought and bushfire, they move their camps to less troublesome spots. In 1951, their usual haunts across New South Wales and Queensland were both drought- and bushfire-affected, and so several thousand of the more trepidatious individuals migrated further south than their usual boundary at the Murray River, and overwintered in Melbourne and Gippsland instead. This paper retraces that journey, arguing that a variety of push and pull factors—some cultural, others environmental—acted to promote an early journeying into a new territory. Briefly, those pull factors included increasing availability of fruit trees in rapidly suburbanising postwar Melbourne; and increasing mean air temperature there, on account of anthropogenic climate change. This paper also grapples with questions of species' belongingness, casting doubt upon the arbitrary and historically and geographically contingent native/invasive binary. Where the flying foxes are concerned, their 'repugnant' and 'satanic' visages, messy table manners, and shrill voices offended residents, botanists, and agriculturalists, many of whom fought a perpetual war against the new arrivals, shooing them away with guns and flamethrowers. As well, therefore, as tracing and explaining the bats' arrival and settlement in the 1950s in Melbourne, this paper deploys the species to refigure that native/invasive dichotomy by suggesting that they were simultaneously native and invasive.

Islam, Literature and Outback Australia: Exploring the Writings of Winifrid Steger
Mirela Cufurovic

On July 8, 1927, Jane Winifrid Steger became the first white Australian Muslim woman to perform pilgrimage in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. By her side was Karum Bux, a Muslim cameleer, hawker and storekeeper from Oodnadatta, a husband of convenience. Months later, she would also become the first documented Australian Muslim woman to publish a serial about her life in outback Australia and about her journey to Mecca in the Women's Page of Adelaide's *The Register*. Except it was not Karum Bux she imagined being by her side in her adventurous retellings; she only saw her late husband, the love of her life: Ali Ackbar Nuby, an Indian Muslim shopkeeper, hawker and cameleer whom she met in Morven, Queensland, some ten years earlier.

Already Steger's life reveals a rich national and literary history of Australia's interbellum years. Her writing emerged during a time when female writers dominated the literary scene, both through serialised fiction publications in local and national newspapers and through the publication of novels by respected Australian publishers. Steger's serial Arabian Days did not only recount her journey to Mecca and reveal world politics during this time but also placed Islam in Australia's early colonial history through her personal connection to the Muslim cameleers and hawkers who traversed the great Australian Outback. This paper thus seeks to answer the following question: what does Winifrid Steger's life story and her writing reveal more broadly about Australia's national and cultural identity in the interwar years?

'Fare Ye Well': Ex-Convict Departures and the Rethinking of Australian Settlement, 1788–1901
Matthew Cunneen

Convict transportation to Australia has often been interpreted as something convicts either sought in practice or quickly came to prefer after arrival. In effect, this applies a voluntary-migration framework to a population that was coerced. Within this logic, settlement appears as evidence of preference, and departure as counterintuitive. Yet a minority of former convicts did leave the Australian colonies once free. This paper asks why.

It argues that those who left did so because transportation had never aligned with their preferences in the first place. Former convicts leaving Australia were not voluntary migrants departing from a long-term residence in response to new incentives, but displaced persons attempting, where possible, to reverse an earlier forced movement. Their decisions at the moment of departure were shaped not only by contemporary opportunities but also by the enduring fact of having originally arrived against their will.

Drawing on a longitudinal database tracing two thousand individuals across the long nineteenth century, alongside close biographical case studies, the paper shows that former convicts' desires to leave Australia were sustained and intelligible. Remaining in Australia once free often reflected the cumulative effects of enforced immobility under sentence rather than the emergence of preference. Transportation functioned not only as a regime of labour extraction but also as a mechanism of settler production by keeping convict men and women in the colonies while they served their sentences. By explaining why former convicts left, this paper reframes our understanding of why so many stayed.

"The Game's gone soft": Changing Minds on Violence in Australian Rugby Union and League.

Bradley Cunningham

It is seen on every social media post for a red card suspension, high tackle, 'challenge in the air' or fight: "The game's gone soft". This, despite the professionalisation of the game, the sheer increase in the physical strength and mass of players and, that severe injuries still frequently occur on the 'footy field'. Though it is gaining interest amongst academics, most spectators of sport do not reflect on violence nor its memorialisation. These considerations help to establish a gauge to what is or was thought of as acceptable violence within a society at a given time. For this paper, I look to the memorialisation of both sporting or 'recreational' violence as well as socio-cultural changes to what is perceived as 'bad' or unsanctioned violence within both codes across Eastern Australia from the 1980s through to the mid-2020s to interrogate why both codes of Rugby are often accused of having "gone soft". Looking at biography, historic newspaper stories, contextual histories and, delving into the concept of violence; I argue that the memory of sport dramatically alters how one views the game in the present which attempts to bridge social determinations of masculinity and recreation between the past and present. Similarly, the conceptualisation of violence as recreation remains a continuing negotiation of traditions, law and personal experience throughout Australian society. The greater contribution, however, is to encourage sportsmen and women to reflect on their game and understand that today's fun hard game may be tomorrow's soft play or vice-versa.

The Church, the Town Housing Programme and the windmills of my mind

Dr Patricia Curthoys

Between 1959 and 1969 the NSW Christian Youth Council supported the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board Town Housing Programme by providing volunteer labour to construct at least one house per year, somewhere in the state. This activity became known as the work camp movement, inspired by and modelled on, the ecumenical work camps held in post-World War II Europe and supported by the World Council of Churches in the 1950s. About

ten years ago, I was bequeathed the work camp archive of a friend of my parents, following his death. He had been thinking of writing a history of the movement. My initial intention was that I would write some sort of history of the movement, mainly for surviving participants.

In working on the project I have sought to understand the work camp movement, in its own time, including its religious, political and social aspects, and in current historiographical contexts. But in doing so, on and off over the past ten years, I have had to deal with the windmills of my mind, to work out how I might write a history of it. How, for example, to understand the well-meaning intentions of the participants in such an unapologetically assimilationist programme? How to assess the place of the relatively modest work camp movement within the context of other activities in the 1960s focussed on improving indigenous rights? It is those windmills, and the ever-spinning circles within them, that I will explore in this paper.

Bumping into Non-human Animals in Maps and Plans of Sydney: Agency and Constraint

A/Prof Nancy Cushing

In a 2023 essay for the Network in Canadian History & Environment, Harrison Croft wrote that "rather than 'discovering' or even 'encountering' animals in the archive, historical researchers 'bump into' them". He saw that the animals we find in records of the past tend not to be passive or cryptic but to have an active presence, much like those with whom we engage on a walk along a river or suburban street. In this paper, I explore this insight through an analysis of historical maps and plans of Sydney held by the State Library of New South Wales. By recording the material culture of constraint developed to contain other animals, these two-dimensional representations of the city provide a welcome context in which to bump into and deepen our acquaintance with denizens of the other than human city.

The Histories of Labour Mobility in the Arab Gulf: A case study for rethinking the scope of colonialism

Zoe Davies

The question of whether the Arab Gulf can be considered a colonised space within the historiography of empire appears an erroneous one given Britain neither formally colonised the region through settler colonial projects (as was the case here in Australia) nor established direct administrative rule (as was seen with the British Raj in India). Indeed, the very absence of these features of colonialism suggests that any efforts to locate the Gulf within the discourse of colonialism risks conceptual overreach of the term itself. But, as the British archives themselves make evident, the region was clearly the focus of over a century of sustained British interventions. So how can this ambiguity be

reconciled? As this paper argues, the very ambiguity of the Gulf, as a questionable case of colonialism, exposes a foundational problem in colonial theory: to what extent is colonialism dependent on formal sovereignty and territorial rule? If colonialism is equated with annexation and administration, then the Gulf lies outside its scope. If, however, colonialism is understood as a mode of governing through structured asymmetries of power, then the Gulf becomes a critical case deserving of further analysis. By drawing upon a case study of labour mobility in the Arab Gulf that highlights how colonial influence shaped the gendered transformation and expansion of the East African-Gulf slave trade, this paper asks us to change our minds about how we think about colonialism and its legacies.

Ascribing First Nations heritage values to Australia's first Government House
Dr Aaron de Souza, Clare Woolley, Dr Constance Wyndham, and Quaiden Williams-Riley

The site of Australia's first Government House (FGH) was excavated in the 1980s-90s and was registered on the National Heritage List in 2005. The listing focussed on the colonial history of the site, with little to no representation of First Nations voices or perspectives. In order to begin rectifying this, a Commonwealth-funded research collaboration between the Gujaga Foundation and Museums of History NSW aimed to bring First Nations heritage values to the archaeological collection from the FGH site. The project had the stated goals of progressing amendments to the National Heritage listing for the site and to embed First Nations perspectives and values into the museum's collection management and community engagement strategies. This collaborative paper outlines some of the key project outcomes and highlights important lessons resulting from this process of community engagement.

Spaces of Resistance: Indigenous Convergence, Sovereignty, and the 1988 Bicentennial Protests
Seth Dias

Since 1788, Indigenous people have repeatedly rebuilt their communities in response to colonial invasion, developing new forms of sovereign nationhood in response to policies of dispossession. By the 1960s, activists such as Uncle Chicka Dixon were arguing for a collective Indigenous identity that transcended cultural differences. This emphasis on shared belonging strengthened community-building efforts in inner city Aboriginal suburbs, fostering solidarity across diverse ancestral groups and supporting the establishment of Indigenous organisations within the social movement over the 20th century.

By the 1980s, Indigenous political actors were employing protest within central urban locations to articulate a contemporary conception of Indigenous nationhood oriented around their assertion of sovereignty. This paper will argue that the act of converging in one location to protest enabled Indigenous political actors to consolidate a diverse range of voices within a framework of resistance and Indigenous self-determination, building on the foundation of Dixon's vision.

Drawing on archival footage and photos, and oral histories, this paper will explore the spatial implications of examining Sydney's urban landscape from the perspective of Indigenous political actors during the 1988 protests against the Australian bicentennial celebrations. It will establish the 1988 protest convergence as a turning point in the Indigenous struggle for sovereignty by examining how activists contested markers of contemporary colonial identity. Examination of the use of protest as a mechanism to express a self-conception of Indigenous transnationality opens the possibility for a counter-reading of the city from the perspective of Indigenous people, one that challenges the city's established colonial narrative.

The "Bonegilla phenomenon" and its meaning in Hungary
Dr Endre Domaniczky

I would like to talk about how important and interesting it was to learn how a country built primarily on British cultural heritage opened its doors to the world and became a multicultural society. It is important to mention how Hungarians found their place in this concept. How did they transform from a closed ethnic community into an open community that embraces Australian values over time, one that seeks to create memories in Australia that offer opportunities for connection and remembrance not only for that community, but also for the majority society. One such example is the Hungarian memorial room planned at the Bonegilla migrant camp, which has a strong connection not only to the local Hungarian community but also to the Australian society. It is important to note that this experiment has also attracted interest in distantly situated Hungary, as several hundred thousands people with Hungarian ancestry lived around the globe and left their mark abroad in the 20th century. It is not only for the Hungarian minority but also the dominant culture that would like to remember them. Bonegilla is therefore a symbol not only for Australia, but also for Hungary, symbolizing a change in thinking towards how the cultural heritage of a minority group can be preserved and presented in another country in the long term.

Changing Minds Historiographically? Reflections on Three Decades of *Gender & History*
Dr Karen Downing

In 1989 the editorial collective of the new journal *Gender & History* aimed to make gender relations central to the study of history, and bring a sense of history to the study of gender, by 'addressing men and masculinity as well as women and femininity'. While continuing to be committed to the 'recovery of women's past experiences', the collective were very clear that 'gender history' was not synonymous with 'women's history'. Has the first editorial collective's intention to change minds on the historical significance of 'gender' been fulfilled?

Our own research and teaching has led us to surmise that in many ways the fields of 'women's history' and 'histories of masculinities' remain distinct and lack equivalence. Scholars in women's history might often self-identify as 'feminist' but historians of masculinities would not describe themselves as 'masculinist'. Do scholars talk of 'femininities' in the same way as 'masculinities'? Do they use 'womanliness' as they use 'manliness'? Where is the field of 'gender' history now?

To test whether there is empirical evidence for this perceived disparity or whether it is simply a semantic argument, we have made a deep dive into *Gender & History* articles published over the last three and a half decades. In this paper we will present preliminary findings from our analysis, and the conclusions and further questions that our findings are raising.

Kill the Whales? The Whaling Information Centre and Anti-Environmentalism in the 1970s

Michael Duri

This presentation concerns the short-lived history of the Whaling Information Centre during the last years of commercial whaling in Australia. The Whaling Information Centre was a pro-whaling organisation and lobby group based in Perth that was active in the late 1970s. Much of the funding of the WIC was directly tied to Australia's last active whaling company, the Cheynes Beach Whaling Company. The WIC disseminated pro-whaling propaganda throughout Australia in the 1970s, attempting to affect public opinion towards a pro-whaling position. Much of the claims presented by the WIC in public material were false, but nonetheless echoed in sympathetic conservative spaces. In particular, pro-whaling groups often disputed scientific evidence of cetacean intelligence, behaviour or ecology. These were often problematised by the easily witnessed behaviour of whales themselves. As such, the 'conservation icon' status of whales as 'unique animals' became a site of public dispute. This presentation will examine the surprising successes, and failures, of pro-whaling activising and lobbying. I argue for the place of misinformation in the history of environmental awareness and regulation in Australia.

The Economic Mirage: Analyzing Western perceptions of Qajar-Era
Tabriz Sadra Emami

This paper argues that in the Qajar era, Tabriz was repeatedly framed in European travelogues, consular correspondence, and commercial commentary not simply as a wealthy city, but as a recoverable hub of trade which had once been the pinnacle of Silk Road trade. Europeans believed that Tabriz's commercial destiny had been interrupted due to multiple environmental factors, as well as a degree of general incompetence of the inhabitants, but that it could be revived. Rather than treating European descriptions as straightforward reportage, I read them as speculative economic narratives that convert Tabriz into a site of latent potential. Europeans routinely described the city in reference to its prior glory while contrasting it with a present state marked by immense decline. The role of Prince Abbas Mirza in this process will also be examined, as he himself perpetuated notions of Tabriz's revival.

The paper shows how this revivalist imagination worked through several narratives. European observers positioned Tabriz as a city with an inherently superior geography to much of Iran. With these factors considered, one sees a persistent narrative of European perceptions of the city, as they constantly lamented the city's loss from a romanticized golden age, while simultaneously arguing that it was, in fact, capable of regaining such status. How this motivated European investment patterns in Iran and the city more broadly will also be considered to construct the full picture of how this narrative ultimately impacted European capital.

A Strategic Frontier: Militarised Landscapes and Defence in Northern Australia, 1939–2026.
Danny England

This paper examines how defence strategy produces militarised landscapes in northern Australia across two periods of intense mobilisation: the Second World War (1939–1945) and the contemporary Indo-Pacific build-up (2011–2026). Rather than treating defence as policy or doctrine alone, it approaches military activity as a material and spatial process that reorganises land use, access, and environmental management.

In both eras, the construction of military bases, airfields, ports, and infrastructure was accompanied by large-scale military operations and training exercises that restricted movement and reshaped patterns of land use. Training areas, periodic closures, and controlled access regimes extended the influence of defence beyond installations into surrounding civilian and Indigenous lands. These regimes of spatial regulation produced contingent environmental outcomes, including altered fire regimes, changing land management practices, and patterns of biodiversity, as unintended consequences of preparing terrain for military use rather than deliberate conservation or degradation.

Through comparative wartime and contemporary case studies, the paper argues that shifting threat perceptions and strategic partnerships have repeatedly transformed northern Australia into a strategic frontier. The region's perceived remoteness and environmental characteristics make it simultaneously valuable for defence preparation and subject to cycles of rapid militarisation followed by partial demobilisation.

Integrating environmental history with military geography and remote sensing, the paper demonstrates that defence initiatives leave enduring imprints on ecosystems and everyday access to land and space. Understanding these militarised landscapes clarifies the long-term relationship between national strategy, alliance politics, and the historical development of northern Australia.

Guardians or Enforcers? Women Police Diaries and Domestic Violence in Australia
Taylah Evans

Before the 1970s, police responses to domestic abuse have been categorised as sparse, as intimate partner violence was widely considered a private matter beyond the scope of police investigation. However, diaries kept by the South Australian Women Police Branch reveal that 'domestic discord' constituted a significant part of women's police work. An examination of these diaries suggests that women police worked outside contemporary judicial and legal frameworks, policing domestic abuse both through formal and informal means. Tasked with the protection of women and children, women police often worked as mediators and provided legal advice, food, and shelter to victims of domestic abuse. However, women police also worked semi-independently from the South Australian police department, and this autonomy meant that women police often drew on their own subjective ideas about violence, victimhood, and gender relations in their policing practices. Whilst existing scholarship tends to focus on how limited police responses shaped the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse, this paper will demonstrate how women police were vital to the construction, maintenance, and negotiation of understandings of domestic abuse throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and before the introduction of formal policing practices.

Changing Minds, Claiming Authority: Astrometeorology and Weather Knowledge in Australia
Michael Evans

This paper examines moments in which Australian meteorologists changed their minds about the causes of weather, focusing on the history of astrometeorology in Australia: the belief that the position of the moon and planets determines weather on earth. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several Australian meteorologists, including senior colonial and early Commonwealth figures, dissented from prevailing scientific orthodoxy by claiming to have identified cycles and regularities in Australian weather

caused by lunar and planetary influence. For some, this was a temporary aberration; for others, it proved career-ending.

Histories of meteorology have acknowledged these changes of mind but have rarely examined them in detail, tending to treat astrometeorological belief as error or embarrassment rather than as a serious challenge to emerging scientific authority. In this study, I frame these episodes instead as part of a broader struggle for cultural authority between scientific meteorology and vernacular astrometeorological practices. This perspective helps explain both the appeal of astrometeorology and the conditions under which scientific practitioners might have been induced to revise their views in the late nineteenth century.

The continued presence of these beliefs was embodied in the practices of long-range forecasters who, throughout the twentieth century, claimed predictive capacities beyond those of the Bureau of Meteorology. In the twenty-first century, astrometeorology has regained a degree of purchase in popular culture as a resource for denying climate change, revealing a shift from changing minds to actively resisting their change.

"Read all about it!": Computing late 19th century newspaper coverage of Australian federation in the United States

Dr Emily Fitzgerald

Newspapers have long been an important resource for historians, and technological developments over time (from microfilm in the early 20th century to digitised newspapers, APIs, and natural language processing in the early 21st) have improved access to and accessibility of newspapers, particularly to historians working far from their site of publication.

This access has enabled research such as exploring by exploring the extent of coverage of Australian federation in the United States as it developed in the 1890s, which can in turn contribute to conclusions about awareness of and connection between the Australian colonies and the United States.

My earlier research found that there was coverage in the United States of Australian federation, and the Australian's use of the United States as a central model to learn from. I argued that, while Australian federation was not a major news story, there was interest in and comment on the proceedings across the United States. This research was undertaken using the online interface of three newspaper databases, with manual note taking of findings.

For this paper, I am returning to this research, focusing on one database used, Chronicling America. I will repeat the search, this time using a more computational approach, utilising the API, and tools such as natural language processing and sequence

matching. The paper will discuss both the differences in methodology, and the impact that had on the research process and research findings; and any new insights gained to my understanding of American responses to Australian Federation.

The Spirit of cricket: Evolution of an idea
Dr Simon Fleming

"It's just not cricket" is a phrase that denotes unfairness, duplicitous behaviour, and dishonest dealing. It is a phrase that reflects a particular sense of cricket as a sport of moral virtue. Indeed, cricket assumes the existence of a universal, unwritten code that extols fair play, honesty, and mutual respect. Such values have become referred to as the "spirit of cricket". More recently, the nebulous spirit of cricket has come in for much criticism, as commentators point to its origins in Victorian Britain. The idea, it is stated, is an archaic residue of a bygone era that bears little relevance today. Missing from this discussion, however, is an historical understanding of the idea of the spirit of cricket. Cricket, like all sports, shapes societies and is shaped by society. The conception of cricket's spirit, and the debates about this idea, reflect the concerns and values of that society. Debates about the spirit of cricket emerge periodically. They may be triggered from events within the sport itself, such as the Bodyline series in 1932-33 or the 'Bairstow' stumping. Sometimes, however, broader social and political trends are brought to bear on the understanding of this "spirit of cricket", such as the decolonisation and civil rights movement in the 1960s. This paper seeks to rectify this gap by outlining a history of this idea and placing the spirit of cricket in its context. Rather than consider the spirit of cricket as an unchanged component left over from the nineteenth century, I consider the concept as one that has evolved over the twentieth century reflecting and adapting to new societies and ways of thinking.

A Right to Remember
A/Prof Fiona Foley

Like a veil draped over this country, there is a persistent silencing of Frontier War history in Australia. This is evident in the way that many memorials to Aboriginal massacres and conflicts remain hidden or unknown to the broader Australian public. Strategies employed by settler society to actively negate this history — through omission and erasure — are visible at a number of sites.

For example, beside a busy highway on the way to Murujuga National Park on the Burrup Peninsula, a dirt road leads to the location of the Flying Foam Massacre. Although a memorial exists there to commemorate the victims, most visitors to the region — including those travelling to Murujuga — are unaware that this memorial exists at all.

At other significant sites of frontier violence, there is no indication at all of what the road or landscape signifies. For instance, near the Coniston Massacre site — one of the last recorded massacres of Aboriginal people in Australia — there is no signage to indicate the road's destination or the historical significance of the place to passers-by.

Elsewhere, there are documented massacres of profound cultural and historical importance where no memorials exist on Country. These absences reinforce a broader pattern of minimizing or forgetting stories of colonial violence. The result is a quiet suppression of memory: Australians can travel through landscapes shaped by colonial conflict without ever encountering markers that acknowledge or explain that history.

This pattern — of hidden, overlooked, or absent memorialisation — reflects how the history of the frontier wars has been treated in public spaces and national consciousness. Memorials that do exist are seldom integrated into mainstream heritage narratives, making them difficult to find and easy to overlook.

Was it the girl or the machine? Towards a labour history of bankers
A/Prof Hannah Forsyth

In April 1919, a Mr H Crawford and Henry Foord Rawson met with around 50 to 60 bankers to form a union of Sydney bankers. Within a few months, the union had more than 800 members and by August the newspapers were reporting NSW membership gains of 50 to 60 members per day. The nearest census in 1921 reports 8,036 people working in banking and finance. Of these 6,731 men and 1,305 women. That means that within a few months, 10% of the banking workforce were unionized. The banks opposed banker unionization on the grounds that they were a profession, not 'workers' in any sense understood by the trades hall. In the process, and in the wage-setting (including for women) that followed the union's success, the arbitration tribunal collected granular detail about bank work processes in the early 20th century. This paper considers these processes, linking them to a glass plate negative collection of photographs taken at around the same time, now held by the RBA. Drawing on these records I will explore the possibilities for using bank labour to reconsider the nature of bank money and its place in the history of Australian capitalism.

Criminal Continuities: how nineteenth-century history affects crime and policing in Australia today
Dr Meg Foster

How does the nineteenth century, Australian colonial past impact Australia's current attitudes to crime and policing? Contemporary crime and policing are affected by a paradox—they suffer from too much and too little history. They have too much history in the sense that current criminological trends—such as racial profiling and

disproportionately high numbers of people of colour in prisons, or the high incidence of domestic violence towards women by their male partners—are not new, but parts of longer, colonial histories of race and gender. Contemporary crime and policing have too little history in the sense that these connections between history and current trends are under researched in mainstream criminology, and are often rendered invisible in this discipline's overwhelming emphasis on the present over the past. This paper will explore the possibilities offered by integrating public history, social memory and criminology to address this imbalance. Rendering colonial legacies of crime and policing visible, and understanding their ongoing impact, is important. It allows us to actively combat our colonial inheritance, rather than being beholden to it.

German Public Opinion and the Invasion of the Soviet Union
Josh Freeman

The following presentation offers an examination of the German public's reaction to the invasion of the Soviet Union during the initial weeks of the conflict in mid-1941 – itself an excerpt from a broader doctoral project that seeks to chart German civilian mood, opinion, and general sentiment towards the war against the Soviet Union over a three-year period (June 1941 – July 1944 approx.). While strategic and operational studies of this mammoth clash are not uncommon, comparatively few works engage with the civilian experience and responses to the conflict. Consequently, key questions remain: how did the German people perceive the war against the Soviet Union? To what extent did these perceptions change over time? Which events marked the highest and lowest points in public morale?

The presentation advances two principal objectives. The first is the demonstration of the value of the Sicherheitsdienst produced Meldungen aus dem Reich (MADR) reports as a source for reconstructing public mood and opinion within the Third Reich. Far from being mere propaganda instruments, these reports reveal sustained efforts by the Nazi regime to monitor popular sentiment, thereby underscoring the importance that even an authoritarian state attached to gauging civilian attitudes during wartime. When read critically and contextualised appropriately, the MADR offer historians rare insight into contemporary perceptions, expectations, and anxieties.

The second is to offer an examination of the German reactions to the launch of Operation Barbarossa during its initial weeks, exploring themes such as enthusiasm, ideological hostility towards Bolshevism, expectations of a swift victory, and underlying concerns about the scale and implications of the conflict. By situating these responses within the broader political environment of mid-1941, the paper highlights the complexity of early public reactions, which combined confidence and ideological conviction with moments of uncertainty.

The final years of the Australian School of Pacific Administration
Alexandra Frost

Established in 1949 and located in Sydney, the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) was designed to train Australian teachers and patrol officers for service in Papua New Guinea. By the early 1970s, as the territory moved toward self-government, the purpose of ASOPA shifted significantly. Under a new Commonwealth policy, the School began providing higher education and training for Papua New Guinean public servants, who were regarded as the nation's future leaders. By 1973, hundreds of Papua New Guineans had completed a range of long and short courses at ASOPA. At the same time, the School continued to educate and prepare Australian officers for roles in PNG. This created a dual purpose for the School: to sustain Australia's colonial administration of PNG while also supporting its decolonisation. This paper examines the multifaceted role of ASOPA during this transitional period and offers insight into the place of higher education in histories of decolonisation and independence. The decision to educate Papua New Guinean public servants in Australia at the School, alongside Australian officers, was a deliberate choice by the Commonwealth. This change in approach, as the Department of External Territories ultimately claimed, aimed to help foster future 'friendly relations' between the two countries.

Adaptations of Creation Theories: Hesiod to the Presocratic Natural Philosophers
Louise Fuller

Interpretation of fundamental belief systems can change over time in any society. This was the case for archaic and ancient Greece, regarding their explanations of creation. The first written literature of Greece was epic poetry from the eighth to seventh centuries BCE. The epic poet Hesiod in his poem Theogony recorded in writing for the first time the traditional creation cosmogony myth which explained how the world, universe, gods and humankind came into existence. One popular argument is that this stemmed from an established oral mythological corpus which in turn represented the standard accepted belief system of the wider Greeks. In the sixth century BCE the natural Presocratic philosophers came to prominence. They also put forth theories regarding creation. However, these differed in key ways to the beliefs Hesiod had established. The Presocratic philosophers attempted to explain creation in a more scientific way. They used empirical observation and logic to argue for a "first principle" by which everything was created. This paper conducts a comparative analysis of both the shared and differing themes of the theories of creation in these two mediums to explore the direct adaptations of theories of creation the later natural philosophers made to the epic poetry. This paper concludes firstly, the epic poetry corresponded to an established oral belief system in pre-literate Greece which accounts for its value of narrative style, and secondly, the

natural philosophers adapted this cosmogony according to the emergence of early quasi-scientific methods to reinterpret the details of Greece's cosmogony.

New age grandparents and thrill-seeking grannies: reimagining old age in postwar Australia

Dr Emily Gallagher

Grey nomads, sky-diving nannas, 'new age' grandparents, and eighty-year-old weight-lifting champions. These days we are surrounded by stories of 'successful ageing', of older people living busy and fulfilling lives while challenging the expectations of their age and gender. The rise of this growing class of active older Australians stretches back to wider social, demographic and economic changes that led to the expansion of the 'third age' in the later decades of the twentieth century. People were retiring earlier and living longer, with many also enjoying better health and greater financial security than their own grandparents. New images of old age were popularised; others were critiqued and sidelined. In this paper I consider some of the 'third age' identities that were circulating in postwar Australia. How was the experience of ageing being represented among older people? And how were changing ideas about old age, retirement, widowhood, family, grandparenting, fitness and youth being negotiated and reimagined? To explore these questions, I examine a variety of print and audiovisual media specifically directed towards senior Australians in the second half of the twentieth century. Many of these publications and productions not only presented particular images of old age to their audiences but also provided a platform for individuals to share their own experiences of ageing.

The birth of the Anzacs: From Myall Creek to Gallipoli

Dr Stephen Gapps

Remarkably, the 2025 publication of *The Australian Wars* book based on the documentary series by filmmaker Rachel Perkins was the first comprehensive overview of the wars fought for the occupation of Australia. There is much more work to be done in writing the detailed histories of the more than 40 distinct wars fought between 1788 and 1930. Perhaps they may be given the same detailed attention as the Official Histories of Australia's modern wars.

The Australian Wars and Australia's modern wars remain as distinct elements of Australian history. This paper explores their connections. The paper considers how Australia's colonial military history – and in particular the Australian Wars – may have had a more significant influence on Australia's first modern soldiers than we might think.

There have been some recent shifts in understanding the colonial military heritage of Australia's first modern wars. Connor and Stockings' 2014 Before the Anzac Dawn

outlined over a hundred years of military developments and experience that accounts for just how well-prepared Australia was for the Gallipoli campaign. The Australian War Memorial's proposed new exhibitions will include the Australian Frontier Wars but is unlikely to explore any connections between these and modern wars.

Australian men were militarised across the frontier during the 19th century. Many were either trained or forced to operate like soldiers by the significant resistance of Aboriginal warriors and people who opposed the occupation of their homelands. This paper asks how much did the Australian Wars influence Australia's military in the First World War?

Regenerating a wetland community
Prof Andrea Gaynor and Dr Nandi Chinna

What relations have enabled social and ecological regeneration of bushland and wetland places in Australian cities over time? And what role can history play in the care and restoration of more-than-human local communities? This paper takes a regenerative history approach to the story of the Wetland Centre in the southern Perth suburb of Cockburn. Established in 1993 on degraded farmland adjacent to Walliabup Bibra Lake, a major wetland in the eastern chain of the Beeliar Wetlands, the Centre was conceived in the wake of an unsuccessful campaign to prevent a road being built through one of the contiguous wetlands. The founders sought not only to repair and regenerate the land, but to spark interest in and appreciation for wetlands, at least in part to thwart future destructive projects. Along the way, the Centre began to provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to reconnect with Country in a place that for thousands of years has been a significant source of spiritual and material sustenance for the Whadjuk Noongar people. This paper uses the story of the Wetland Centre to explore the role of historical understanding and storytelling in developing and maintaining multispecies regenerative projects.

Melbourne 1925: a case study in digital public history
Patrick Gigacz

The correspondence of Melbourne's Town Clerk, the "municipal magpie", has been foundational to development of Australian urban history. Successive custodians have ensured it is a remarkably rich and well-preserved source for histories of the city. As with many such archives, however, there remain significant obstacles to access for the wider public, beyond its usual audience of professional researchers – limiting the possibilities for personal and public histories for these personal and public documents. This paper discusses the "Melbourne 1925" project, which created an interactive online snapshot exhibition of the Town Clerk's files, and piloted new integrations of a range of technologies and digital infrastructure to enhance access to this important archive. It examines how archival digitisation can be supplemented with strategies to intuitively

reveal the relationship between documents, and demonstrates how the project built upon the Glycerine research image annotation platform to combine visual representation with structured, searchable metadata. Further, it explores the current state and potential of generative AI tools for large-scale transcription and annotation, and discusses the limitations of this automation in the realm of public history. Finally, it considers the inherent risks of dependence on specific digital ecosystems for producing robust and enduring public history resources. This paper, and the Melbourne 1925 project, offer a case study of possibilities and challenges for public histories in the era of digital public archives.

A.J. Vogan's The Black Police: a story of modern Australia (1890) - reassessing its value as a source on Queensland frontier violence

Denis Gojak

When journalist Arthur Vogan wrote a novel of his experiences of the Queensland Native Police, he hoped that it would have similar impact to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. Instead, while it was noticed and often positively reviewed, it sank without trace. Readers were put off by the novelisation and had no clue as to what was factual and what was fiction. Citations since have been very few and largely focussed on his 'Slave map'.

Vogan's papers are scattered across many institutions and collections. When taken together they map out his extraordinary career as a journalist, archaeologist, naturalist collector, Aboriginal advocate, miner and massively racist ratbag. While this was his life after he published *The Black Police*, his archive offers clues as to how and why he composed the book, when and where he travelled and what his sources and inspirations were. We can now, with some certainty, say who the characters in the book were intended to be, how reality was represented, and where he used others' writing, what was his own work and on what it is based. In short, sorting fact from the fiction.

Although it remains a flawed source, the Black Police should be credited as a much more promising and nuanced first-hand source on Queensland frontier violence, although still to be used cautiously. It supports the historical consensus about its horrific nature and the entanglement of pastoralists and government agents. When seen against Vogan's later life, it is even more of an extraordinary source.

The 'Manila Girls': The recall of Australian civilian women working for the US Forces in the Pacific, 1945-1949

Justine Greenwood

Arthur Calwell, Immigration Minister from 1945 to 1949, was not a man to change his mind. When the US Army spirited a group of 15 young women out of Brisbane to work at a base in Manila in January 1946 – without having approached Australian authorities –

Calwell was adamant they must be returned to Australia. After a diplomatic scuffle, the US duly complied and the women arrived back in Australia two weeks later. There the incident should have ended, but a pronouncement by Calwell that these women would "never return to Manila" caused a media-fuelled public uproar that lasted until the election loss by Labor in 1949. The controversy over the "Manila Girls", as the press coined them, has not received the same attention as other cause célèbres in which Calwell was embroiled, such as the Gamboa and O'Keefe affairs. At first glance, the Manila Girls case appears to be the odd one out, focused as it was on returning white Australian women to Australia rather than keeping non-white migrants out. Collectively, however, the three incidents were perceived as proof by certain sections of the media and the Opposition that Calwell's management of the Immigration portfolio was damaging perceptions of Australia internationally. A long-forgotten moment in the tumultuous early post-war period, the curious case of the Manila Girls is worth a closer look for what it reveals about the fraught nature of the post-war Australia/US relationship, freedom of movement for Australians, and the gendered nature of Australian citizenship.

'Plenty water for a long time': Indigenous water management and invasion
Dr Billy Griffiths

Part of truth-telling is coming to terms with the ecological cost of invasion. Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth, and it is dryer now than it has been in hundreds of years – and this is not just a story about rainfall. It is a consequence of overstocking and erosion, draining wetlands and denuding landscapes, and, most significantly, disrupting ancient and enduring practices of care. As many Aboriginal people told newcomers to the Western District of Victoria as early as 1839: 'Plenty water for a long time, but when the white people come the water goes away'. This paper explores how Indigenous peoples engineered ecosystems over thousands of years to ensure that water lingered in diverse landscapes, and how water remains central today as communities seek to heal Country in the wake of invasion. It focuses on histories of the Western District of Victoria, where the eeling system at Budj Bim has helped bring Indigenous hydrological engineering to the world stage. But this is a broader story about water management. Similar technologies to those at play on Gunditjmara Country can be found across the continent. The way water moves in the landscape is itself an artefact of human presence here over thousands of years.

Interview in Play: An Approach to Video Game Oral History
Dany Guay-Belanger

Classic video games are in peril. Indeed, a 2023 report by The Video Game History Foundation and the Software Preservation Network revealed that "87% of classic video games released in the United States are critically endangered" (Salvador). Fortunately,

the fields of video game preservation and history have recently seen much effervescence, but initial efforts to preserve video games and their history produced narratives resembling "great man" history. Some scholars, perhaps most notably Melanie Swalwell (2009, 264; 2021a; 2021b), have nevertheless stepped up to redress this problematic situation which Carl Therrien has qualified as techno-industrial glorification (2019, 8) and Dany Guay-Bélanger as "great game" history (2021, 4), to break the vicious cycle it creates. Yet, some approaches are still underutilised to preserve and research the medium's history, namely oral history.

Using *Jersey Devil* (1998), Behaviour Interactive's first title, this paper will present lessons learned while applying a player-first approach to researching and preserving the history of specific games and the findings emerging thereof. Said approach gives interview partners an active role in the research process and positions them as experts on their own memories by asking them to play the game again and reflect on this experience potentially differed from what they remember. Via shared authority (Frisch 1990; Frisch 2003; High 2008) and the inclusion of participants' self-reflections, this project attempts to create fissures in the proverbial ivory tower and create better, more connected scholarship that will hopefully change the public's perception of academic video game historians and vice versa.

The Bengal Tiger in Punch: Animal Symbolism and the Visual Politics of the 1857 Indian Mutiny

Dr Srishti Guha

The iconography of the slain tiger, particularly in the practices of big game hunting, is seen repeatedly in the Victorian visual archive as a way of depicting the triumph of the British over a dangerous India, and more generally of the dominance of Britain over the racialized Indian Other. The events of the so-called 1857 Indian Mutiny sent the British metropolitan media into a visual frenzy as animalised images of the bloodthirsty, treacherous and 'tigerish' Indian Sepoys began to circulate. As material beings that could not speak for themselves, animals such as the Bengal tiger were wholly subject to human control; as rhetorical devices, they proved especially open to manipulation. This paper draws on the cartoons of the Punch magazine, among other visual material, to discuss how imperial power in this form of image-making was both extended and disturbed by the multiple entanglements of human/animal worlds. The wily Bengal tiger began to stand in not only as an allegory of danger, but also imperial anxiety as the British sought to reinstate their control, often through violent means, over their prized colony following the events of 1857. The paper traces the evolution of this imagery, situating it within emerging conversations about the vibrancy of non-human worlds in imperial visual culture. It approaches these representations as part of an imperial bestiary in which animal

symbols animated and structured power, shaped national identities, gave form to emotion, and informed cultural memory.

Teaching the Lives of Girls in Antiquity
Dr Julia Hamilton

Imagining and historicizing the lives of girls in the ancient world presents distinctive pedagogical challenges. Evidence is fragmentary, often mediated through elite male perspectives, and discussions of labour, enslavement, and gendered violence require careful scaffolding to create inclusive learning environments. This paper reflects on a 'pedagogy of belonging' (Press et al. 2022) developed for undergraduate teaching in Ancient History at Macquarie University, which encourages students to engage with girls as active economic contributors rather than passive historical subjects. Combining rigorous historical analysis with student-centred teaching methods transforms potentially confronting content into opportunities for critical thinking and ethical engagement with the ancient past. Central to this approach is a digital museum trail co-created with the Gale History Museum, which enables both on-campus and remote online students to develop empathy through material encounters with objects. Drawing on Hartman's (2008) 'critical fabulation', students are asked to attend not only to what objects reveal but to what they cannot: the lives, voices, and relationships that left no material trace. Teaching this material ethically also demands attention to trauma-aware pedagogy within Australia's settler-colonial context. This paper discusses strategies for guiding students to read ancient sources critically for silences, agency, and resistance, and to hold the "impossibility that conditions our knowledge of the past" (Hartman 2008, 13).

Views of the colonies: British graphic satire in the age of Empire
Dr Guy Hansen

Graphic satirists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, such as James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, and George Cruikshank, produced a vast catalogue of prints relating to key political events and personalities documenting the evolution of British political culture. This archive, sometimes referred to as the 'Golden Age of Caricature,' has been mined by scholars such as M Dorothy George, HT Dickinson, and Nicholas K Robinson, to explore the British world view in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this paper I will talk about satirical prints held by the Lewis Walpole Library and discuss how this medium depicts the growth of the British Empire. The key period of production of satirical prints overlaps with the period that Britain grew to be the world's dominant global power providing a running commentary on the exploration, mapping, and exploitation of Britain's colonies.

Casualty, Ambulance and First Aid Rooms in Sydney 1880 – 1970
Dr Elizabeth Harford

Provision of first aid and medical care to protect athletes and visiting public recreation grounds, as well as for large crowd events, is today taken for granted. However, for at least the first 100 years of the Colony, these services were not available. From the late 1880s Casualty Rooms were opened at racecourses and sportsgrounds across Sydney. These openings coincided with the start of First Aid classes led by medical officers and then in 1890 by St John Ambulance Association. The Civil Ambulance Transport Brigade began in 1895. As ambulance stations expanded across the City and Eastern Suburbs space for a casualty room was included. By 1903 daylight bathing had been legalised and Surf Life Saving clubs opened at many beaches including Manly, Bondi and Coogee. As clubs developed, the original changing sheds gave way to substantial club buildings with casualty rooms. Casualty rooms were also opened by local Councils who had Harbour beaches within their municipalities. These were staffed by divisions of the St John Ambulance Association. This paper traces the expansion and operation of community and factory casualty rooms until the 1970s and explores reasons for these services. It will also describe the provision of first aid services for large crowd celebrations such as Federation Day, visits of Royalty and various foreign naval fleets and Royal Easter Show. The complexity of these arrangements would rival modern outdoor medical provisions. Location, equipment, staffing and arrangements with ambulances and hospitals are also discussed.

The Influence of Curators on the Agency in Museums: An Exposition of the Queensland Museum's Numismatic Collection in Public History
Sebastian Harris

Museum curators are extremely significant in directing the route of a museum and creating change through deliberate decision making. In this presentation, Sebastian will look at the history of the Queensland Museum’s Numismatic Register from a data-driven perspective. The aim of this presentation is to introduce key documentation to the audience, with key factors in curating coinage in museums, with an additional note on the importance of accurate record keeping. Having looked through several thousand internal documents and working to publish a thesis on this topic, he will collate what is understood and consider the importance of public history to museums, and more so, how one collection can be impacted heavily by the work of a few curators.

A Case Study of Using Tabletop Roleplay Games to Teach Ancient History
Dr Abbie Hartman

The benefit of using video games in formal pedagogic settings, and the practical ways to do so, is by no means a new concern for scholars. However, university history

departments often do not have access to video game-specific infrastructure, especially for large undergraduate cohorts. Therefore, the best way to integrate games as a supportive pedagogical tool may be to return to analogue forms of gaming. Analogue games can be utilised as a more accessible way of developing ludic engagement and assist with students' development of historical literacy and historical empathy.

This paper examines Arete, a pedagogy-driven analogue set during the formation of ancient Greek states and designed for use within a second-year ancient history unit. Over the 13-week teaching session, students engage with the game three times: firstly, to develop a historical character, using historical sources discussed in the course; secondly, as part of a skill-based critical assessment; and thirdly, when undertaking a scaffolded debate about key events during the formation of the Athenian state. In engaging with Arete, students are asked to use their developing knowledge of ancient history to adopt the perspectives of historical actors and apply this knowledge to a historical event.

This paper will reflect on the process of development, the experience of students when engaging with this game, and speculates about how using games in teaching could provide a foundation for future projects.

Corporate Ambition and the National Interest: An entangled history of Australia's wartime flax production and the decentralised linen thread factory of James Miller and Co in Warragul, Victoria

Dr Pauline Hastings

In line with Australia's postwar industrial expansion, long-established Melbourne-based rope and cordage manufacturer, James Miller and Co proposed to build a state-of-the-art flax processing and spinning facility to handle all Australia's linen thread requirements. With state government support for decentralisation, the company commenced construction in 1945 in Warragul, the heart of West Gippsland's recently revived flax growing region. Historically, Australian flax production had been a sporadic undertaking. Throughout much of the twentieth century, imported flax met local requirements for textiles and defence products, but local flax crops assumed heightened strategic importance as Second World War hostilities disrupted international supply chains and Britain appealed to its dominions for help. By 1940, the federal government had pledged support for Britain's predicament, and the newly formed Flax Production Committee stimulated resurgence of domestic production to ensure future national self-sufficiency. However, ongoing success of the plan relied upon stable supplies of local flax, willing farmers prepared to allocate acreages, the labour of the Women's Land Army plus patriotic wartime enthusiasm. With the coming of peace, each of these factors steadily waned. By the late 1950s, Miller's Warragul factory was spinning linen thread from

imported flax. Utilising Miller's company records, this paper explores the initial synergy between these primary and secondary industries, highlighting the tensions between a venture in the national interest and corporate ambition and profit. It seeks to understand how the company appeared to overlook Australia's chequered history with flax and failed to anticipate future competition for acreage between types of agricultural production.

Shaping Men's Minds: Affective Pedagogy and Masculinity in the British Royal Navy, 1793-1815

Matilda Hatcher

When newly recruited men joined the British Royal Navy of the French Wars (1793-1815) they rarely conformed to the navy's emotional style, which identified bravery, light-heartedness, and self-mastery as essential components of seafaring masculinity. During their first months of sea service, men had to rigorously and laboriously learn the art of seafaring, which involved not only learning the craft of seamanship, but the proper performance of naval manliness and its associated emotional style. As men in the Royal Navy literally 'learnt the ropes', they also figuratively learnt the contours of appropriate emotional expression in their new community, becoming inured to the hardships of naval life, and gradually coming to resemble something more like the ideal naval man.

This paper examines the various processes by which men were moulded, guided, and encouraged to perform the navy's emotional style. Using the framework of 'affective pedagogy', it identifies four factors which were crucial to the formation of the seaman's emotional culture: officer training, behavioural modelling, religion, and peer-to-peer socialisation.

In identifying and describing these factors, this paper reveals the multi-modal and all-encompassing nature of affective pedagogy and speaks to the relationship between gender, emotion, and identity formation, showing how seamen themselves defined their emotional style through enactment, self-regulation and peer-to-peer enforcement. More broadly, this paper demonstrates how minds and feelings are shaped and changed by a dispersed, pervasive and micro-physical network of forces which can be both deliberately implemented from the top down and arise spontaneously as part of social interaction.

Napoleon's Australian Afterlives

A/Prof Ekaterina Heath

This paper examines the legacy of Napoleon Bonaparte in Australia from the nineteenth century to the present. When, why, and by whom he has been remembered offers a revealing lens onto how Australians have imagined authority and their nation. Napoleon's

Australian “afterlives” can be traced in the form of keepsakes, material culture, art, and the landscape.

Early Australian conservatives frequently admired Napoleon as a figure of imperial authority, mobilising his image to work through anxieties about civilisation at the edges of empire. Through their efforts, Napoleon’s memory materialised in Australia in unexpected ways: from the cultivation of so-called “Napoleonic willows” as living monuments, to the display of Napoleonic art in Australian galleries, where paintings of the emperor inspired young men to march off to the First World War.

This paper also explores alternative interpretations of Napoleon, including Dame Mabel Brookes’ family history of Napoleon as a ‘captive lion’ within the domestic sphere and David Roche’s queer engagement with Napoleon as an object of aesthetic fascination. In recent decades, Napoleon’s cultural presence in Australia has faded, raising questions about shifting historical sensibilities and the stories Australians choose not to tell.

‘Marrying Up with the Environmental Movement’: Unions, Uranium, and Labour-Environmentalism in the 1970s

Dr Nicholas (Nix) Herriot

This paper considers the mid-to-late 1970s as a significant period of Australian labour-environmentalism, when the anti-uranium movement created strong connections between unions and environmental activists. Focussing on the 1976 national rail strike against uranium and the 1977 ban imposed by Melbourne’s waterside workers on handling yellowcake, I situate these industrial actions within a broader convergence of the radical left, labour, and ecology movements. Drawing on archival records and oral history interviews, this research uncovers a grassroots environmentalism shaped by industrial militancy and traditions of social unionism. These case studies demonstrate how opposition to uranium mining bridged the divide often seen to separate workers and environmentalists. By revisiting this moment of unity, I highlight the conditions that made labour-environmental collaboration possible.

The Changing Landscape of Capital Punishment in Western Australia (1871-1900) – Past Amendments and Present Understanding

Michelle Hilbrands

During the nineteenth century, many European countries and their colonies grappled with the role of capital punishment, with many eventually ending the spectacle of public executions, requiring them to be privately conducted behind prison walls.

In Western Australia, the Capital Punishment Amendment Act (1871) legislated that all executions must be held privately. Debate simmered in the colony as to the purpose of capital punishment for Aboriginal prisoners, arguing that due to the moral insufficiency

and religious naivety of these 'uncivilised' peoples, the only method of effectively imparting the power of the law and its deterrent effect for capital offences was to terrorise them through the spectacle of public execution. In consequence, in December 1875, the WA government empowered the Governor to appoint public execution sites for Aboriginal prisoners sentenced to death. The Governors used this power in all but one of the later Aboriginal executions to ensure that an audience, usually Aboriginal prisoners, viewed the execution. This paper will argue that these state-orchestrated audiences for executions were a tool of colonisation that existed far longer in Western Australia than in other Australian states due to both geographic and political conditions that influenced the colony's racialized use of capital punishment.

Today, WA's dark tourism and education curriculum focus on the convict establishment Fremantle Prison, where no Aboriginal executions were held, silencing the experiences of Aboriginal people and capital punishment. Further work is required to include narratives beyond the convict establishment, broadening the information utilised for tourism, education, and public awareness.

'A Field for Anglo-Indian Capital': Australian Domesticity and the Marketing of Colonial Modernity in James Inglis's Story of the Tea Trade (1901)
Dr Chris Holdridge

In *The Story of the Tea* Trade, a promotional book coinciding with Australian federation in 1901, photographs and illustrations of South Asian tea pickers labelled 'primitive' sit alongside images of tea manufacture and railways described as 'modern'. Targeted at a settler family readership, the author and businessman James Inglis (1845-1908) combined education and humour to shape gendered ideals of consumerism as patriotism. He also used marketing and literature to shape young minds through selling capitalism as an imperial adventure of progress – transformed landscapes of jungle to plantation, and bush to town, and exoticized labour of South Asian tea-pickers contrasted to the industry of settler planters and merchants.

Historians note how British imperial tea marketing contrasted Indian teas as refined and modern, against Chinese tea as an adulterated and foreign danger. As the largest Australian tea importer, the James Inglis Co. galvanised this marketing discourse of capitalism and empire towards an Australian sphere of influence both literary and commercial. As a Scottish migrant to New Zealand, then India, and then Australia, he combined a gentlemanly career as planter, MP and businessman, with that of published writer (*Our Australian Cousins* (1880), *Tent Life in Tigerland* (1888), etc.) More famous for popularising 'Waltzing Matilda' from 1903 as a marketing jingle for Billy Tea, Inglis has received limited attention from historians. This paper looks earlier, to trouble teleologies

and romances of nation, empire and capitalism, and to understand why the domestic consumer as reader was central to James Inglis's vision of colonial modernity.

The Underworld: Living and Dying in London's Air Raid Shelters, 1917-1918
Dr Brett Holman

London's first significant experience of air raid shelters came not in the Blitz of 1940–1941 but during the Gotha raids of 1917-1918. Largely in response to civilian occupation of Underground stations in September and October 1917, authorities quickly moved to identify and designate hundreds of buildings, both publicly and privately owned, as public air raid shelters: by May 1918 there was space in these shelters to shelter 1.4 million of the roughly 7.5 million inhabitants of greater London, a substantial proportion. But while the shelter experience was widespread, it was not universal, being mediated by class, gender, and ethnicity. In this paper, I will draw on official, press and personal sources, to assess what we can say about who used the air raid shelters in 1917-1918, why they used them and what their experience was like. I will also ask what lessons were learned, or not learned, in the interwar period by governments, organisations and individuals looking to prepare for the next war.

Changing minds on the Mallee: Hazel Hogan and an ethic of care Emeritus
Prof Katie Holmes

This paper speaks to recent work in the environmental humanities on the ethic of care through a case study of Hazel Porter. Hazel moved to Kulwin in the Victorian Mallee when she married a soldier settler in 1934, and began writing pieces about the Mallee environment for the metropolitan newspapers. She wrote of its seasons, the abundant wildlife and the impact of settlement and clearing on the bush she came to love. She directly sought to challenge negative, city based ideas about the Mallee as a land beyond redemption, portraying a life of community and a landscape of quiet beauty.

By foregrounding care as a historical practice, this paper considers the different ways in which Hazel could act upon and articulate her care for the Mallee environment. It recognises that particular historical contexts, ecological conditions and farming practices, opened up different possibilities for women to express and act on sentiments of care.

This paper also draws on my own desire to find histories that speak for both the humans and non-humans, of caring for Country, of stewardship, cultivating, healing and restoring. Stories about the complex entanglements of the more-than-human world and stories infused with the values which must guide our relationship with it. What are the histories that 'move us forward'? Perhaps Hazel's is one such story.

Hot Singles in Your Area!: Forming Relationships Across the Online/IRL Divide in 90s and 00s Australia

Rebecca Houlihan

In the 1990s, for Australians experiencing online networks for the first time, the internet turned their computers into gateway to a new, virtual world. Cyberspace promised participation in a plethora of interest-based communities, unrestricted by the limitations of distance. Moreover, online communication seemed to leave the body behind and allow users to become new people. However, despite the excited, science fiction fuelled speculation of technology commentators, the physical experience of using the internet still looked like a person sitting solitary at their computer. Across the 1990s and 2000s in Australia there was intensive debate over how 'real' the virtual world was.

This paper uses oral history interviews and internet dating guidebooks to discuss how Australians formed communities and relationships in online spaces in the 1990s and 2000s. In many cases, not only was there 'crossover' between online and offline life, but also location and the physical world shaped their participation in cyberspace. Moreover, the anonymous intimacy created on the internet led users to claim it facilitated interactions which were more genuine. I argue that, instead of a single understanding, at times Australians played with the online/IRL 'gap' that rendered cyberspace less real and at other times reaffirmed the reality of their online world.

The influence of the Middle East and North Africa on early 20th-century Australian artists: Light and deserts, gold and blue

Prof Kate Hunter

I am not an art historian but I think I am changing my mind about the emergence of 'Australian' art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Popularly ascribed to the Heidelberg School and giants of Australian art such as Tom Roberts, and unfailingly connected to a rise in nationalist sentiment, what if I suggested that the marketplaces and deserts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) were a major, perhaps critical influence? Through my research on the ways the MENA region was made visible to Australians in the first half of the 20th century, art and colour have assumed surprising importance. MENA environments captivated Australian artists during peace- and war-time travel, the works of orientalist painters introduced new techniques, and archaeological discoveries created an intellectual climate that suffused desert landscapes with antiquity and decline. I am still wrestling with these threads and welcome a discussion about how ideas emerge and change, and whether I am seeing straight.

Beyond the Moment of Crisis: Tracing Veteran Suicide in the Archive, 1914-1945

Dr Meggie Hutchison

Deaths by suicide generate extensive archival material from coronial inquests, medical reports, and institutional correspondence. Yet these records are overwhelmingly legal and medical in nature. This paper explores the role that a historical approach can play in the study of veteran suicide in Australia, arguing that it can reframe debates about veteran wellbeing and care and provide insights into veterans' lives beyond the moment of crisis. Drawing on case studies of Australian returned men and women who died by suicide between 1914 and 1945, this paper interrogates historical understandings of veteran suicide. Moving beyond a medico-legal framework, it examines the broader political, social, and cultural forces that have shaped how veteran suicide has been constructed in post-war Australia and considers the implications of this history for contemporary debates.

Menang Noongar complainants in the Albany Plaint files
Dr Caroline Ingram

This paper is concerned with First Nations people who brought criminal actions in the courts of colonial Western Australia.

The historiography of First Nations defendants accused of crime sometimes assumes that these defendants did not have an adequate understanding of the court system in which they were tried.

However, by examining the Albany plaint files, an underutilised and often overlooked resource, which records court cases in the local Court of Albany, in the South West of Western Australia, between the years of 1834 and 1901 we can see that some Menang men and women were able to utilise the colonial court system for their own ends, prosecuting both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal defendants for crimes such as assault or non-payment of wages. This research indicates that some First Nations people had a degree of legal literacy not often acknowledged in current historiography.

"Our Land abounds in Nature's Gifts": Viewing Australia through the Migrant Workers of 1901 to 1914
Lucie James

This paper is a personal project inspired by previous study as well as papers from last year's conference. It examines the Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test and Certificates of Domicile in addition to other relevant paperwork in the National Archives of Australia in order to de-simplify Australia's migrant history immediately following the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. Looking at the documents through both a qualitative and quantitative lens allows for a re-imagining of the past in which the generic summaries on the topic that currently available are shown to lack the complexity that was the reality of the time. Assumptions about family dynamics and

formalities are questioned whilst highlighting the beliefs that allowed for non-European migrants to work in Australia in the years following 1901 and preluding the beginning of World War One.

Caring for the Soul: A Social History of Spiritual Care in Australia from 1850
Prof Timothy Jones

'No religion' is the fastest growing 'religious' demographic in Australia: burgeoning from 6.7% in 1971 to 38.9% in 2021. It is also the least understood. Prevailing histories equate secularisation with spiritual disenchantment, loss of faith, and atheism. Yet we now know that people who cease, or have never held, religious affiliation frequently still see themselves as spiritual beings and seek spiritual care (Jones & Rhook, 2025; Singleton et al, 2021). However, we know almost nothing about practices of nonreligious spiritual health care in Australia and how they have changed over time because historians of religion and secularisation have ignored nonreligious spiritual experience (Alexander, 2021; Jones, 2021). These knowledge deficits about Australia's largest 'religious' demographic negatively impact policy development and the safeguarding of spiritual health care services. This paper responds to our significant knowledge gap in the spirituality and self-care practices of Australians, by outlining the first social history of spiritual care in both religious and nonreligious settings from the Gold Rush to the present.

Diasporic Violence and Fractured Faiths: Women and the Macedonian Question in Multicultural Australia
A/Prof Jennifer Jones

During the late-twentieth century, the so-called Macedonian Question – an intense geopolitical dispute over the Macedonian region in the Balkans – became an identifiable transnational issue in Australia. In 1994, after years of sustained debate and collective action, tensions between diasporic Greeks and Macedonians spilled onto Australian streets. Shortly following the Australian Government's official recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), a spate of reciprocal violence unfolded. Greek and Macedonian churches, businesses and private properties were targeted through arson, firebombing and vandalism.

This paper examines the gendered impact of diasporic violence against Greek and Macedonian Orthodox churches in Australia, an aspect that has hitherto received sparse scholarly attention. The destruction and desecration of churches and ritual spaces are approached not only as ethnonationalist political acts, but as direct assaults on Greek and Macedonian women's cultural agency and power. By privileging women's cultural labour, this paper draws on women's first-hand accounts and media reportage to explore their experiences of and responses to the violence of 1994. In doing so, this paper

highlights how violence linked to the Macedonian Question in Australia was mediated and contested through gendered forms of cultural authority.

World War Two Love Letters and the Hebrew term MIZPAH
Dominique Jones

Three days after their most recent separation, on 7 March 1946, nineteen-year-old Lola Burkitt wrote to her 'very own darling' soldier Brian Kerr and closed her missal using the Hebrew word 'MIZPAH'. In love with a soldier who she met on the steps of the Albury Methodist church, Lola Burkitt experienced conflict between her evangelical religious ideals and her lived experience. Albury-Wodonga's strategic location on the border of NSW and Victoria made it an important inland 'garrison town' during the Second World War. Here local churches provided wholesome entertainment for Army personnel, exposing rural residents like Lola to cosmopolitan wider worlds. By examining an epistolary archive created after Kerr's transfer to another military base, I consider how this couple used religious ideas to organise and interpret their live contact, renegotiating power and interpersonal expectations in a dating culture that championed the thrill of romance and immediate sexual connection. In the Hebrew Old Testament, 'Mizpah' refers an agreement between two people, with God as their witness. Part of a broader 20th C wartime tradition among couples separated by distance, Mizpah appeared on jewellery, handkerchiefs, postcards, and in newspaper articles and letters. This paper considers how this written manifestation of religious ideas enabled Lola and Brian to manage physical separation punctuated by emotionally charged weekend visits and phone calls. In this epistolary relationship, I argue, the term functioned as a 'watchtower' over the couple's bond, sustaining a conflicted relationship as it moved towards public commitment.

Quiet Protest by the New South Wales Teachers Federation during the Vietnam War
Dr Effie Karageorgos

The role of university staff and students in combating the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s is frequently paid more attention than the torrent of protest surrounding Australian schools during the conflict. Like their contemporaries today, teachers and school students were at the forefront of anti-war and anti-conscription activism and were dedicated advocates within these movements. This paper focuses on quieter activism by teachers in New South Wales during the Vietnam War, much of which was instigated by the NSW Teachers Federation. Their less public actions, including advocacy, letter-writing and fundraising during the arrest, imprisonment and court cases of conscientious objector Bill White, as well as their role in protecting the students' rights during the Moratorium badge scandal at Ibrox Park High School represent days, weeks, months and years of dedicated quieter activism. Teachers Federation members were also determined

to use their pedagogical skills to educate members of the public, aiming to change the minds of those who supported Australian involvement in Vietnam, through the War and Education Research Group. These and other actions by teachers who opposed the war emphasise the power of quiet protest, which has frequently been overlooked in histories of activism despite its ability to cause dramatic and very public responses by political authorities. This paper speaks to the vital role of quiet activism within social movements, not only during the Vietnam War years, but in the present, where across the country, ordinary Australians are increasingly integrating activism into their own daily lives.

Changing Minds: Classical Historiographical Methodology in the Re-Appraisal of Indigenous Histories

Roger Karge

A new awakening in "truth-telling" has resulted in much new scholarship in Australian historiography. In particular, two areas of study are coming under greater scrutiny for their potential effects on Australia's colonial history - Aboriginal massacres and the effects of international slavery.

This paper will explore the conference's theme, "Changing Minds", by applying classical, historiographical techniques to truth-telling in two colonial events – one a massacre and one concerning the life of a freed slave. Both events would go on to influence Australia's Indigenous history.

The first occurred in Hobart in 1830. An ex-convict named Edward White testified before the Aborigines Committee that he had been an eye-witness to a terrible massacre of Aboriginal people, which had occurred 26 years earlier at Risdon Cove. His account would contribute to the changing of minds in the way history would record the very first major clash between the Tasmanian Aborigines and the British. But who was this Edward White and were his claims true? This paper will discuss the methodology involved in the re-analysis of the primary records surrounding this event and conclude that historians need to be much more circumspect in believing White's testimony.

The second event had its genesis the following year, 1831, with the illegitimate birth of a slave, Richard Rose, on a sugar plantation in the West Indies. His father had been a white Scottish planter and his mother one of the plantation's black slaves. A 'sliding door' moment occurred in 1839 when an unexpected turn of events set Rose on a path for a new life on the Gympie goldfields in Australia. New archival evidence will be presented to show that black slaves such as Rose may well have had a much greater impact on modern Aboriginal historiography than previously thought.

Politico-strategic relationship between Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom during the Second World War

Harrison Kennedy

The politico-strategic relationship between Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK) during the Second World War has been the subject of great historical and political interest. However, less attention has been paid to the nature and evolution of this relationship. This paper is based on PhD research that seeks to address this gap by undertaking a comparative analysis of the politico-strategic relationship between the two Dominions and the UK between 1939 to 1943. The thesis examines how these relationships formed and evolved over the course of the Second World War, and how effective they were, particularly in circumstances where Dominion relations with the UK were greatly tested by the competing agendas of Allied strategy and decision-making. In doing so, it examines imperial strategy in abstract and in application. This paper will highlight the approach taken, early themes and ideas, and where the project is anticipated to lead, including challenges identified, allowing for peer feedback on the thesis project.

Interrogating and Accounting Japanese Australian Internment

Dr Tianna Killoran

In 1941, 524 Japanese Merchant Seamen — along with almost all resident Japanese Australians at that time — were interned as civilians in Australia. In 1943, these 524 men were subsequently reclassified as Prisoners of War Japanese Merchant Seamen (PWJM). Historian Rowena Ward has documented the significant role of these men in the negotiation (but ultimate failure) of the second Anglo-Japanese Civilian Exchange, while Yuriko Nagata has noted the difficulties that the men faced as POWs, relative to civilian internment. In the spirit of 'changing minds' and approaching the history of these individuals from the perspective of migration and mobility, rather than incarceration and wartime policy, this paper seeks to complicate the boundaries that separate Japanese prisoners of war and internees in Australia's wartime histories. This paper will draw upon government and newspaper records to explore the history of migration and mobility among this group in Australia, as well as consider the consequences of the PWJM reclassification, including loss of rights and property. In doing so, this research will expand on existing understandings of the Japanese Australian experience of migration and the consequences of internment in twentieth century Australia.

Byte at the Museum: teaching digital literacy and ancient history

Dr Alina Kozlovski

In 2024 I taught HINQ303/503: Making Museums Digital for the first time at the University of New England. This unit, which is now an option in our Ancient History major, students

explore the different ways that museums have interacted with the digital sphere and we look at broader themes such as the idea of digital space as public space, digitisation, and born digital materials, and their main assessment is to curate their own online exhibition. In addition to this, I ran a two-day optional intensive school in Sydney where we visited museums and met some of their staff, and, as a group, curated a small exhibition in a day at the UNE Sydney campus using 3D printed copies of ancient artefacts from the UNE Museum of Antiquities. Students collaboratively used the Pedestal3D platform to interact with digital models of the objects, experimented with the 3D prints, conducted research, came up with a theme and design, and curated the final display. In this talk I detail the different ways in which I have included ancient Mediterranean content in this unit to make it relevant to ancient historians and explore how the activities promoted peer-to-peer learning, interdisciplinary thinking, and digital literacy.

Changing Perspectives on Natural Hazards
Lena Krause

Natural hazards such as earthquakes, cyclones, and storm surges have profoundly influenced the long-term co-evolution of Australia's natural environment and human communities. These hazards not only shaped physical landscapes but also affected patterns of settlement, economic activities, and social responses to environmental risk.

Over the last century, the understanding and mitigating of natural hazard risks in Australia changed substantially. Historical records are essential for long-term hazard assessment but have been limited by inconsistent methodologies and restricted access, incomplete and biased historical data, often excluding First Nations knowledge.

Drawing on case studies from different regions across Australia, this paper examines how perceptions of natural hazards, including earthquakes, cyclones, and storm surges, changed over the course of the twentieth century. In addition to this, the paper reflects on methodological approaches for translating qualitative evidence into quantitative data and discusses the value of interdisciplinary perspectives for the study of natural hazards.

The 2024 cancelling of Surveyor General Edward Frome
Dr Skye Krichauff

In May 2024, South Australian Member of Parliament Reggie Martin called for the renaming of the electoral district of Frome, named after the Colonial Surveyor General Edward Frome. Martin drew attention to Frome's involvement in acts of retribution in the wake of the Maria massacre – the largest killing of white people by Aboriginal people in Australia's history. I was employed by the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission to compile a 'short history report' on Frome's actions. This paper argues for the need to recognise the nuances and messiness of both historical events and the ways they are

remembered, and for the need to expand our understanding of colonial violence. Throughout his South Australian career (1839 to 1849) Frome was not connected with the murder of Aboriginal people, and twenty-first century accusations to the contrary are historically incorrect. I nevertheless changed my mind regarding the proposed renaming of the electorate of Frome.

Changing attitudes to anatomical dissection in Australia 1965-2000
Helen Laffin

Attitudes to anatomical dissection are complex. This presentation examines the change in attitudes within Australian society and consequently within medical schools. Dissection has been central/integral to medical education since the14th century. This changed in the latter part of the 20th century. The first medical school in Australia to offer a curriculum without compulsory anatomical dissection was the University of Newcastle in 1978. Since then, eight of the 11 Australian medical schools have opted to dispense with compulsory anatomical dissection.

Invented Histories: Myth Making, Tradition and Australian History
Dr Emily Lanman

Australian national history is frequently framed as beginning in 1788, with the arrival of the First Fleet, rather than at the federation of the six self-governing Australian colonies. This chronological anchoring has produced a dominant founding mythology that privileges the colonial experiences of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, while compressing, marginalising, or reinterpreting the histories of other colonies to fit an 'eastern-centric' narrative of national development. Such framing has become so normalised within Australian historiography that it is rarely interrogated as a historiographical choice. This paper argues that the privileging of 1788 as a significant foundational moment has narrowed understandings of Australia's past and constrained the ways colonial history, and subsequently the histories of states and territories are written and interpreted. Colonies beyond the eastern geography are frequently rendered peripheral within national narratives, despite their distinct political cultures, economic trajectories, and relationships to the empire. The result is a fragmented national history that obscures the uneven, contested and regionally specific processes through which Australia was founded. These historiographical choices have consequences beyond academic debates. Simplified national narratives circulate widely and shape popular understandings of the past at a time when historical expertise, and the humanities more broadly, face substantial institutional and political pressure. By examining the persistence of foundational myths within Australian historical writing, this paper calls for a more plural and decentralised approach to the nation's history.

"And, then, everything became so difficult". Teaching Ancient History in the Age of AI

Prof Ray Laurence

This paper will make an argument (maybe not popular) that we teach in the age of AI, which has made "everything more difficult" – but just maybe has made teaching so much more exciting. TEQSA in 2025 anticipated a fundamental rethink of assessment for the age of AI that both assured learning, but maintained inclusion. Thus, the simplistic conversion of a 40% assessment would impede the learning of a significant cohort of students, whom universities have sought to include. There is no easy fix, even if there is a rush from universities to become TEQSA compliant. More thought is needed of how to do this, without blowing out workload figures of staff (whose numbers have been cut). "It is all so difficult", but, just maybe, we have an opportunity to reduce barriers for diverse learners, whilst assuring learning. But, "oh no, do I know what learning is in the age of AI?". Questions keep appearing in the age of AI and by the time of the AHA conference, I hope to have some more answers than questions…on fulfilling the TEQSA requirements of inclusion, assurance of learning and the use of AI in teaching first year Ancient History!

Migration history and migration communities: contested stories

Dr Roland Leikauf

It is often overlooked that the mere act of collecting sources related to migration history by historians and institutions can substantially change their value for specific communities. Recording and cataloguing content in a museum or archive brings legitimacy to those who felt that their experiences of migration were unheard or unwanted. Adding a story to an official repository can be a currency in itself for migrants that continue to search for a wider audience. However, migrant communities often retain a strong claim of ownership over the interpretation of their stories. "Giving them away" to professionals makes them open to scrutiny on levels that the community members might not expect.

This presentation uses a series of projects in cooperation with the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia to show how these communities struggle to stay in control of their narratives. These refugees still base many assessments of Australian migration history on axioms (like a radical anti-communism) that they have defined when they first arrived in Australia. Institutions like museums that have to practice truthtelling can be caught between the necessities of historical accuracy, political considerations and the desperate desire of community groups to stay in control over their own story.

Working to change minds in this context takes on another layer of meaning: collecting stories is not only about using them to expand historical science, but also about teaching

the communities that provide them about the complexity of possible interpretations that will follow if they have them recorded.

His story, her story, our story: whose story are we really teaching? A critical analysis of the inclusion of women in the NSW 7-10 history curriculum over time
Kate Littlejohn

The historical narratives within mandated school history curricula perpetuate gendered discourses about our past. To what extent should historians and history teachers critically interrogate the inherent perspectives and positioning of women within school history? How do the history teachers who are responsible for enacting the syllabus perceive the historical narratives embedded within the documents they are required to teach? Through a critical policy historiographical analysis of NSW 7-10 syllabus documents from 1929 to now, this PhD research aims to understand specifically the ways that women have been included and represented in school history and how much this has changed alongside the growing focus on women's experiences in the wider discipline. Interviews with current teachers and curriculum developers will form case studies relating to the more recent syllabuses and their reception and perception by the professionals entrusted with their enactment in the classroom. Emergent research findings suggest that there is an element of 'absent curriculum' at every level of curriculum design and implementation, and whilst there has been quantifiable change in the diversity of focus in the history curriculum, attempts to move past the 'pale, male and stale' and 'important man' historical narratives have proven difficult to accomplish in a meaningful way.

In the mind of Donald Forbes: accessing the archival material of a man who applied to mine Ellison Reef
Dr Rohan Lloyd

Histories of the Save the Reef campaign exist because of the rich archival and published material left by activists, scientists, and government agencies. One figure who played a prominent role in this event and is among those who are less well represented in these histories is Donald Forbes: the man who applied to mine Ellison Reef for the purpose of manufacturing fertiliser for North Queensland cane fields in 1967. In 2017, however, Forbes' papers were submitted to the State Library of Queensland. Within this material are the notes, correspondence, and research of an important actor within this portentous moment of Great Barrier Reef history. Forbes seemed to be aware of the significance of the moment too. His more personal material can be read alongside, and given context by, his collection of other relevant material—newspaper articles, reports, and submissions to the Innisfail Mining Warden. Rather than radically changing understandings of the Ellison Reef campaign, Forbes' papers reinforce the notion that those who desired to drill

or mine the Great Barrier Reef were small in number. The papers do reveal, however, while these pro-miners were isolated both geographically and politically, they were connected and felt supported by their own networks. This paper presents how Forbes came to apply to mine Ellison Reef, his response to the objection, and then how he continued to seek opportunities to establish mining as a legitimate economic pursuit within a Great Barrier Reef Park.

Imperfect Literacies and Ordinary Writings in the 19th century: When Australia Learned to Write
Prof Martyn Lyons

The sources on early Australian literacy have many deficiencies, and a few historians (like Nicholas) have exaggerated the level of early Australian reading and writing competence. At the beginning of the 19th century, probably between 50-60% of the white population could read and write at a rudimentary level. But by the end of the century, Australia had achieved an outstanding level of epistolary competence. Australian colonies led the world in the volume of correspondence they produced and received per capita. Australia had learned to write, and it was developing expertise in a new kind of literacy – epistolary literacy.

Drawing on autobiographical sources, this paper briefly indicates how ordinary writers in the bush faced up to material shortages. It points to the prevalence of imperfect literacies and the need for delegated writing. It goes on to underline the importance and profusion of ordinary writings, especially letter-writing. By ‘ordinary writings’, historians of scribal culture mean non-literary writings in various genres, generally produced by non-elites and embedded in the practices of everyday life. I depart here from the conventional focus on reading literacy, to stress Australia’s status as a writing society. At the same time I embrace the cultural practices of the uneducated and semi-literate who formed the majority in the first decades of colonial Australia.

Quiet violence' in the nineteenth-century garrison world
Prof Charlotte Macdonald

British redcoat soldiers were stationed across the globe through much of the nineteenth century, including in the Australian and New Zealand colonies. They were conspicuous and familiar sights in emergent colonial towns, emblems and instruments of British authority. Engaged in instances of frontier violence (Australia) and wars (New Zealand) episodically, much of their time was occupied in what I have argued was a kind of 'quiet violence' - presenting a constant reminder of potential coercion and the vast resources of British imperial power that could quickly supplement those present. They exercised force through a 'changing of minds' as well as directly with bayonet and rifle. The paper explores this dynamic in the context of a wider 'garrison world' of the mid-nineteenth

century, including its abrupt ending in the settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand in 1870.

The paper draws on, but also extends work in my recently published book, *Garrison World. Redcoat Soldiers in New Zealand and across the British Empire* (BWB, 2025), winner of the Ernest Scott Prize, 2026. https://www.bwb.co.nz/books/garrison-world.

Differing Perspectives: The Death of the Red Baron and the British, Australian and Canadian Official Histories
Dr Ross Mahoney

On 21 April 1918, Rittmeister Manfred von Richtofen, the most successful fighter pilot of the First World War, was shot down. From the time he was shot down, controversy has existed over who downed the famous fighter pilot. Essentially, the claims fall into two camps. The first is that he was downed by Captain Arthur Brown, a Canadian pilot serving with No. 209 Squadron Royal Air Force. Secondly, it is claimed that ground fire by either the Australian 24th Machine Gun Company or the Australian 53rd Field Artillery Battery shot him down. This paper does not intend to assess the claims of who shot down Richthofen. Instead, this paper will contrast the approaches taken to Richthofen's death in British, Australian, and Canadian official histories, starting with F.M. Cutlack's account of the Australian Flying Corps (1923) and concluding with S.F. Wise's official history of Canadian airmen in Britain's air services (1980). In doing so, it will assess the role that factors such as service and national identity played in the writing of official history.

Preventative Activism: the history of the Medical Association for Prevention of War
Abbey Malone

Can anti-nuclear protest be framed as an outworking of professional practice? This paper will analyse the ways in which the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW) has worked to "change minds" about nuclear war.

The MAPW was founded in 1981 and by 1986 – the UN International Year of Peace – it had won the Australian Peace Award. Via the MAPW, Australian doctors sought to leverage their professional expertise and trusted social standing to advocate for the medical implications of nuclear war. In addition to activism at home, some MAPW members became global actors for the nuclear disarmament movement through professional networks and collaboration with organisations such as International Physicians for Prevention of War (IPPNW) and the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Based on MAPW's archival material and oral history interviews, this paper examines the history of the MAPW as a case study of preventative public health activism.

The World in Their Hand: Teaching Object-Based Skills through Hands-On Cataloguing Projects

Dr Charlotte Mann

Students are often keen to work with ancient objects in research, curatorial or educational contexts. However, many lack the practical skills required to identify, document and analyse unfamiliar objects: routine tasks in research and collections-based work. Student-led research projects using ancient objects or replicas can help to bridge this gap.

This paper discusses student-led numismatic cataloguing projects at the Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies at Macquarie University (2024, 2025) and the RD Milns Antiquities Museum at the University of Queensland (2026). In each case, students worked with a collection of approximately 250 bronze Roman coins dating from the first to fourth centuries CE in varying stages of wear, all of which were unidentified. Students were required to identify each 'mystery' coin through close observation and to produce full catalogue entries based on their own analysis and key reference works. The later stages of the project introduced students to the broader challenges of collections work, including exhibition design and outreach.

This paper reflects on the design and delivery of these projects, outlining a practical framework for structuring similar object-based learning activities. As access to large archaeological collections is often limited in Australian schools and universities, it also explores how this model can be adapted to smaller teaching collections, replicas and or different object types.

Australia, the Empire, and the fall of France

Aaron Marston-Pattison

From May to July 1940, German armies rapidly swept across and subjugated western Europe. By September, the Luftwaffe was raining fire upon British urban centres, and it seemed as though the invasion of Britain itself could arrive at any moment.

Prior to these events, many Australians remained largely disconnected from developments in Europe. The war seemed distant, its purposes unclear, its demands on life an unwelcome intrusion. But swift German victories in Europe, and the subsequent threat posed to the British Isles, effected a revolution of popular opinion. Indifference vanished, distance seemed largely irrelevant, and Australians became increasingly prepared to give their time, money, efforts, and even lives for the cause.

The defeat of Britain, many suddenly realised, could imperil their civil liberties, industrial rights, Christian civilisation as they understood it, and Australia's own security. As a result, Imperial fervour manifested itself on an unprecedented scale. Groups who had

been sceptical of the Empire and its war now found themselves singing Imperial songs, proclaiming their loyalty to the Mother Country, and crowding churches to pray for Britain's survival.

This paper aims to follow the course of such developments and to demonstrate how and why the fall of Europe and the danger posed to Britain awoke so many formerly sceptical Australians to the war's importance.

Resisting the gender lens in times of change: women veterans' memories of misogyny, violence, and discrimination in Western militaries in the War on Terror
Dr Mia Martin Hobbs

In the 21st century, Western militaries attempted to recruit more women by promoting the military as an empowering career. Yet these militaries also faced widespread reports of misogyny, sexual violence, and discrimination toward women. Drawing on oral history interviews with women veterans from the US, UK, and Australian militaries who served in the War on Terror, this paper explores how women veterans have been resistence to change their narrative of their past to 'fit' an increasingly prominent gendered lens of military service.

Across militaries and interview collections, most women claimed that misogyny in the military was a relic of the past, and made efforts to separate themselves from a gendered identity by expressing judgements about other women. Yet there were instances where individual expressions of frustration and resentment with military misogyny broke through in the interviews. Similarly, many rejected that gender-based violence was a widespread issue in the military and deployed victim-blaming to make sense of incidents in their community. Yet they also spoke of individual experiences of harassment, assault, and rape culture. Finally, while many women praised the flexibility offered by the military to couples and parents, there was also a difficulty in being recognised as both wife - or widow - and soldier, and many women revealed that their military careers effectively ended upon becoming mothers. This paper reveals how and why women veterans resisted what they saw as stereotypes about gender and the military, even when their experiences aligned with those stories.

What can the study of 'military social history' offer Army in improving culture and capability?
Paul McAlonan

Traditionally historical studies of the Australian Army have had a very narrow focus on the conduct of campaigns, battles and operations; studies on senior officers; strategy and command; with a smattering of research on specialist capabilities, such as medical and legal. Anything outside of this scope, even if primarily on the experience of Army service

or the impact Army has on society or culture, is viewed within Army as 'social history', or at best 'military social history' and it is not considered of value for professional military education or for building organisational or warfighting capability.

However, it is clear that this 'social history' does have lessons for Army in how it operates and develops capability. There have been many examples of research presented at recent AHA conferences that fall within this 'military social history' category that if embraced by Army would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the organisations culture and the impacts on its people. There is obviously opportunities to learn from the study of 'military social history' that enhances Army's understanding of how it can improve, both culturally and organisationally.

This paper will investigate Army's historical approach to learning from its past and potential strategies to change minds so that the inclusion of the study of 'military social history' builds greater professionalism and capability within Army.

Irish Nationalism and Settler Colonialism, 1848–1923: An Australian Case Study
Dr Scott McCarthy

The moral disjunction between successive movements for Irish sovereignty and the construction of settler indigeneity throughout the British Empire has received little attention, even as both processes developed along interdependent lines. The Australian colonies functioned as sites on which radical and constitutional political traditions were negotiated by Irish settlers and circulated back to the homeland(s). However, that negotiation was enacted in the foreground of Indigenous dispossession and genocide both within Australia and throughout the broader Anglosphere. Despite such positionalities, the global history of Irish settlement is framed typically through the mediums of subversion, sub-culture, and working-class politics. Such historiographical emphases overlook the integration of Irish settlers – Catholic and Protestant – within a colonial hierarchy of power conditioned by whiteness. The centrality of migration to narratives of nationhood and citizenship in contemporary Australia and Ireland makes clear how necessary it is to grasp this historical dynamic. This paper argues that the enactment of political cultures among Irish settlers from the mid-nineteenth century confirmed rather than challenged settler claims to indigeneity. In so doing, the paper sketches the implications of Irish nationalism as a global, cross-cultural system that actively conformed to the settler imaginary of white sovereignty.

Sound as a portal: seismic and the right to know
Rebecca McCauley

In the mid 1990s off the coast of north-west Western Australia marine biologist Robert McCauley took shelter from bad weather onboard a seismic vessel, at the invitation of

crew. At the time Robert was studying the effect of seismic blasting on humpback whales, who migrate along the coastline through seabeds rich in oil and gas. That evening he witnessed a strange phenomenon — bioluminescent shimmers pulsing in time to the sound of these blasts, spreading from the sound source at the back of the vessel across great distances of the ocean's surface. Witness to these pulsing waves of light it occurred to him that sound might elicit a physical reaction in large numbers of marine organisms.

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented resource extraction, this paper will look at evolving understandings and perceptions of the effects of marine seismic technology. Seismic surveys refer to a geophysical technique that uses sound vibrations to allow geologists to 'see through' the water column; forming a picture of the varied layers underneath the seabed. Developed in the 1950s, originally using dynamite, marine seismic technology has been used in Australian waters for over sixty years, but its effects have only begun to be understood in recent decades. Because of the challenging and complex nature of marine sound there are still large gaps in understanding its life-altering effects, yet, in considering how seismic is used in processes of extraction, important questions arise around how we choose to think about, or ignore, sentience within ocean spaces.

Beyond Nationalism: Rethinking Contemporary Engagements with the Kokoda Track

Alexandra McCosker

This paper argues for a rethinking of how modern historians and commentators interpret contemporary engagements with the Kokoda Track, challenging the tendency to read modern trekking primarily as an expression of resurgent or uncritical Australian nationalism. While nationalist narratives may shape official commemorations, institutional memory and popular representations of Kokoda (as explored in influential scholarship on Australian war memory and myth-making) they do not fully account for the motivations, experiences, and meanings articulated by many contemporary trekkers.

Drawing on close readings of trek narratives, interviews, and commemorative practices, this paper suggests that for some trekkers, the Kokoda Track functions as a site of pilgrimage rather than patriotic affirmation. Trekkers frequently describe their journeys in terms of obligation, humility, transformation, and encounter with an unfamiliar landscape, as well as expressions of grief and sadness over the loss of life in this theatre of war; such accounts do not always square with triumphant national stories.

This paper argues for a more capacious understanding of how a historical site, like the Kokoda Track, has been engaged with in the recent past and present. In doing so, it invites reflection on the limits of nationalist explanation and on how historians might better

account for affective and embodied relationships to the past that resist easy categorisation.

What Has Not Changed? Prison Museums, the Carceral Archipelago, and Colonial Continuities

Hannah McCullough

Prison museums have significant potential to challenge dominant carceral ideologies, yet changing minds about incarceration and marginalisation remains profoundly difficult when punitive attitudes are deeply entrenched. These institutions reproduce state-endorsed narratives, shaping perceptions of historical and contemporary incarceration.

This paper situates prison museums within the "carceral archipelago," extending analysis beyond dark heritage and prison tourism scholarship to encompass forced migration and colonial dispossession. Through comparative analysis of Britain and Australia, I examine how colonial logics—manifest in Brexit's ""Empire 2.0"" rhetoric, Britain's Bibby Stockholm detention barge, Australia's offshore processing, and disproportionate Indigenous incarceration—continue shaping socio-political climates.

Drawing on my research into nineteenth-century juvenile delinquency, I identify a disconnect between crime-and-punishment histories and colonial legacies. Historians discuss child transportation and emigration, yet rarely situate these within critical examinations of how colonial legacies shape contemporary incarceration. Prison museums must bridge this gap, challenging visitors to think critically about the past and the present.

Prison museums constitute part of the carceral archipelago not only as former prisons but as museums actively perpetuating colonial logics of separation, othering, and dehumanisation. Changing minds requires acknowledging disciplinary complicity and rethinking interpretive authority and epistemological foundations. Perhaps the most pertinent question is not what can change, but what has not changed. Museums and historians cannot engage only with histories of incarceration and colonialism because those histories are ongoing, continually shaping contemporary perceptions and practices. As decolonial theorist Mignolo wrote, "Coloniality is not over; it is all over.

The rights to play: situating sport within queer activist histories

A/Prof Fiona McLachlan

The complex and power-riddled struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights in Australia has been carefully examined and documented. Queer history projects have explored LGBTIQ+ rights to work, serve, live, learn and die with dignity. Sport is a central part of Australian life and has been determined a ‘cultural right’ by the UN, however, the struggle to play has not been incorporated into the broader history of LGBTIQ+ rights in Australia. While a handful

of sport historians have uncovered stories of LGBTIQ+ participation in sport and have made relevant connections to harmful and unsafe sporting environments, the political campaigning, and grassroots actions of LGBTIQ+ sport activists have been overlooked. This paper will provide a critical reading of both queer activist history and sport history to outline the historiographical reasons and implications of the omission of LGBTIQ+ sports activism. Through this critical reading, I argue that positioning sport, and the rights to play, as an important aspect of LGBTIQ+ history opens new lines of inquiry and could generate significant insights about the gendered and racialised dimensions of queer politics, and the unsettled fight for LGBTIQ+ justice in Australia.

Rethinking Shell Shock: Australian Army nurses and the trauma of the Western Front

Dr Fiona McLeod

Australian Army nurses who served on the Western Front during the First World War were assailed by the sights, sounds and smells of industrialised warfare, almost insurmountable work and endless death. Though these women are present in Australian war vignettes, the analysis and understanding of the First World War rarely foregrounds their traumatic experiences in their own right. Men's shell shock is highly visible in medical records, historical analysis and fiction—women's shell shock is hidden. In part this is because of archival destruction and the relatively small numbers of women involved. However, their experience is also invisible because of their gender. According to medical military practice, men got shell shock and women just fell apart, exactly as women were expected to do in times of stress and strain. This paper draws on nurses' own accounts to elucidate how they claimed the traumatic experience of war for themselves, finding their own language to describe their response to the horrors of the Western Front. It reveals they refused to be bound by traditional categories of psychological distress, as indeed they were not bound by traditional gender roles that would have kept them behind the lines. Rather than accept feminine weakness and maladies as a way of understanding their traumatic breakdown, they claimed the male category of shell shock as a condition open to women. Examining this evidence sheds much needed light on how nurses—and other non-combatants—are casualties of war, like the soldiers they cared for.

Anxious to be Seen and to Belong: Queensland's Centenary and the visit of Princess of Alexandra of Kent

Dr Lyndon Megarrity

This paper discusses Queensland's political, social and cultural engagement with royalty and the British Commonwealth during the Menzies era. It focuses specifically on the tour of Princess Alexandra of Kent, whose visit to Queensland during 1959 was considered by

officials to be the highlight of the state's centenary celebrations. It will be argued that the social and ceremonial events of Princess Alexandra's visit were designed to symbolise the state's significance by associating itself and its political, economic and social values with the prestige of the British Commonwealth, as represented by the royal family. Queensland's attachment to royalty and the notion of a British Commonwealth will also be explored in the context of the evolving nature of Australia's relationship with Britain and how that was reflected in the visits to Queensland by royal representatives during the post-war era.

Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of Political Violence on the Revolutionary Left in Western Europe in the 1970s

Dr Ben Mercer

Research on political violence and terrorism in the late 1960 and early 1970s in Western Europe has often asked where the line between protest and terror was crossed, seeking to identify a moment at which a 'good' protest turned into 'bad' violence. This paper asks the question of where the line between violence and terror was drawn by the groups themselves. In a context where revolutionary violence was given wide legitimacy, how did individuals and groups on the far Left involved in political violence and terrorism distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate violence, and how did those who did not follow the minority choice of terrorism understand their rejection of terrorist violence?

Did Joseph Banks change his mind? What Banks said, Hawkesworth wrote and the voyage of the Endeavour in New Holland, 1770-1786

Dr David Meredith

There were significant discrepancies between testimony given by Joseph Banks to two Commons select committees in 1779 and 1785 and what he wrote about New Holland in his Endeavour journal. The committees were inquiring into where British felons could be sent if British colonies in North America were no longer available. Comparisons between Banks's verbal testimony and his journal entries were made more difficult by the disappearance from public view of his journal and that of James Cook's for over 120 years, a complete edition of Banks's delayed until 1962. Although these two journals were not published for such a lengthy period, the resultant void was filled by an account of the Endeavour, using Banks's and Cook's journals as sources, published in 1773 by John Hawkesworth. A well-known British essayist and editor, Hawkesworth had never been to sea, let alone to New Holland. His popular three-volume Account, however, failed to reveal observations and insights of Joseph Banks because Hawkesworth blended the two journals together and added his own material, so that it was impossible to tell who had written what – Banks, Cook, or Hawkesworth. Moreover, Banks himself was completely silenced by Hawkesworth choosing to write his narrative in Cook's voice alone. This study

is an attempt to identify the discrepancies, especially those focusing on First Nations people, and ask, in promoting "Banksia", as Linnaeus thought New South Wales should be called, did Banks change his mind, suffer a lapse of memory or deliberately mislead two parliamentary select committees?

Changing Minds, Holding Histories: Writing Jewish Survival and Palestinian Dispossession Together
Dr Jane Messer

How might an historian or life-writer hold together these intertwined histories: past Jewish vulnerability and survival in the face of fascism, and Palestinian dispossession and statelessness in the wake of Israel's partition and war. Rather than privileging one history or narrative over the other, I explore the tensions and asymmetries between them, and the moral complexity of inhabiting both as a German Jewish descendant whose grandparents lived in British Mandate Palestine. The paper draws upon my book, *Raven Mother: War, Family and Inheritance*, a memoir, published in March 2026, that is, during the continued war in Gaza, and amidst conflict between and within Australian Jewish and Palestinian communities. *Raven Mother* invites reflection on how we might ethically narrate and communicate histories in which their own forebears were at once victims of one catastrophe and beneficiaries of another; and communicate in ways that respect others' inherited and current traumas.

On the "nightside" of the Self and the World: Reflections on Writing a Speculative Biography of the Anglican Educator and Activist C.F. Andrews (1871-1940)
Prof Bernardo Michael

All humans possess, at best, a modest knowledge of themselves and of the worlds they strive to live in. This "nightside" of unknowing creates an enduring set of shadows to work through, both historically and historiographically. This presentation considers the value of this insight in writing what might be tentatively called "speculative" biographies. It will use historical evidence to explore this theme in the life of the Anglican educator and activist Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940). An ardent supporter of Indian nationalism, and a close confidant of the poet Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas D. Gandhi, Andrews remained an exemplary instance of transnational activism and intercultural friendships. This paper will explore how his engagement with his "nightside" opened new possibilities for living and liberation that allowed him to address pressing questions of equality, inclusion, cross-cultural living, and interfaith understanding—puzzles that continue to confound human societies in the twenty-first century. Writing such a speculative biography entails not only an account of the biographies of the historical subjects under study; it also calls for a consideration of the experiences, intellectual attachments, and preoccupations driving the historian to undertake the research in the

first place. Ultimately, writing a speculative biography calls for a more truthful witnessing of how the historians' self-formation might, knowingly and unknowingly, determine the subject and orientation of their research. It serves as a reminder that this might provide a faithful facsimile of the full arc of their humanistic labor from self to the world that motivates their historical inquiries.

'I almost forget how badly you spell': Sibling dynamics in First World War letters
Bessie Mikelsons

Relationships between couples or between soldiers and their mothers tend to eclipse the bond between brothers and sisters within First World War historiography, including the study of correspondence during the war. And yet, though brothers or sisters were not usually the foremost amongst service personnel's correspondents, the relationship between siblings occupied its own important space within the epistolary experience both of enlisted and civilian Australians. Sibling letters had a tone of solidarity and camaraderie unique among other epistolary relationships, reflecting the easy companionship born of their long, shared history and of having grown up together as peers. But during the war, enlisted and civilian siblings had almost entirely separate experiences, which had the potential to create an emotional distance to mirror the physical distance between them. This paper will explore the ways in which siblings' letters—despite being a rather supplementary addition to the epistolary exchange between home and front—allowed for the continuation of close relationships. Letters allowed brothers and sisters to continue, within limits, to care for one another, to offer sympathy and advice, and to collaborate in fulfilling their filial duties. For these reasons, the sibling relationship was of great value to service personnel and civilians alike. It was a relationship marked by mutual support, the letters exchanged providing a source of stability for siblings throughout the tumultuous course of their separation.

Anatomy transfigured – the work of the 16th century anatomists, with a focus on Matteus Realdo Colombo
Elizabeth Milford

The sixteenth century was a time that was ripe for change. Anatomists began to dissect human rather than animal cadavers and were challenging the theories of Galen which had held sway for around 1500 years. Important amongst them were Vesalius, Colombo, Da Carpi, Estienne and Eustachius.

Matteus Colombo was a contemporary of Vesalius but history has tended to laud Vesalius rather than his one-time student and critic. However, Colombo also produced an anatomy book, albeit 16 years after Vesalius' *De Fabrica*. Colombo and Vesalius based their anatomical observations on human dissections and challenged the theories of Galen. Significant anatomical advances were made by both men, but Colombo's use

of vivisection helped him to describe ‘living’ processes such as the pulmonary circulation of blood.

Although Colombo hoped that Michelangelo would illustrate *De re Anatomica*, the only image in the book is the frontispiece - an engraving showing Colombo at work at the dissecting table. However, *De re Anatomica* was a successful publication in its day. Apart from the clarity of its Latin text, it was considerably cheaper than Vesalius’ lavishly produced tome.

This paper seeks to outline the significant anatomical contribution made by Colombo and others and to discuss how human civilization tends to forget that ‘progress’ is an evolving process with many contributors.

No longer silenced - Australia's 1980 Olympic Team members find their voice
Dr Darren Mitchell

On 30 July 2025 in an address to Parliament Prime Minister Albanese offered to the 1980 Australian Olympic team an apology and a belated welcome home. Forty-five years ago, the team members were subject to intense Federal Government and media pressure to boycott the Olympics. Moscow was the host city for the Games which were being held in a communist country for the first time. Calls for an athletes boycott had been prompted by the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Some Australian athletes were prevented from going by the decision of their sport federation, some decided themselves not to go, but the Australian Olympic Federation, the body with responsibility for making the decision about Australia’s participation, determined by a margin of one vote to oppose an insistent campaign by then Prime Minister Fraser and to send a team to Moscow.

However, in contrast to how every Australian Olympic team has been feted before and since, the athletes who went to Moscow received death threats and were labelled as traitors. Upon return home, many athletes were silenced, unable to openly discuss their experiences nor their Olympic journey. The Prime Minister’s statement of recognition offered an opportunity for these Australians to finally be heard. Their experience is being collected in a series of oral histories, recorded by the presenter as part of the official recognition project, providing insight into changed attitudes and a long overdue change of heart – no longer traitors, but national representatives caught in Cold War misjudgements.

The 1948 House of Representatives Expansion and the Urbanisation of Federal Politics: Enlarging Parliament and the Story of Australian Electoral Reform
Dr Chris Monnox

In 1948, the Chifley government expanded the House of Representatives from 74 to 121 seats and introduced proportional representation for Senate elections. The full implications of proportional representation were not immediately apparent, but House expansion changed electoral politics within the year. In 1949, for the first time, most House of Representatives seats and most marginal seats were located in Australia's capital cities. In this paper, I explore 1948-49 as a key moment for the urbanisation of Australian politics. I also assess House expansion against other electoral reforms of the era, and suggest that, unlike compulsory and preferential voting, it had easily identifiable losers.

Victory and controversy: the Battle of Binh Ba in Australian historical memory
Ainsleigh Morgan

The Battle of Binh Ba in June 1969 was considered an operational success by the Australian military, with the Australian forces routing the enemy and suffering only a single fatality. Yet the battle had no significant domestic impact in the days, months and years that followed. This changed in the 1980's. As awareness of atrocities increased and it became fashionable to conceive of war as one atrocity after the next, Australian understandings of Binh Ba changed dramatically. For a brief period, Australians wrestled with the allegation that Australian soldiers had committed a massacre in Vietnam. These allegations came via anonymous sources and had all the lurid details of a press sensation: military coverups, deliberate targeting of civilians, mistreatment of bodies massacred children and weeping mothers. Surprisingly, the effect of the allegation on the general population's understanding of the Australian war in Vietnam has been minimal, and it failed to attract attention beyond a handful of news programs. Neither victory nor atrocity appeared to register in the Australian historical memory. The same cannot be said of the veteran community. With very little having been written on the battle before the 1980's, the allegation has come to shape veterans' recollections and commemorations of the battle and indeed the war as a whole. This paper traces these brief appearances in the Australian media, addresses the allegations of an atrocity and highlights its effect on remembrance to bring to light the story of this battle, changing minds on Australian conduct and success in Vietnam.

A space programme without astronauts: human spaceflight in Australian history
Dr Tristan Moss

Astronauts and the spacecraft that carry them are the face of spaceflight. While Australia has been involved in space activities since the 1950s, from rocket launches at Woomera to assisting the moon landings, it has never funded its own programme of human spaceflight. Instead, Australians were selected and not flown in the Apollo programme in the 1960s, were part of American human spaceflight during the 1980s and 90s, and in

one case, flew as a private citizen in 2025. Now, the Australian of the year, Katherine Bennell-Pegg is trained as an astronaut, but has no mission.

This paper will examine the decades-long and ongoing debate about whether Australia should fund its own astronaut programme, and the public reactions to both quasi-Australian astronauts launched by others and unrealised proposals for Australian human spaceflight. In doing so, it illuminates government approaches to space spending, but also, crucially, Australian public imagination concerning space. Astronauts are a symbol of national space programmes and of the nation itself. This paper asks, then, how Australians have conceptualised their place in spaceflight when no Australian representative has been sent there.

'Joined Together by Bands of Steel': Nation, Empire, and the Politics of Transcontinental Rail

A/Prof Benjamin Mountford

In the early 1990s, one of the most influential scholars of British imperialism, Ronald Robinson, challenged historians to conduct fresh investigations of the relationship between railways and imperial expansion - 'the imperial propensities of locomotion'.

In Australia, historians have paid relatively little attention to the history of rail. This is particularly the case perhaps when it comes to the nation's transcontinental railways. On the 17 October 1917, at Ooldea in South Australia, the last spike was hammered into place completing Australia's East-West Transcontinental Railway. 'Today', reflected West Australian Premier John Forrest, 'East and West are indissolubly joined together by bands of steel, and the result must be increased prosperity and happiness for the Australian people.' But for Forrest, and for many of his contemporaries in Australia and Britain, the opening of the Transcontinental was also part of a wider story of imperial consolidation.

Drawing on new archival research in Australia and the UK, this paper sets out to reconsider the significance of Australia's East-West Transcontinental Railway within the context of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Australian and British imperial politics.

'Nuisances galore': how one man changed the course of sanitary and environmental management in Sydney

Dr Lisa Murray

The history of sanitation, waste management, pollution and environmental law in NSW is generally considered through the frame of legislation, regulation, and administration. The Municipalities Act (1858 & 1867) and the Nuisances Prevention Act (1875) were key pieces of 19th century legislation that enabled municipalities to have an Inspector of

Nuisances. While some municipalities employed an inspector – many only part-time – one man became synonymous with the position in Sydney: Richard Seymour.

Richard Seymour was the Inspector of Nuisances at Sydney City Council from 1862 to 1896. This was a critical time in the city's urban development, as the old Georgian city made way for the bustling metropolis. Seymour wasn't a medical man. He learnt on the job. He observed, walked and smelt the city. Despite the lack of formal training, over the course of his career he became regarded as an expert: on housing, noxious trades, garbage, water and drainage. He was called upon to give his opinion at parliamentary inquiries. Over the course of 34 years, he shaped late nineteenth-century governmental responses to urban health and environmental hazards. This paper seeks to look beneath the regulatory framework to consider the role and influence of this zealous and uncompromising, but rather overlooked, Sydney identity.

Shape shifter? Tracing the history of Aboriginal self-determination policy in NSW Government administration.

Prof Heidi Norman

The policy of Aboriginal self-determination in Australian government public policy has been described by disappointed proponents as gravely ill, on life support or dead. Despite this, self-determination (sometimes used interchangeably with autonomy and self-management) is nonetheless firmly established in policy discourse and is the raison d'etre of the Aboriginal service sector and polity. Self-determination policy discourse coincides with or has occurred in the name of significant Commonwealth policy 'moments' and analytic descriptions (refer to my other pubs for this...): land rights, support for an Aboriginal sphere in administration, representation within and to government, competitive contractualism, neo-colonial paternalism, mutual responsibility, Closing the Gap, Recognition and economic participation.

While the Commonwealth's role has been closely studied and its various policy iterations critically documented (references), what is less understood is the role and responsibility of state governments in the newly crafted post-referendum federal structure. My paper focuses on how the NSW government has taken up the policy of self-determination. In NSW, the government adopted self-determination as policy in the early 1980s. In the forty years since, Aboriginal affairs self-determination has served multiple and diverse reforms, settler sentiment and shifting debate about the role of government in addressing disadvantage and recognizing difference alongside Aboriginal aspirations to advance political rights in the sphere of government. This paper is an account of the shifts and changes in Aboriginal affairs administration by government, putatively under the policy headline 'self-determination'.

Disrupting fascist narratives: can intellectual history really change minds?
Joseph Parro

Of the countless histories written about fascism and fascist movements, few have been undertaken with the goal of promoting fascist ideology and politics. Far more often, historians have studied fascist ideas and movements with the intention of opposing fascism; whether by exposing significant actors, links, and organisations, directly countering fascist arguments and perspectives, or simply seeking greater understanding. Some histories are ambiguous with regards to pro- or anti-fascism, evincing a fascination with their subject that may be read either way. Surveying studies of fascism in Australia since the nineteen sixties, alongside instances of fascist activists retaining or abandoning their commitment to the movement, this paper discusses the anti-fascist potential of intellectual history. In doing so, it raises questions about the role of history in public conversations, avenues of communication between historians and target audiences, and the place of scholarship in opposing a political formation so heavily defined by appeals to instinct and emotion, the rejection of reason and debate, and a commitment to violent action.

Changing my mind about Musquito
Dr Naomi Parry Duncan

As an Honours student at Macquarie University, I prepared an essay on the Dharug matriarch Maria Lock, and was invited to prepare an entry for the 'missing persons' issue of the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Shortly after that, I was asked if I, being Tasmanian, wanted to write one about Musquito, an Aboriginal man from Port Jackson who had been executed in Hobart in 1825. That request, which came in the middle of my PhD studies, led to an obsession with this fascinating man who, I realised, deserved a full-length biography. After decades of research that biography, *Musquito: The Real Story of a Legendary Colonial Warrior*, will be released by Allen & Unwin during this 2026 AHA Conference.

This paper introduces the book, and talks about some of the ways following Musquito through the archive has made me change my mind about history. I will focus on a collection of stunning drawings produced by Nicolas Martin-Petit and Charles Lesueur in 1802, during the visit of Commander Nicolas Baudin's Géographe and Naturaliste to Port Jackson and what they tell us about the Aboriginal communities of Sydney and Parramatta. And I will talk about my own convict ancestors and what Musquito made me understand about their role in settler colonisation.

Changing Minds: The Transformation of Authority in Northern Ireland
Melissa Pavihi

This paper offers a legal-historical analysis of Northern Ireland, examining the lessons of the Northern Ireland peace process, for international law. It argues that restorative principles, such as those engaged in Northern Ireland, can enhance reconciliation, strengthen accountability, and produce effective transitional justice outcomes.

Engaging the conference theme, the paper contends that "changing minds" in Northern Ireland was inseparable from changing the law. Legal reform created the conditions in which entrenched identities - once oriented toward violent resolution - could reimagine authority, legitimacy, and political participation.

The Troubles constituted not only sustained violence but a profound crisis of constitutional authority. Measures such as the Special Powers Acts, Diplock courts, internment without trial, and expansive executive powers produced a regime centred on coercion rather than consent. In this context, paramilitary actors came to view the law as an instrument of subjugation rather than an impartial arbiter, fuelling and legitimising continued resistance.

From the 1970s onwards, gradual legal realignment - accelerated by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing Street Declaration, and the 1994 ceasefires - reconfigured the constitutional landscape. This trajectory culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which introduced consociational governance and substantial reforms in policing, criminal justice, and human rights protections. These reforms fundamentally recalibrated the state's relationship with its citizens, rendering dialogue and political participation credible alternatives to violence.

The Northern Ireland peace process thus offers a compelling model for international law, demonstrating how innovative legal frameworks can transform authority, resolve entrenched conflict, and promote durable reconciliation.

Unfinished Business: Aboriginal self-determination and the NSW Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme

Dr Anne Maree Payne

In 2017, the NSW government initiated a reparations scheme for Stolen Generations survivors, with the stated aim of acknowledging the direct role the government and its agents had played in forcible child removal in NSW. NSW was the third Australian state to implement some form of reparation to members of the Stolen Generations, a significant change from two decades earlier, when the federal government and all state and territory governments had rejected the recommendation of the Bringing Them Home report that reparation be made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in recognition of the gross violations of human rights which had taken place (HREOC 1997).

This paper explores the activism of NSW survivor groups for justice and how the state government came to comprehend and respond to the reparations claims of Stolen Generations survivors in NSW. I examine how the NSW Scheme addressed the justice claims of survivors in the context of the history of the public administration of Aboriginal Affairs and a policy commitment to self-determination. The government's expressed aim was to give Stolen Generations survivor groups self-determination in how their needs were addressed by government and the forms in which reparations were provided. While comprehensive, equitable reparation for forcible child removal remains unfinished business in Australia, this paper examines the extent to which the reparations measures implemented in NSW have resulted in lasting change, both for Stolen Generations survivors and descendants and for state government policy and practice in relation to Aboriginal people.

Heavy metals in wetlands: Tracing a history of contamination, awareness, and advocacy

Dr Lilian Pearce and A/Prof Emily O'Gorman

In this paper we consider the history of heavy metals in global wetlands, through an initial focus on lead. We consider causes, consequences, advocacy and regulation around key periods of change. While arriving through multiple routes, including mining and military activity, lead shot used in bullet cartridges for waterfowl hunting has seen extensive contamination of wetlands with lead. For example, one 1992 study estimates that hunters deposit 350 tonnes of lead across Australian wetlands annually. Once present, fragments are often consumed, concentrated, and forgotten; but their presence and long-term impacts live on. Lead poisoning has been documented in waterfowl in 21 countries, and the relative impact of heavy metal poisoning on population decline and extinction of multiple species has likely been wildly underestimated. Through archival and contemporary policy sources alongside scientific studies, we trace awareness of contamination, campaigns and regulation of heavy metals in wetlands over time. Change has occurred through shifting ecosystem concepts, international conventions and diplomacy, and regulatory monitoring advancements, yet enduring waste remains. We consider the ways that the materiality of metals concentrates and persists in seemingly 'closed systems', while also always in motion through the global, migratory movements of bodies, water and wind.

Party Time? Mobilising Women Candidates through the Labor Party, 1979-1996

Madeline Pentland

On 27 September 1994, a crowd of journalists, photographers and television cameras joined the 102 conference delegates of the Australian Labor Party at Wrest Point Casino in Hobart, anxiously awaiting the delegates decision vote on a rule change for the

preselection of women candidates of the Labor Party. The affirmative action, which proposed a threshold of at least 35 per cent of Labor safe seats to be women candidates by 2002, passed unanimously by a vote of acclimation. Colourful celebrations ensued and, for the first time in nearly twenty years, consequential change for Labor women candidates seemed within reach.

This paper explores the structural changes made within the Labor Party to mobilise and attract women candidates between 1979 and 1996. It identifies the key drivers that sought to encourage women to seek preselection in the Labor Party, as well as the inhibitors of the policy change within the party. It places the affirmative action in the context of a global movement for the political participation of women over this period, tracing the development of Labor's policy for preselection against United Nations treaties, as well as cultural changes for women candidates enacted by other political parties. In doing so, this paper tests Prime Minister Keating's claim that Labor's affirmative action was capable of 'reshap[ing] the character of Australian politics' by the mid-1990s.

Perpetrator Testimony in the Investigative Archive
A/Prof Jayne Persian

The late twentieth century saw a resumption of interest in locating, investigating and prosecuting alleged war criminals who had resettled in the West in the post-war period. The main countries of resettlement – the United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom – all instituted judicial processes to be able to either denaturalise and deport or criminally charge war criminals, particularly those complicit in the Holocaust. In Australia, this late burst of official activity resulted in investigations into around 800 individuals, most of whom had been part of the million non-Jewish Central and Eastern European displaced persons resettled by the United Nations. While the judicial process was ultimately unsuccessful in securing any convictions, the investigative files are a unique historical resource. The Special Investigations Unit files held at the National Archives of Australia are, to date, the only fully accessible archive in the West that contains evidence of the delayed transnational effort to prosecute immigrant perpetrators. This archive is also a vast empirical repository of testimony that speaks to non-German complicity with the German-led Holocaust.

For Democratic Citizenship or for Slaughter? Compulsory Youth Military Training in 'Lands of Freedom' from Australasia to New York
Shannon Peters

In the 1910s, both Australia and New Zealand adopted a new defence policy that drew much admiration and criticism from international observers: compulsory military training for adolescent boys. By introducing such a measure, the antipodean nations became

noted outliers in the English-speaking world, the first to sanction what critics decried as 'child conscription.' While historians have emphasised the distinctiveness of the antipodean schemes, another Western context in this period also lawfully compelled adolescent boys to undertake military training – the state of New York, under the Welsh-Slater Bills of 1916. The New York measure, which had no parallel in the United States, elicited polarised debates, with commentators on both sides drawing on the Australian experience to support their respective stances. This paper traces American responses to Australia's program and compares the rationales advanced in each setting. American and Australian advocates alike argued that military instruction improved discipline, built patriotism, and addressed physical and moral decline. Opponents protested that the training fostered a warlike mentality, encouraged blind obedience over democratic initiative, and displaced more effective forms of civic and physical education. Comparison of these cases also reveals how compulsory youth military training was justified differently based on local anxieties about demographic composition and national identity. In Australia, discussion centred on the scheme's potential value in helping to sustain a culturally homogenous white society, whereas in New York the more fragmented and diverse population made the assimilative possibilities of youth military training a central focus.

Counting sheep, cattle and pigs: animals and the political economy of population in colonial New South Wales, 1788-1820

Nicholas Pitt

This paper places sheep, cattle and pigs – three species typically categorised as livestock – in the history of colonial populations in the British colony of New South Wales. While the crucial role of these pastoral animals in the history of British colonialism is well-known, and while the ways that the growth of colonial populations was theorised and tracked are increasingly understood, the place of animals in this history of populations has been largely unappreciated.

I trace the place of sheep, cattle, goats and pigs in the ways that the coloniser populations were theorised and tracked through the first three decades of the colony of New South Wales. Leading colonisers established a roughly-theorised political economy that relied on the growth of pastoral animal populations to support the sustained growth of the settler population. Understanding this colonial vernacular political economy greatly helps understand both the contrasting systematic approaches to settler colonisation that emerged in the 1820s, and parallel ways that animals and human populations were intertwined in other contemporaneous anglophone societies in the United States, Great Britain and Ireland.

Who Belongs?
Dr Peter Prince

As Marxist historian E. P. Thompson said about England and the rule of law, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the law about 'citizenship' was also, for Australia's governing elite, 'a nuisance, to be manipulated and bent in what ways they could'.

As late as 1971 in Western Australia, First Nations people had to apply for 'certificates of citizenship' – on land their ancestors had belonged to for over 60,000 years – to escape racist control over where they lived, worked and who they could marry. In 1957 the white Australian community – including the responsible Commonwealth minister – believed Albert Namatjira, the world-famous artist, was 'made a citizen' when, after a public campaign, his name was not included in a list of 15,000 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory deemed to be 'wards' requiring 'protection' by the government. Australian government websites still wrongly repeat this claim today.

This paper will look at how those regarded as non-European 'Others' (Chinese and Japanese Australians, British Indians, Pacific Islanders and even Australia's First Nations peoples) were perceived and treated as not legally belonging, contrary to imposed British law adopted and applied in this country.

An Oenpelli Monologue: re-storying the Berndt archive
Dr Laura Rademaker and Prof Sally May

Over the wet season of 1949-1950, Ngalindali Garnarradj (also called 'Dorcas') sat down at Oenpelli with the anthropologist, Catherine Berndt, and spoke to her in Kunwinjku. She told Berndt that her husband, Joshua, had reassured those in the camp: 'Those two [anthropologists] didn't come to make trouble. They just want to find out our thoughts… Afterwards they will send back that information for us.'

But the Berndts did not return the knowledge they learned from the Old People at Oenpelli. Their archive remained embargoed, even for community and family members, until 2024. Ngalindali's 'monologue' was published in *Oceania* in 1951, with Catherine and Ronald Berndt listed as authors. Ngalindali was framed as the object of research, not the agent, even though Ngalindali and her husband had consulted widely about exactly what should be recorded and why. Ngalindali's words to Catherine Berndt were intentional and reflective of her intellectual leadership and foresight.

Our project is about reframing this broader 'anthropological monologue' – the dominance of the voices of non-Indigenous researchers – and foregrounding the intellectual contributions of Arnhem landers such as Ngalindali. The project has been co-designed with descendants Aboriginal elders who worked with the Berndts in this region and made

possible by the recent opening of the Berndt archive. In flipping the academic model of biography, the stories we tell of the Berndts themselves will be only oblique. Instead, we assume Aboriginal agency and authority in creating this archive for Aboriginal people's own purposes.

Forced Exercise in Schools as Corporal Punishment: Corrective Exercises in French Schools in the 20th century

Dr Keith Rathbone

In the middle of the 20th century, French schools routinely assigned poorly behaved, "maladapted," and/or physically weak students "corrective exercises." These punishing activities could include calisthenics, gymnastics, sports, and stress positions. They were often accompanied by verbal abuse. They were intended to teach students appropriate behaviour, to force them into defined social roles, and help them to strengthen their bodies.

Anyone who has read Foucault's Discipline and Punish, would recognize both the biopolitical intentions of these activities and the way in which they modelled forced exercises common in other carceral institutions such as military barracks and prisons.

In that light, it might be how resistant, physical educational corrective exercises have been into the 21st century in France and around the world. What we might think of as calisthenics or gymnastics, which ostensibly have healthy purposes, were functionally intended to be punitive and were often experienced by children in that way. In the latter half of the 20th century, in France, corrective exercises in prisons were prohibited (although it remains a common part of military training.) Tellingly corrective exercises in schools (and in other sporting contexts) remain common despite a growing awareness that they tend to be counterproductive.

In this article, I will argue that corrective exercises connection to sporting life and wellness culture has made it the most resilient form of corporal school discipline today. I will examine the resilience of corrective exercises in French school environments. I will begin by addressing the way that gymnastics exercises were intended to work in French schools in the middle of the 20th century. I will trace the origins of corrective exercises in schools to the French military. I will compare justifications for corrective exercise – as expressed in pedagogical documents – with those offered by officials in French military and prison contexts. I will conclude by addressing recent research in English and French that points to the limits of physically punishing exercise as a pedagogical tool.

Life Turned Inside Out: Amateur Drag and the Logic of Carnival in Pre-WWII Australia

Dr Yves Rees

Drag has a rich and largely unexplored history in settler Australia. Alongside the theatrical tradition of professional drag performance, drag has long been practiced as an amateur artform in a wide array of both underground and mainstream settings. In this paper, I consider three sites of amateur drag in early-twentieth-century Australia—the mock wedding, University Commemoration and community fundraisers—to consider how otherwise transgressive and stigmatised forms of gender crossing could be made permissible. By using Bakhtin's theory of carnival, alongside archival photographs and documentary records, the paper explores the conditions that sanctioned amateur drag in certain time-bound contexts, allowing ordinary individuals to temporarily deviate from assigned gender roles without risking criminalisation or reputational damage. As a practice embraced by respectable figures ranging from students to sportsmen to cultural leaders, amateur drag can be read as a portal into gender play and experimentation—an arena of inversion and parody that offered reprieve from, yet simultaneously reinforced, the strictures of normative gender performance.

Escape from Rabul

John Reeves

This presentation will focus on the evacuation of European women from Rabaul in 1941, a lesser-known part of the Pacific War. It will highlight the resilience of a group of pioneering women at a time of global upheaval. It will also highlight how these women empowered themselves in the face of adversity. Exploring a snapshot of what life was like in the New Guinea Islands before the outbreak of World War II. Outlining and describing the efforts of the Australians in ensuring that no women and children were left in harm's way. The presentation will also explain what life was like for these women as they became displaced persons and refugees in their own nation, and culminating with the traumatic effects of the loss of all their spouses and sons on the prison ship, the Montevideo Maru. To demonstrate their resilience, I will include specific examples of how these women assumed roles vacated by their imprisoned or deceased husbands, such as managing households or supporting war efforts, thereby empowering themselves in the face of adversity.

"Letter from Madame Benda": Australian Singers Abroad

Dr Rosemary Richards

The early decades of the twentieth century posed challenges for Australian singers who ventured abroad. While related studies have been undertaken for more than a century, further investigations can illuminate different aspects of the topic amid changing historiographical fashions.

In this paper I will focus on selected former students of Austrian-born and Melbourne-resident soprano, teacher, and patron Madame Elise Wiedermann Pinschof (1851–1922).

Marguerite Henderson (1876–1922), Mona McCaughey (1873–1962), and Kate Samuels ("Madame Benda", 1878–1960) left Melbourne together in 1901 to seek opportunities for education and careers overseas. Henderson returned to Melbourne in 1904 and died in 1922, the same year as Wiedermann Pinschof. McCaughey made her home in London for many years but returned to Melbourne, whereas Samuels lived in London from 1910 until her death.

Insights can be gained from sources including newspaper reports and scrapbooks with newspaper clippings now held at McGill University in Montreal, compiled in London c. 1910–15 by Samuels' husband, Canadian scientist and musician Thomas Wesley Mills (1847–1915).

Research such as this contributes to a re-evaluation of personal and cultural connections of Australian singers in the twentieth century.

Our Stories, Our Histories: Aboriginal Incarceration in Australia
Prof Lynette Riley, Amy Davidson, Irene Wardle, Dr John Clegg, and Michael McDonnell

Australia has the highest racialised incarceration disparity in the world, yet there is currently no national, digitised, or collated historical dataset documenting the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to 1978. Existing data begins only after the establishment of modern corrective services, yet our previous work has shown that historically incarceration was not limited to prisons. Across all jurisdictions, Aboriginal people were confined through missions, reserves, settlements, lock hospitals, police gaols, boys' and girls' homes, and administrative "holding" institutions. These systems disproportionately targeted Aboriginal people based on racial stereotypes rather than on criminal conviction, producing patterns of surveillance, forced mobility and punitive control. Because the archival records documenting these systems have never been systematically collated, digitised or analysed, the scale, geography and mechanisms of this carceral network remain unknown.

Our first of its kind Aboriginal-led project addresses this knowledge gap by creating the first national, digital database of historical incarceration (1788–1978). This paper will showcase some of our initial results from a pilot project, which shows that large-scale identification, transcription and analysis of these archives is both feasible and culturally appropriate through an Aboriginal Community-Led Research (CLR) methodology. Our design integrates archival research, yarning-based inquiry, community governance, and a "right to reply" process that enables Elders to contextualise and challenge the archival record. We hope to broaden this out in the future, producing unprecedented cross-state data, mapping prisoner flows, and analysing the broader punitive system beyond formal prisons, to showcase further insights into the development of Australia's carceral state and strengthen national truth-telling, digital sovereignty and community authority.

“This could be a Jewish issue”: Shifting relationalities between Jewish and Indigenous peoples in the New South Wales Jewish press

Dr Zac Roberts

Since the 1980s, the notion that Jewish and Indigenous peoples in Australia are uniquely connected has become a prolific narrative, especially within Australian Jewish circles. Such a narrative is centred on a perceived shared history of dispossession, persecution, and genocide. This narrative, however, is primarily framed in post-Holocaust histories and thus excludes the 157 years of primarily Anglo-Jewish settlement on Indigenous lands. This paper analyses how Indigenous peoples in Australia are represented or spoken about across seven Jewish newspapers published out of New South Wales between 1895 and 1990. It traces how attitudes towards Indigenous peoples changes from classification as a ‘lower race’ to identification of Indigenous activist movements as ‘a Jewish issue’ and calls into question whether narratives of Jewish solidarity with Indigenous peoples in Australia are a genuine reflection of relationalities between Indigenous and Jewish communities in Australia, or if they are a modern form of mythmaking.

‘Hey! … Do you know about sex?’ Australian girls read Peter Mayle’s Where Did I Come From?, 1973–2010

Saskia Roberts

At first glance, the 1973 sex education picture-book *Where Did I Come From?* appears groundbreaking. Unlike his contemporaries, Peter Mayle informed children not only about procreation but also pleasure, and he wrote with an unusual directness and zest. Yet many of his ideas featured in earlier works, and some of them were indebted to older, even conservative, understandings of sex and gender. In this paper, I investigate the Australian publication and reception of this text, which has so far received surprisingly little scholarly attention. I contend that it was girls’ interactions with *Where Did I Come From?* – rather than adult appraisals of the book – that cemented its status, first as a dramatic intervention in sex education literature and later as a genre-defining classic. Adults stocked the text in libraries, read it aloud to their children and – counter to Mayle’s instructions – left it on bookshelves for girls to encounter alone. These well-intentioned efforts, however, often communicated a sense of shame and taboo to girls, in contrast to the book’s message of the joy and importance of sexual pleasure. Yet girls were still able to interpret *Where Did I Come From?* in novel ways, especially when discussing it collectively. Using approximately forty oral histories I have conducted with a diverse range of interviewees, I reveal how girls’ readings transformed the book from an awkward explainer into an exciting exploration of sexuality. In doing so, I uncover a hidden history of girls’ role in shaping Australia’s sexual culture in the late twentieth century.

"They Always Knew These Stories": Images of Racial Violence and the Children Who See Them

Jaylynn Rose

How do you keep those you held captive for centuries from stepping out of line? You scare them into submission. Violence has been used as a method to subjugate Black people in the United States, beginning with the Slave Patrols of the Antebellum South, Jim Crow laws in the post-Emancipation period, police tactics during the Civil Rights Movement, and 'ending' with the various instances of police brutality and other racial violence seen throughout the 21st-century. It was with the advent of the 24-hour news cycle and eventually social media that it became increasingly easy to access images of racial violence against Black Americans. The impacts of this visual bombardment of brutal content are often researched through the lens of Black adults, but it is actually Black youth who suffer the most consequences because of their constant, inadvertent viewership of violent media. Black youth are more likely to be exposed to images of racial violence because of their dependence on social media, but they are also more likely to pay attention because the victims often look like them, their peers, their family members, or the other adults around them.

Changing Minds, Making Selves: History, Autoethnography, and the Temporarily Labile Self

Emily Rose

This paper examines the intersection between historical research and autoethnography: a site where selves are actively changed. Drawing on my y doctoral research on counter-narratives from the Australian Consumer/Survivor/Ex-Patient Movement, I outline instances in which archival encounters, oral history interviews and primary research prompted shifts in my thinking. These changes were not linear or cumulative, but uneven and contingent, reflecting the labile nature of both identity and historiography. What does it mean to treat the historian's changing mind as part of the historical record? How might identity instability challenge epistemic injustice that privileges objectivity and disciplinary expertise? Ultimately, I suggest that embracing the malleability of identity does not weaken historical rigor but reveals the centrality of changing minds to how histories are imagined, written, and understood. It is hoped that this paper contributes to broader conversations about reflexivity, epistemology, and the ethics of scholarly self-positioning.

Bee Miles and Encephalitis Lethargica – The 'Enigma' Revisited

Dr David Roth

There is an extensive literature about the Sydney identity, 'ratbag', homeless person, and passionate patriot Bee Miles (1902-1973; also known as Beatrice or Bea). It includes an Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) entry by Judith Allen, many newspaper articles, chapters in two books about Australian 'ratbags', and a meticulous 2023 biography by Rose Ellis. Bee's recalcitrant and attention-seeking behaviour, within her family and in public, led to a series of committals to mental hospitals and numerous clashes with the justice system from the 1920s, arising from her persistent refusal to pay tram or taxi fares. Her frequent defiance of male authority made her popular underdog figure. In public memory Bee continues to be a feminist icon down to the present day, for example through the work of the B. Miles Women's Foundation, although she vehemently rejected feminist teachings.

In 2018 two Sydney psychiatrists, Graham Edwards and Robert Kaplan, claimed that Bee's 'enigmatic', outrageous and sometimes violent public conduct arose from the long-term after-effects (sequelae) of an attack of then pandemic encephalitis lethargica (EL) in early 1920, when she was eighteen. The paucity of surviving evidence casts some doubt on the diagnosis of EL and its sequelae.

The aim of this article is to suggest that Bee was probably not a victim of EL. Focusing on the hypothetical effects of this disorder diverts attention away from the possible long-term effects of early domestic abuse, inadequate mental health support, and inability to find a stable home.

Changing Minds: Understanding the historiography of Australian war widows of the Great War and why it must evolve

Melanie Roylance

Women's wartime experiences have often been overlooked due to the male-dominated focus of military history, especially in Australia, where Anzac soldiers are venerated. As a result, the historiography typically portrayed Australian war widows of the Great War as a homogeneous group of victims deserving pity and dependent on welfare if they did not remarry. Treated as symbols of mourning and sacrifice, little attention was paid to their individual agency or diverse experiences, with their attempts to improve their circumstances generally considered limited due to socio-economic and patriarchal constraints. Even with newer studies focusing on emotion and memory, the complex realities of these widows' lives remained overshadowed by a narrative of loss.

This paper traces the drivers that have shaped military and social historians' attitudes toward war widows over time. In explaining the contexts and times in which they did their research, it contends that historians' myopic convention of war widows as victims without agency has done a disservice to these women. It argues that recognising our inherent biases in military history can help historians 'change their minds' about how to

approach topics, which, in turn, can assist in engaging meaningfully with our audiences and help counter the re-hashing, simplification, and hallucinations of AI tools people are using to replace us.

Writing Elsie Elliott-Tu's Crusade for Justice into Hong Kong's Colonial Past
Alexia Rutkowski

When Elsie Elliott-Tu (1913-2015) first arrived in Hong Kong in 1951, after years as a missionary in China, she was from the outset concerned with the state of the working-class refugee population in the colony and embarked on her self-proclaimed 'crusade for justice'. This crusade centred on exposing corruption in Hong Kong's colonial government and police force, while creating her own institutions to support working-class individuals. Elsie's activism started on a grassroots level, she photographed corruption and sent the photos to newspaper outlets, she wrote reports on corruption that the local authorities ignored, and she opened a school for the underprivileged which still exists in Hong Kong today. From a grassroots level, Elsie slowly climbed the ranks of the colonial government, joining the legislative body of the government in 1988. Elsie was not only concerned with the underprivileged in Hong Kong, she was one of the original voices of the colony's pro-democracy movement, and she was integral to both housing reform and education reform. Despite her role in addressing and exposing inequality in colonial Hong Kong, her efforts to make the territory a more fair and just society are largely ignored in historical accounts centred on the former British colony, and I argue this is because of the pro-Beijing stance she took at the end of the colonial period which ended in 1997. This paper seeks to question how historians can successfully write individuals with complex reputations into historical narratives they have been left out of.

How can we change their minds? Connecting 21st century debates on women's reproductive rights and ideas of 'compatible coupling' in Greco-Roman medicine
Rebecca Sachse

Despite numerous advances in reproductive health knowledge in the modern era, ancient Graeco-Roman views of women's reproductive systems continue to be employed in damaging ways. My paper examines the concept of 'compatible coupling' in Graeco-Roman writings and how, despite medical progress, it continues to be used in the modern day to control and politicise women's bodies.

In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle recognised that unity and love were essential between a couple for conception to occur. Similarly, Graeco-Roman gynaecological texts reiterated that compatibility was crucial for successful conception, whereas infertility arose when couples were incompatible. Historically, scholars have included 'compatible coupling' in discussions about divorce and strengthening political alliances in Imperial Rome through marriage and offspring. However, from a feminist hermeneutical

perspective, ‘compatible coupling’ can also highlight issues of sexual violence. Such beliefs further victimised women in the Graeco-Roman era, where the health of their wombs was of paramount importance. Although ’compatible coupling’ might seem like an outdated concept, similar ideas still influence politics and television narratives today. For example, remarks by US Republican Representative Todd Akin in 2012 demonstrated that some people still believed women possessed natural defence mechanisms that would prevent conception during acts of sexual violence. Connecting these past and present understandings emphasises a vital need for research to explore how outdated medical beliefs continue to persist in the modern day, thereby continually restricting women’s rights and medical care in the 21st century.

The X-rated early history of Wellington; three violent and tragic events that surround the 1843 Wairau Affray

Rose Salas

Often national histories have been told in a linear fashion. One event led to another, and a another, resulting in a certain outcome. For example, an event that I studied was considered the first conflict in a long list of conflicts that were given the name ‘The New Zealand Land Wars’, during the nineteen century. Yet, reality is messy and more chaotic than this neat linear pattern. Karl Jacoby, in his book *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* pivots his book around one event, and explains each group involved, investigating the causes and aftermath of the event. Jacoby’s approach provides a robust opportunity to understand significant events, rather than a long linear narrative, and helps to change our minds on well-known historical stories.

This paper investigates three seemingly insignificant events that surround the first conflict of the New Zealand Land Wars commonly known as the ‘1843 Wairau Affray’. These three events are not mentioned in the normal New Zealand historical narratives because they oppose the general perspective of Māori verse British Settler. Instead, the three events consist of: Māori verse Māori, Settler verse Settler and a criminal case that exposes an intentional misuse of the British justice system. The result of examining these events surrounding the ‘1843 Wairau Affray’ sheds light on its intriguing name, a name that have gone through many changes, beginning with ‘the Wairau Massacre’. This paper reveals the complexity of the story of colonial settlement during the 1840s in New Zealand.

Militarised Urbanism in Northern Australia: Adaptive Reuse of Second World War Infrastructure in Townsville

Vianey Salazar

The adaptive reuse of wartime infrastructure represents one of the most enduring legacies of the Second World War in Northern Australia. This paper examines how military

installations and logistics networks constructed under emergency conditions were integrated into civilian planning after 1945, shaping Townsville's urban trajectory for decades.

These transformations illustrate the concept of path dependency, where infrastructure built for short-term military objectives becomes embedded in long-term urban development. Beyond physical reuse, these legacies influenced strategic thinking: the presence of adaptable infrastructure reinforced Townsville's role in contemporary defence planning, as seen in the North Queensland Defence Strategy (2020–2030). By situating this case within frameworks of militarised urbanism and resilience planning, the study argues that wartime construction not only redefined space during conflict but continues to inform how cities prepare for future disruptions. Comparative insights from Darwin, Cairns, and other significant Australian locations during the Second World War underscore the broader implications for adaptive planning in regions where defence imperatives intersect with civilian urban growth.

The Purity is in the Pudding: the culinary politics of internet #tradwives
Dr Lauren Samuelsson

In 2025, the Cambridge Dictionary added a new word to its collection: tradwife. A tradwife (or 'traditional wife) is a woman who adheres to traditional gender roles, especially in the domestic sphere. Many of these women perform their aesthetic femininity on TikTok, a short-form video platform that is popular with a younger audience. In a world where many young people gain their historical knowledge on social media platforms, it is imperative for historians to engage with and understand how historical narratives are being created, shaped, shared, and weaponised on those platforms.

Food and eating are inherently political. In this paper, I consider the way that #tradwives on TikTok explicitly position their worldviews within a (flawed) historical framework, drawing on historical myths, nostalgia, and aesthetics to support and promote anti-feminist, ultra-conservative messages. I will explore how those historical narratives are weaponised, especially in the kitchen, and how they reflect and encourage misinformation which feeds into broader worrying trends.

Singing the News in Colonial Australia
Madeline Sargeant

This paper looks at sporting news transmitted through song in early colonial Australia. Deriving from the European broadside ballad tradition, newspapers in early colonial Australia printed ballads set to familiar tunes to convey recent events, social, political, and sporting events. Set to familiar tunes, these ballads are known as "contrafactum," a tradition in which new songs were set to known tunes, which enhanced the retelling of

recent events. Tunes had the ability to ascribe additional meanings onto events, and upon singing or reading these ballads, audiences would have been able to trace links between the events and broader messages. Of particular interest are songs which pertain to early cricket games and football matches in which "Australians" began to formulate a conception of mateship and comradery which remains a tenet of the modern "Australian identity." In particular, the paper will look to early cricket games between Australia and England, in which the colony and the motherland found themselves at odds with one another. Through analysing both the lyric and the tune, we can garner how Australians began to position themselves against, or alongside, the imperial metropole.

From 'no trace' to reconstructing Chinese Australian lives at Young
Dr Karen Schamberger

In 1988, journalist Geraldine O'Brien interviewed Lyster Holland, President of the Young Historical Society. He told her that there was 'no trace' of the Chinese miners in the area around Young. He claimed that there were not even any Chinese graves in the local cemetery. However, she did find descendants of 19th and early 20th century Cantonese migrants in the town. In 2011 I received a phone call from Chek Ling from the Convenor of a conference of the Chinese Community Council of Australia – Victoria Chapter (CCCAV). Ling wanted me to help him persuade my former employer, the National Museum of Australia, to hold an exhibition called 'Expulsions' about the Lambing Flat anti-Chinese riots of 1860-61. This unfortunate choice of exhibition title would have continued the perception that there were no people of Chinese descent left in Young after the riots. This conversation inspired me to research the Roll Up No Chinese banner used during the riots for a chapter in my PhD, completed in 2016.

In 2019 I started volunteering at the Young Historical Museum and am now President. Since that time, I have been researching the historical Chinese presence in the area and publishing my findings through occasional blogposts. This paper will outline my findings so far and some of the public responses to that work.

Fiction and myth-making: narratives of the Australian WWII home front
Tonia Sellers

WWII Australia hosted over one million American servicepeople serving in the Pacific conflict. In the close proximity of the home front, many romantic or intimate relationships developed between Australian civilians and visiting Americans, which Australian society viewed as controversial, or even transgressive. Subsequent popular narratives of this difficult time in Australia's history typically positioned the (hetero-presenting) people who participated in these relationships along stereotypical lines. American men were often remembered as exploitative and sex-driven, and Australian women were disloyal and materialistic. Their relationships seen as were self-serving, women seeking rationed

material goods that men offered in exchange for companionship; American men were destructive to Australian women, who, by choosing Americans, could be seen as betraying both Australia and Australian men.

My research questions why and how this narrative rose to prominence in the postwar years, and why it continues to remain relatively unchallenged in the present day. By looking at pop culture sources including magazines, popular film and fiction, and reflective sources such as autobiographies and oral histories, I track understandings and interpretations of home front Australian-American relationships, as popular narratives developed, changed, and coalesced between the 1940s and 2010s.

R is for Reckoning: Australian University Residential Colleges in the Age of MeToo
A/Prof Paul Sendziuk

The 2010s was a time of reckoning for Australian university residential colleges in regards to the tolerance of intimidatory, abusive and sometimes criminal behaviour by students. Swept along by the tide of the MeToo movement, a number of university colleges and halls of residence became the focus of investigations and reports initiated by government, activist organisations, and the mainstream media. This paper focuses on how one of these institutions – St Mark's College, Adelaide's longest-standing residential college – was caught in this maelstrom. It examines the accusations levelled at the College in two '60 Minutes' episodes and associated media reporting in 2018, and how the College responded. It argues that the College's culture and administration was unfairly targeted and criticised at the time. Nevertheless, St Mark's public humiliation led to a program of cultural renewal initiated by the College's leaders, which inevitably made it a more respectful, inclusive and safer place for students to live and study.

Researching statelessness in this time and place: some thoughts on methodology
Dr Jordana Silverstein

In this paper I want to think about how to conduct historical research about statelessness at this moment in time, as multiple genocides of stateless people are perpetrated around the world. How can the research methodologies used be attentive to the place of historians in both understanding what statelessness has meant to people and in creating possibilities of future worlds without statelessness? Drawing on oral history interviews from the project I am undertaking, examining the ways that familial histories and memories of statelessness are passed down through generations, in this paper I will explore ideas of temporality – of past, present and future – and of location – of both here and there – and how they emerge through the testimonies I am gathering. Through these testimonies and memories, I will consider how, particularly in the shadow of the ongoing scholasticide of Palestinians in Gaza, we can write these histories of peoples who have endured some of the worst aspects of state violence.

Infrastructures of connection: Railways and relationality in Grafton
Dr Ben Silverstein

This paper considers the importance of railways in, through, and around Grafton throughout the twentieth century. Railways can be transformative; their introduction effecting a re-organisation of work, travel, and social relations. In the course of a series of discussions of oral histories with senior Goori knowledge holders of the region, rail emerges as one of a number of infrastructures of connection, sometimes facilitating and at other times hampering relationships across space. This collaborative research considers the way railways sit uneasily in Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung Country around Grafton, weaving together and relating people and place. In this paper we draw on Goori life stories to describe the ways this and other infrastructures have made different kinds of homes possible in the context of the mid-late twentieth century.

Change your mind, change your life(style): the history of veganism in Australia, 1970s-2020s
Marie-Elyse Smith

Veganism is a politically motivated lifestyle movement aimed at ending the exploitation of non-human animals through the boycott of animal products. The vegan movement seeks to convince others to reconsider our ethical obligation to non-human animals by adopting a lifestyle that defies the deeply ingrained societal norm of eating (and using) animal products. In Australia, animal agriculture has played a fundamental role in the cultural, economic, and political development of the nation. Opposing animal agriculture in a country 'built on the sheep's back' is no easy feat. However, the vegan movement has managed to go from a group of a few dozen people in the 1970s to a well-known and controversial cultural trend in the 2020s. This paper will investigate the motives and actions used by the Australian vegan movement in changing the minds of thousands of people across five decades.

State formation, surveillant assemblage and settler colonialism: The control of non-'white' persons in Australia and South Africa, 1901-1939
Dr Evan Smith

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Commonwealth of Australia (1901) and the Union of South Africa (1910) unified a number of smaller British settler colonies into two nation-states, which would become self-governing Dominions within the British Empire/Commonwealth. Both countries had established a settler colonial socio-political hierarchy, underpinned by whiteness as the key to political citizenship. Part of the argument for state formation in both was for better regulation and control over non-'white' persons who sought to enter or resided in Australia and South Africa. This included Indigenous/native persons, diasporic communities who had arrived during the colonial

era, indentured labourers and new migrants. From the earliest days of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Union of South Africa, various state and non-state institutions were employed to seek control over non-'white' persons, which can be described as a 'surveillant assemblage', regulating their movement, their residence, their employment and political/legal rights. Several scholars have looked at the transnational development of these controls in the period from the 1880s to 1900s, viewing their development in Australia and South Africa as part of a wider phenomenon across the Anglophone world. This paper focuses on the following period (1901-1939), exploring how the move towards Dominion status allowed both countries to reinforce the white settler colonial hierarchy via the surveillant assemblage and how 'social sorting' was policed at the border and internally, recognising Australia and South Africa were simultaneously settler colonial and imperial migration states.

The spatiality of domestic violence in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Australia

Dr Zoe Smith

In writing a history of domestic violence in Australia, considering where this violence occurred, and the meanings inherent and ascribed to that location, is crucial to deepening understandings of historic marital abuse. As contemporary scholars continue to argue, domestic violence is characterised by the space in which it occurs. This paper draws together historical geography, feminist legal history, and social history, using the concept of 'geographies of fear' to illuminate the spatial, emotional, and material dimensions of domestic violence in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Australia.

During a period that is often characterised by the expansion of women's spatiality in accordance with their new public freedoms, this paper shows how, for some women, fear resulted in a contraction of their spatiality; male violence frequently denied women freedom of movement across class divides in rural and urban areas. As victim-survivors exposed in their divorce petitions and affidavits, the bush hut or pastoral station could represent terror, torture, and trauma instead of idyllic freedom, whilst the suburban townhouse, villa, or mansion could be experienced as a place of imprisonment, fear, and surveillance, instead of safety, security, stability, or refuge. These petitions and affidavits dispelled myths associated with the bushman and the urban elite, exposed the emotions these women invested in their domestic spaces, and revealed the lived realities of domestic violence across intersections of place and class. Both the bush and the bourgeois home could be actively complicit in, or indeed central to, regimes of marital abuse, exacerbating and enabling domestic tyranny and violence.

Trust, Truth, and Tension: First Nations Public History in Australian Museums Post-Referendum

Dr Mariko Smith

Museums are generally held in high regard by members of the public as trusted authorities of information and knowledge. There is great potential, as well as inherently a great responsibility, for museum staff to produce content that is thought-provoking and impactful. The stakes can be high, particularly in the case of representing First Nations cultures and histories in institutions like museums where public scrutiny can be intense. While there is a lot of interest in learning more about Aboriginal Australia from the public, there is also a lot of ignorance, misperceptions, and downright prejudice evident in people's opinions and attitudes. The museum can be a powerful, and empowering, platform for First Nations peoples to share their perspectives, experiences, and knowledges, and for the public to be educated and informed. However, especially in the post-failed "Voice to Parliament" federal referendum Australia, there is significant push back from some quarters about accepting Indigenous realities, experiences, and presence in Australia, and this especially plays out in public engagements with Australian history. Mariko Smith discusses her experience as a public history practitioner who applies historical and sociological research methods to First Nations truth-telling exhibitions at the Australian Museum. She shares insights from the AM's 2023 Community Sentiment Study which measured the Australian public's views on First Nations-related topics, tackling stereotypes and myth-busting. Mariko seeks to develop an anti-racism framework-driven methodology in her historical research, in order to promote respectful understandings and social cohesion for a better shared future.

Of Monks and Men: Spatial Networks and Cultural Communities in a History of the New Norcia township in 1877

John Soniega

New Norcia, a curious town nestled in a wide valley deep within the heart of Yued Noongar country in Western Australia. Founded by Spanish Benedictine monks in the nineteenth century, the township functioned as both a hybridised monastic mission and lived village for Aboriginal people and the Spanish monks from 1867-1900. From 1901 until the late 1990s it radically shifted towards a cloistered monastery with new schools for Catholic Anglo-settler children built over the previous mission villages. These schools were run by the Marist brothers and Irish sisters of mercy respectively. Evidently, multiple cultural communities resided and conglomerated within New Norcia from around the 1870s and until the first decade of the 1900s.

This paper, drawn from my broader Doctorate thesis, utilises network analysis methods in a spatial history focus to thresh out the 'spatio-cultural' historical networks of both

Spanish monks, Indigenous Noongar people and white-settler colonial inhabitants of New Norcia in the late nineteenth century. Alongside traditional archival work with maps, lithographs and primary source records, I have used software programs such as Gephi and the web-based Palladio visualisation tool to digitally thresh out these spatial networks and construct spatial network graphs of different communities living within a historical place in two distinct time periods (1877 and 1910). Consequently, the process aims to compare the spatial network graphs of New Norcia in both timeframes to unravel the shifting conceptions and meanings attached to space and place, and shifting relationships between communities within the same microhistoric place. Hence, the paper's goal is to tease out how spatial arrangements of a particular place in a particular time evoked these shifting relationships of cross-cultural communities and their understandings of spatial identity.

Snapshots: Who is the Bessie Rischbieth we see in family photographs?
Dr Michelle Staff

Feminists have long used photography in their efforts to capture, share and preserve their history. Significant figures were (and are) often the subjects of such artefacts. In this tradition, one of Australia's leading feminists, Bessie Rischbieth, was photographed throughout her life, both in her home country and during her many journeys overseas. But a certain kind of image has dominated those published in the public domain, in the pages of newspapers and, more recently, in exhibitions and online. These 'official' pictures present her as a respected and respectable, powerful and empowered, individual. Alongside this public-facing archive there is a scattered collection of personal and family photographs that depict her in a wider range of settings and modes. Who is the Bessie Rischbieth captured in such photographs? What might they be able to tell us about her character and life beyond the headlines? In what ways are they useful and/or limited as historical sources? This paper considers these questions and more to explore how the many varied snapshots of this major feminist figure push us to rethink how we understand her story and what it reveals about the feminist, Australian and global pasts.

Changing Minds on Colonial Legacies: French Historians and the Pursuit of Justice for Algeria
A/Prof Charalampos (Harry) Stamelos

The enduring legacies of French colonisation in Algeria (1830–1962) continue to shape diplomatic, social, and historical narratives. While France's colonial past has been subject to extensive scholarly examination, official recognition of responsibility—including apologies, reparations, and restitution—remains incomplete. The recent passage of an Algerian law declaring French colonisation a crime and demanding legal

and financial accountability highlights the urgent need for historical reflection to translate into public and political action.

This paper argues that French historians occupy a unique position to influence both public discourse and policy regarding colonial reparations. By critically reassessing entrenched interpretations, engaging with the lived experiences of colonised communities, and advocating for truth-telling at institutional and governmental levels, historians can help catalyse a "change of mind" not only within the academy but also in wider society.

Drawing on case studies of restitution efforts—including the repatriation of artefacts and human remains, as well as comparative examples from other post-colonial contexts—this study examines how historians' interventions might shape legal, moral, and cultural reparative measures.

This paper explores the intersection of historiography, ethics, and diplomacy, suggesting that historians have both the intellectual tools and civic responsibility to push for acknowledgment, apology, and concrete forms of reparation. In doing so, the discipline can model the very processes of reflection, adaptation, and moral reckoning that it seeks to illuminate.

Reclaiming Research in Collection-Based Institutions
Dr Penelope Stannard

In an age of instant knowledge, cultural institutions must reconsider what it means to research, interpret, and lead. When answers can be generated in seconds, our responsibility shifts from simply producing information to cultivating depth, discernment, and trust. The challenge before us is not speed, but meaning — and how we maintain authority, stewardship, and critical inquiry in a fast changing knowledge landscape. This paper examines the methodological approach undertaken to develop a strategic research framework for Museums of History NSW. It highlights some of the challenges faced in interpreting new legislation concerning history and how concepts of identity, heritage, trust and community are positioned and re-positioned within this.

Serenissima: an intellectual history of trade and power from Rome to Napoleon
Prof Koen Stapelbroek

Endless she was not, but the trade republic of Venice was a first-hand witness and protagonist in the development of the world of trade and politics, from the fall of Rome to the time of Napoleon. The actual witnesses to these events, the Venetians, citizens of the trade republic passed on ideas and traditions, cultural knowledge and predispositions across generations, in times of growth, through to her decline and death. In this project I use the contents of a Venetian patrician family archive (letters, manuscripts, books,

diplomatic correspondence) to connect global change and local perception, using the history of Venice not as an object, but as a tool to understand the development of political and economic ideas over a longer period.

Troops to treaties: the evolution of the Australia-Japan relationship, 1946-1976
Dr Alison Starr

In the wake of war in Europe and Asia, 1939-1945, Australian attitudes to Japan were dominated by the traumatic wartime experiences of Allied services personnel and civilians across the Asia Pacific theatre of war. War crimes media reporting in the postwar period was vehement in its denouncement of Japan, collectively as a nation as well as its people. In 2026, as Australia and Japan celebrate 50 years of the historic NARA Treaty friendship agreement in 2026, this paper considers the evolution of the Australia-Japan relationship, from Japan's surrender to Allied forces and Australia's subsequent ole in the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, to a historic bilateral friendship agreement just three decades later.

With Australia and Japan now committed trade and security partners, it is timely to examine political, economic and cultural fluctuations, from the conclusion of hostilities until the treaty's execution, as both countries recovered from the impacts of conflict. This paper examines the postwar bilateral relationship from the perspectives of trade and political context, both domestic and regional, as well as less-examined aspects such as design and the built environment, the sporting world, and the role of sister-city relationships. Despite persistent efforts by veteran's groups and the media to demonise Japan, Australian community attitudes softened, and geopolitical and economic realities trumped such demonisation, permitting the Whitlam government to commence treaty negotiations which the Fraser government duly finalised, committing Australia and Japan to a fruitful bilateral relationship barely a generation after harrowing conflict.

The Screencast: Reimagining a Digital Method for Historians and Humanists of the Internet
Dr Ana Stevenson

In an era of post-truth, misinformation, and disinformation, historians and humanists specialising in contemporary history find themselves confronted with the challenge of needing to accurately recreate the history of websites from available digital primary sources. The limitations of automated digital archiving services such as the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine became clear when analysing the official website of the 2017 Women's March on Washington as a case study within the Australian Research Council Discover Project, Archiving Social Movements and Historical Literacy for the Digital Age. Using the Wayback Machine's digital archives of this website revealed that historians need a more methodical approach to assess change over time. With these insights in

mind, this presentation revisits a digital method that media studies scholar Richard Rogers (2017) proposed for capturing and interpreting a website's history: the "screencast documentary". The team began by updating this digital method to reflect the software and capabilities of new digital technologies. Using this digital method to work through the Internet Archive's screen captures of the Women's March on Washington's website, this case study highlights the possibilities and limitations of an updated approach to creating a screencast. As we face an ever greater need to trace the history of websites with confidence and understanding, these findings have bearing upon the digital training needs for future historians and humanities scholars.

Intersecting Narratives: History and Public Memory in a North Queensland Town
A/Prof Rodney Sullivan and A/Prof Robin Sullivan

This presentation surveys the evolution of public memory in the North Queensland town of Innisfail. It pays attention to the colonising ethos which facilitated occupation of Indigenous territory. Irish Catholic selectors and sugar plantations persist in foundational narratives. We plot the trajectory of the town's public memory from its foundation as Geraldton in 1887 to the 1999 unveiling of 'River Reflections', a ceramic mural on the Johnstone River. Memory markers include anniversaries, monuments and public art. We examine the extent to which memory informs history, and history revises memory.

Winning Hearts & Minds': The 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit in the Vietnam War
Hannah Swaine

This paper examines the operations of the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit (1ACAU) as an element of the broader campaign for 'winning hearts and minds' during the Vietnam War. 1ACAU was created to centralise civic aid being provided/delivered by the Australian Army for the South Vietnamese people of Phuoc Tuy province. Made up of five detachments—engineering, medical, education, agriculture and liaison—the responsibilities of 1ACAU varied from building roads, schools, and clean water infrastructure to the training of locals in modern agricultural techniques and the dental treatment of the residents of Phuoc Tuy. They were in many ways, the face of the Australian Army on the ground to the people of the province. Through this civic aid work, Australians formed real relationships with members of Vietnamese communities and delivered significant projects across Phuoc Tuy between 1967 and 1971. However, their operations cannot be separated from the broader regional politics and military objectives of the Australian Government in South Vietnam. In line with the unit's objectives, projects were ideally proposed by the local community, taken on by the Army, and then attributed to the local military and government. The complicated origins of 1ACAU as a unit dedicated to 'changing minds', invites a deeper analysis of their work, as part of both a political and military campaign being run to influence the outcome of the Vietnam War.

Using Data from the Colonial Archive – Discussing the Position of the Human-in-the-Loop

Jennifer Tadge

The German collaborative research project DiViAS (Digitisation, Visualisation and Analysis of Collection Items) works with various archival materials, including records of the Imperial Colonial Office (Reichskolonialamt). One subproject focuses on reconstructing the movements of Imperial German ships, persons, and ethnographic objects within nineteenth-century colonial contexts in Oceania.

Structured as a transdisciplinary collaboration, the project employs methods from data science to analyse historical documents and extract structured information from handwritten records. In particular, large language models enable the automated identification of spatial and temporal references. This extracted data is subsequently processed using geoinformatic approaches to model and visualise the movements of ships, actors, and collected objects.

However, this approach introduces a number of methodological and ethical challenges at different stages of the workflow. First, standardisation for computational processing tends to obscure ambiguity and incompleteness, thereby limiting the representation of uncertainty inherent in the source material. Second, colonial records frequently contain structural silences and epistemic gaps that may persist in the extracted data. At the same time, automated information extraction risks reproducing racist terminology, colonial place names, or classificatory regimes embedded in the sources. Finally, these limitations raise questions regarding how Indigenous perspectives and interests might be meaningfully integrated into computational research environments.

Drawing on examples from ongoing project work, this contribution discusses the necessity of “human-in-the-loop” approaches in mediating between automated processing and historical interpretation, and reflects on emerging responsibilities for historians in the ethical use of AI-assisted analytical tools.

A Singaporean xiangsheng? The history of Singaporean bilingual xiangsheng, 1973-2025 to Negotiating China's influence on bilingual xiangsheng in Singapore, 1973-2025

Ruth Tan

How did Singaporean performers change the minds of their audience members who were accustomed to the conventions of xiangsheng as a Mainland Chinese art form? Xiangsheng, otherwise known as cross-talk, is an art form that originated from Mainland China during the Qing dynasty (1636–1911). Xiangsheng commonly features two performers who engage in light-hearted banter which is peppered with Chinese idioms

and proverbs to provoke laughter from the audience. Xiangsheng also develops audience members' appreciation for the Mainland Chinese culture and tradition through the Chinese cultural references. While xiangsheng is a Chinese-language art form that originated from Mainland China, Singaporean xiangsheng artists re-invented the art form, by incorporating bilingual dialogue to reflect the linguistic landscape of multilingual Singapore. This paper will trace the history of bilingual xiangsheng performances in Singapore to consider how it reifies the complex cultural politics between Singapore and Mainland China in laying claim to – and re-inventing – the form of xiangsheng. I posit that the history of bilingual xiangsheng performances in Singapore – shapes and is shaped by – Singapore's evolving political and cultural ties with China. Through a close examination of the key themes in the bilingual xiangsheng performances and the discourses around them, I will consider how Singaporean xiangsheng performers have used the bilingual dialogue to negotiate with – and subvert – conventions of the Mainland Chinese xiangsheng. In so doing, I will delineate how Singaporean performers have attempted to change the minds of audience members who have viewed xiangsheng as simply a Mainland Chinese art form.

The question of first: amputations and hospitals in Port Phillip, Australia 1836-1839
Prof Meredith Temple-Smith

For 80 years from 1787, more than 162,000 British and Irish convicts were sent to penal colonies in Australia. Many were kept below deck for the entire trip, and the long sea voyage with short rations, poor sanitation, and infectious diseases, meant that on landing many convicts needed hospitalisation. Priority was given to setting up a functional hospital and while the first hospitals were generally in tents, they were replaced by appropriate buildings as soon as possible. In contrast, Port Phillip, later to become Melbourne, was established in 1835 by free settlers, and in 1836 was proclaimed as a colony by the British government, who initially considered the climate there to be so healthy that no hospital would be needed. When events proved otherwise, government medical care was initially only offered to government representatives, soldiers, and assigned convicts, in primitive conditions.

From that time until 1846 when the subscription-based Melbourne Hospital opened, few official medical records survive. Serious medical events, such as certain infectious diseases, accidents and deaths, were reported in the local newspaper. What was reported publicly as the first amputation in the colony occurred following an accident at a celebration, but government records show an earlier amputation - of the penis of a convict. The case of convict William Bone is used to highlight the shortcomings of the first government hospital and the challenges in venereal diseases management in the years in which Port Phillip was being established.

Beyond Human Originality: AI Outputs and Copyright Law in Australia and the United States

Nirogini Thambaiya

The rise of AI outputs is challenging the conventional framework of Australian copyright law, which has primarily focused on human authorship for copyright protection. Throughout the history of copyright law, intellectual works originating from non-human forms have not been recognised as eligible for copyright protection. Apart from human authorship, the advent of AI outputs poses challenges to other core principles of Australian copyright law, such as originality, ownership, and material form. This research analyses the challenges posed by AI outputs to the traditional principles of Australian copyright law. It compares Australian copyright law with that of the United States (USA) to draw lessons from how that jurisdiction has addressed the challenges arising from the intersection of AI outputs and copyright law. The research evaluates recent developments in the USA, including the USA Copyright Office's Statement of Policy (2023), the USA Copyright Office Report (2025), and USA Copyright decisions on AI-generated outputs. By analysing the complexities posed by AI outputs and drawing lessons from recent developments in these two jurisdictions, this research argues for a forward-thinking legislative approach in Australia while emphasising the need to reform its copyright law to effectively address the challenges posed by AI outputs.

The Taranaki Punch – the use of satire as a devise for British Imperial propaganda

Dr Annie Thomas

This presentation—part of a broader examination of mid to late nineteenth century Australian and New Zealand Punch magazines—explores the contents of the Taranaki Punch (1860–1861). The Taranaki Punch was modelled on the original Punch or the London Charivari (1841-1992; 1996 - 2002), one of the most successful satirical periodicals of the Victorian era. The original Punch was one of the most imitated nineteenth-century periodicals outside of London, yet it has only been in recent decades that analyses of Punch magazines beyond the original have been produced. The satirical writing and cartoons of each unique colonial magazine bearing the Punch name examined to date have proven to be rich sources for understanding the complex, variegated and contested cultural landscapes that comprised the British Empire. However, much of this work has been focused on Punches produced in Asia and there are still significant gaps in our understanding of numerous Antipodean Punches. The Taranaki Punch was produced during the first major New Zealand land war of the mid nineteenth century fought between Māori and British Imperial troops; the latter often stymied by superior Māori war tactics. The idea that satire is oftentimes used to cathartically express a theorised emotional triad of contempt, anger and disgust (CAD) at the satirical target will be discussed. It will be demonstrated that the Taranaki Punch

employed satire to both express and elicit the CAD emotions to reinforce Māori as 'other', and to propagandise notions of British military and racial superiority.

Commemorating Iraq and Afghanistan: The changing face of modern Australian war memorials

Paige Timms

Australians have been building war memorials since before Federation, resulting in a long and storied tradition of conflict commemoration within the physical landscape. But in a world rapidly changing through technological advancement, the way in which war is being fought and subsequently remembered is also changing. Conflicts of the 21st century now pose challenges to traditional methods of remembrance. Modern wars were not popular with the Australian public, and ongoing allegations of war crimes continue to mar the conduct of Australian soldiers in the Middle East, complicating the way service and sacrifice is to be memorialised. Although more than 50,000 Australians were involved in the military operations of Iraq and Afghanistan, resulting in 52 deaths and hundreds more casualties, there remains a delay in the construction of new physical sites of commemoration to these conflicts. The past mythology of Anzac, underpinning the language and style of most war memorials in Australia, cannot be as easily applied. This paper explores the resulting challenges and solutions through the limited commemoration that has occurred. First, a disproportionate emphasis on explosive detection dogs can be seen as a safe entry point into discussion of the wars, where innate innocence and volunteer status remain within the realm of comfort. The paper then explores the commemoration of veteran deaths by suicide, which sit firmly outside the realm of comfort, as a form of remembrance that moves beyond the traditional Anzac mythology and begins to broaden the scope of who is considered as the fallen in war.

Migrant Music-Making and Dance in Postwar Australia: Searching The Good Neighbour with AI

A/Prof Nicholas Tochka and Dr Emily Fitzgerald

Between 1950 and 1969, the Australian Department of Immigration published *The Good Neighbour*, a monthly bulletin distributed by the Good Neighbour Council. Its stated goal was to assist recent migrants in assimilating to their new homeland; in practice, the bulletin sought to foster wider public acceptance of non-English-speaking newcomers from Europe. In representing these migrants to the Australian public, music-making and dancing featured prominently in the pages of *The Good Neighbour*, providing a wealth of information about the cultural activities of these so-called "New Australians.

Our project sought to identify the articles in *The Good Neighbour* that featured music-making and dancing and who the migrants were, building a dataset to be able to explore how music-making and dance helped construct "the good migrant" while diversifying our

understanding of postwar music-making in Australia. Using Large Language Models (LLMs) we were able to create a database of articles and people mentioned in the Good Neighbour, and key details about them, including any connection to music or dance. From there we developed a searchable website with visualisations and links back to the articles, to help answer these questions.

This paper will share how we undertook this project, and the questions, challenges, and insights we found through the process.

Cross Culturalizing Historian: Rethinking Japanese Public History via the adaptation of Minoru Hokari

Takuya Tokuhara

Since the mid-2010s, the reception and institutionalization of public history in Japan has accelerated significantly. One important yet understudied factor in this development is the influence of Minoru Hokari, an Australian-trained scholar whose work on Aboriginal historical practice has become a touchstone in Japanese public history discourse. Hokari's 2004 book *Radical Oral History: Indigenous Australian Historical Practice* introduced the idea that all agents participate in history-making, a thesis that has been widely cited in Japan as foundational for understanding "historical practice" outside traditional academic boundaries.

However, the reception of Hokari's work in Japan has often been ambivalent. Many Japanese scholars frame him as a surprising or even anomalous figure—almost a "trickster" in the intellectual landscape—leading some critics to dismiss both Hokari and public history as fleeting trends. In this presentation, I argue that this mischaracterization stems from reading Hokari outside the intellectual and institutional contexts that shaped his work. Rather than an isolated radical, Hokari emerges as a cross-cultural historian whose position at the intersection of Australian Indigenous studies, anthropology, and historiography offers a critical node for transnational dialogue.

Re-situating Hokari in relation to broader Australian historical research—including Indigenous methodologies and Deep Time approaches—reveals that his ideas are neither idiosyncratic nor peripheral. By examining the transpacific flows of historical theory and practice, this paper re-evaluates Hokari's role in shaping Japanese public history and explores possibilities for continued dialogue between Japanese and Australian historical communities.

The Arc Of The Spears: Museums Spaces And Mythic Retellings Of Australian History

Alice Tompson

On 29 April 1770, the Kamay Spears were stolen from the people of the Dharawal nation of Kamay (now known as Botany Bay). On this day, the Gweagal people and the crew of the Endeavour encountered each other for the first time. Within the broader colonial project of collecting, these spears were transformed from cultural tools to pieces of historical significance. As the only known objects from Australia with a documented Cook provenance, the spears were forgotten within the cabinets of Trinity College, Cambridge for over a century. When calls were made for their repatriation, it sparked a movement to retell the history of Australia.

The Kamay spears tell a story, they hold memories, they represent the taking of Aboriginal culture, creations and knowledge, and their journey shows the changes and contestations in power over historical voices. This paper tracks the historical arc of the spears, grounded in their journey from the shores of Kamay to the shelves of Cambridge, and argues that the spears both symbolise and problematise the mythic retelling of history-making based on the resistance of the Gweagal people to the landing of the British.

Class Action: Examining Australian newspaper coverage of student and youth protests against the Iraq War
Dr Nicole Townsend

On 20 March 2003, a US-led "coalition of the willing" invaded Iraq. Western intervention was controversial, and it became the subject of global anti-war activism in the lead-up to and immediately following the commencement of hostilities. Among the assorted groups that comprised the anti-Iraq War movement were students and youth, who opposed the war both collectively as part of the broader movement and separately in dedicated student protests. While youth activism surrounding the Iraq War has been the subject of academic study internationally, Australian protests have received less attention in the context of the Iraq War. By examining newspaper coverage of student and youth protests between January and April 2003, this paper examines how these protesters were presented by the Australian print media. It argues that coverage initially framed student protesters in a positive–neutral light until the war began, at which point the framing became increasingly negative, focusing on the deviance, truancy, and competency of students and youth, and their vulnerability to exploitation by external parties.

The Limits of Idealism: Woodrow Wilson and the Mexican Revolution
Dr James Trapani

Woodrow Wilson sought to distance his Latin American policy from his Republican predecessors through the rhetoric of idealism. By stating that his administration would abandon Gunboat Diplomacy and that the US would become a benevolent he attempted to change the minds of key members of the Pan-American Union. However, events in

Mexico severely tested that rhetoric. One month before his inauguration, the US ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, provided US consent to a coup that deposed and murdered the democratically elected President Francisco Madero. President Wilson was opposed to the action and sought to remove the coup's architect Victoriano Huerta through non-recognition, by providing weapons to chosen revolutionaries and eventually by invading Mexico in 1914. In Mexico, Wilson's idealism was limited to his opposition to Huerta's illegitimate government. His actions unleashed the most violent phase of the Mexican Revolution and denied full recognition to a new constitutional government that challenged US ownership of Mexican land and sub-soil rights. Therefore, Wilson's rhetoric of idealism did not amount to tangible support for Mexican self-determination and did not ultimately change the minds of the Pan-American union regarding US intentions in the region.

History in the Present Tense: Podcasting Contemporary History Beyond the Academy

Dr Mathew Turner

This paper reflects on the recent creation of History Currents, a Deakin University Centre for Contemporary Histories podcast that I conceived, research, script, host, and edit. The podcast examines urgent contemporary questions—gun laws, antisemitism, the housing shortage, failed referenda, the concept of fascism, disability policy—by tracing their longer historical trajectories. It is designed for a general audience but grounded in the expertise of professional historians, situating complex and polarised issues within deeper historical contexts without advancing a single interpretation.

The podcast draws on interviews with professional historians and other scholars in structured, narrative episodes. As producer and host, I make decisions about topic selection, interviews, editing, and narrative voice. These interpretive choices shape how context and causation become intelligible to listeners.

Reflecting on "changing minds" also requires reflecting on where our work circulates. Much historical writing is directed primarily to other historians, whereas podcasting demands sustained engagement with non-specialist audiences—bringing the "public" back into the idea of the "public intellectual". It places questions of clarity, authority, and structure at the centre. What forms of explanation travel beyond the academy? When does clarity sharpen understanding, and when does it risk simplification? How much historiographical insight can be conveyed in a 30-minute episode? The podcast is less about persuasion than about testing what it means to practise contemporary history outside conventional academic formats, and about equipping listeners with historically informed tools to reconsider their assumptions. The paper asks what practising contemporary history deliberately in public requires of the discipline.

Do You Mind? The Relationship Between Historian and the Secrets of the Past
Dr Hannah Viney

One of the greatest archival finds of my career was a literal 'Dear John' letter hidden in divorce case proceedings from 1940. In this letter, Louise laid into her soon-to-be-ex-husband John about his failed business dealings and debt, scathingly remarking "you can keep the wedding ring to remind you of how much you have let me down." As a historian, this letter is gold. It gives a clear voice to Louise and demonstrates perfectly her own agency. Yet this was a letter that was never intended to be read by someone other than John. I've talked about this letter in other papers and publications, as evidence of Louise's strong character. But I wonder: do I, as the historian, have the right to reveal something so personal never intended to be made public? Historians juggle questions of consent, privacy, truth, and harm. It is easy to get lost in the joy of discovery or the commitment to historical truthtelling. This paper asks, what is the historian's responsibility to the individual they study? And then, when we tell a story over and over again, whose story is it really? As the world ventures further into the Age of AI, and we grapple with how to convince the wider world of the importance of human historians, I argue it is more crucial than ever to ask these questions. Histories are never disconnected from the people in them—those who write them or those who are written about—but what is the relationship between the two?

Making the Invisible Knowable: Generative AI as a Tool for Speculative Historiography
Mohamad Waheed Fareed Abdelfattah

The capacity to ""change one's mind"" is often predicated on the availability of evidence. Yet, for many marginalized histories, the archive is not merely incomplete; it is a space of enforced silence. This paper presents the work of LO(C)AI (Lab of Creative/Critical AI) : https://locai.carrd.co/ to argue that generative AI, when used as a critical thinking partner, can facilitate ""speculative reconstruction"" a method that allows researchers to interrogate narratives where traditional documentation has failed.

We present three projects that challenge the ""meagre"" histories often associated with AI. NEW LANDS addresses the archival absence of the Egyptian Labor Corps during World War I, using generative processes to translate fragmented subaltern memories into a visual language of forced mobility. Echoes of Time utilizes node-based logic to reject linear chronologies, visualizing the ""temporal entanglement"" of a historic fortress where ancient and contemporary strata coexist simultaneously. Finally, The Bauhausifier reactivates Bauhaus principles through an interactive system that translates human movement into generative forms, moving beyond static historical aesthetics.

Together, these projects demonstrate that AI is not a ""poor facsimile"" of humanistic inquiry, but a provocation that forces us to change our minds about the limits of the knowable. By embracing abstraction and ethical speculation, we argue that AI allows for a more honest account of historical preoccupations, helping to recover collective memories and spatial relations that remain invisible to conventional historiography.

Bob Katter's Populist Initiatives: Tilting at Windmills or Misplaced Power Seeking?
Dr William Wallace

This paper examines the populist power seeking strategies of Bob (B.) Katter and Katter's Australian Party (KAP), asking whether Katter's legislative agenda is best described as futile 'tilting at windmills' or a coherent populist strategy oriented more toward electoral mobilisation than policy success. Drawing on Kurt Weyland's political strategic conception of populism, the paper analyses the relationship between KAP's policy objectives, legislative agendas, and leadership praxes at both the federal and state levels. Using qualitative case study methods, the study conducts a thematic content analysis of party manifestos, parliamentary speeches, bills introduced into parliament, media statements, and semi-structured interviews with KAP Queensland (KAPQ) MPs.

The findings reveal a sharp divergence between KAP's federal and state trajectories. At the federal level, B. Katter has consistently pursued an agenda centred on economic interventionism and protectionism, calibrated to appeal to 'rusted off' rural and regional voters. However, despite introducing numerous bills, Katter has failed to secure any legislative success in the Commonwealth Parliament. This ineffectiveness is attributed to Katter's unwavering commitment to policy positions that lack support from other actors in contemporary Australian politics. In contrast, KAPQ, under Robbie (R.) Katter's leadership, has adopted a more focused agrarian legislative strategy and achieved significant parliamentary success. The paper concludes that Katter's dearth of legislative 'wins' at the federal level has undermined the party's ability to effectively attract rusted off voters. In turn, this has led to a strategic reorientation of KAP away from the federal sphere towards Queensland state politics.

Theodor Mommsen and the Erasure of Women from the Roman Narrative
A/Prof Kathryn Welch

Many generations of Roman historians have probably never read Mommsen's Römische Geschichte. Even so, this best-selling, widely translated, Nobel Prize-winning work has had an enduring influence on the structure of the traditional Roman Republican syllabus. It can be discerned both in the ways that individual stories are related and in a common approach to periodization. More importantly, Mommsen is largely responsible for the (artificial) division between "political history" and "social history" that ensures the relegation of the latter from "proper" syllabuses.

Mommsen's choices and prejudices still affect our reading of Roman women. Their public role was largely tied to religious ritual which in his view had to be kept separate from politics. Even women who, according to our sources, played a political role or intervened in some way in political outcomes are erased from his narrative or, if they are included, praised for their "domestic" virtues in very un-Roman terms.

Understanding the artificial nature of Mommsen's narrative structure (which is still followed in certain current textbooks), his narrow definition of "political", and his own prejudices allows us to gain a better understanding of how gender difference operated in Republican Rome and encourages us to write women back into a study of the Roman community and its politics. This paper hopes to demonstrate not only the problem but also a solution in such a way that reintroducing women into the narrative can at once be easy, normal and more in keeping with the ancient evidence.

Venomous Proximities: Snakes, Irrigation, and Everyday Risk
Dr Amanda Wells

Post-WWII irrigation schemes in South Australia's Riverland promised order, productivity, and control over a semi-arid landscape. In the mid-twentieth century, Citrus orchards, channels, and new housing reshaped Mallee scrub into a region associated with agricultural modernity. These changes, however, also created favourable habitats for Snakes. This paper traces the presence of Snakes, particularly the highly feared Brown Snake, within orchards, pump sheds, and domestic yards. Drawing on settler writings, local newspapers, and agricultural records, it shows how settlers encountered Snakes as recurring co-inhabitants of blocks and homes rather than as rare intrusions from an external 'wild'. Practices of vigilance, avoidance, and killing reveal the embodied and emotional dimensions of agricultural life, where the possibility of envenomation remained part of everyday experience. In dialogue with histories of Australian snakebite science, including the work of Peter Hobbins, this paper extends attention to the irrigated landscapes and domestic spaces where many human–Snake encounters occurred. Snakes emerge as reminders that irrigation did not eliminate environmental danger, but reconfigured how and where it was lived.

Shared oral histories build community networks. Can they survive as an open archive in the rapidly changing digital space?
Peter Whalley-Thompson

How can a community-based pocket-film archive of community members' stories be designed and governed in ways that are ethically robust, relationally responsive, and fit for multiple future uses?

The memory landscape of the Cowpastures in monuments, memorials and murals
Dr Ian Willis

In the early colonial period of New South Wales, the Cowpastures was a vague area south of the Nepean River, on the southern edge of Sydney's Cumberland Plain. For a period, the Cowpastures was a government reserve, the colonial frontier and a functional geographic region, and covered a significant part of what is now the Macarthur region. In addition, it played a foundational role in Australia's nation-building story.

Building on Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton's observation in their book *Memory & History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (1994: 4) that collective memories are 'all around us in the language, action and material culture of our everyday life', I often wondered why the cultural material representing the Cowpastures appeared to have been 'forgotten' by the Macarthur community.

The Macarthur region is characterised by high urban growth and increasing ethnic diversity, with new arrivals creating new stories while suppressing existing ones. According to Andrea Gaynor in History Australia (Dec, 2025: 526-527), history can build bridges 'at a local level…that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity or income' by creating stories.

Using an empirical case study approach, I will illustrate attempts at community re-engagement with the Cowpastures cultural memory and the legacy of the settler society through storytelling and public art. In the process, demonstrating how the past speaks to the present through representations of the Cowpastures that are present in the Macarthur region.

Changing minds through changing bodies: the Winlaton tattoo removal program
Kirsten Wright

This paper will discuss a tattoo removal program which occurred at Winlaton, a notorious government-run youth training centre and juvenile justice facility for female state wards in Melbourne. Tattooing had been common at Winlaton since the 1960s and it was considered inappropriate and dangerous for the young women to have tattoos. Past in-house removal methods, and attempts to stop the tattooing, had not been successful. The Winlaton tattoo removal program, initially funded by a grant from the Commonwealth Schools Commission, ran for around 8 years in the 1980s and was most active from 1981-84.

The paper will discuss the conditions at Winlaton that led to the development of the tattoo removal program, describe the mechanics of removing the tattoo, and consider why the staff at Winlaton felt it was important for the girls' tattoos to be removed. The name of the program, "Tattoos Shape Your Future", speaks to the concerns about women

and tattoos, ideas around rehabilitation and re-entering into mainstream society, and the policing and control of young women's bodies which were already controlled in so many ways within the institution.

There was considerable publicity around the program. Tattoo removal was always portrayed as a positive, and the institution's efforts to change the bodies of young women in Winlaton was seen as a way to change people's perceptions about these young women. The paper will also situate the Winlaton tattoo removal program within the broader history of tattooing in Melbourne at that time.

The 'company man': hegemonic masculinity and Australia's mid-century corporate executives

Dr Claire Wright

The mid-twentieth century represents an important moment in the history Australian managerial capitalism. In the aftermath of the Great Depression and Second World War, entrepreneurial capitalism was replaced, not by socialism as some feared, but by professionals in control of a technocratic, bureaucratic state. The 'company man' was the central figure of mid-century managerialism, and he exchanged hard work and commitment to the organisation in return for lifelong employment and structured promotional success. Responding to a significant gap in the business history literature – in which businessmen are everywhere, but are rarely analysed as men – this paper applies hegemonic masculinity to analyse the entangling of management and masculinity in Australia's mid-century corporations. Examining the lives of top corporate managers between 1930 and 1986, I find that company men embodied values and behaviours that reified a specific, culturally-dominant masculinity. Manhood, for company men, was obtained through professional devotion, hierarchical success, deference from subordinates, and military discipline. Individual brilliance and 'hands on' experience was a way of performing dominance, and they valued strength and security gleaned from hard work in service to the corporation. Finally, they were outwardly stoic and humble, and suppressed both feminine emotions, and the confidence and competitiveness of entrepreneurs. This gendering of corporate management can provide insight into the barriers that women and other minorities face in the workplace today, and can help re-shape them with a focus on equality for all.

Building an Operative Chinatown: Narrative Governance in Neoliberal Urban Renewal

Zeng Wu

This paper argues that Sydney's Chinatown in the late twentieth century should be understood as both a historiographical object and an infrastructure of global capitalism. On one hand, it examines the historiography of Chinatown: how a usable narrative is

assembled, who is authorised to speak, how tone is managed, and how oral histories and selective archival mobilisation consolidate a story that is neither multicultural triumph nor simple racial conflict. On the other hand, it examines the professional and institutional machinery that makes this narrative appear self-evident through cycles of design upgrade, heritage conservation, and exhibition practice that produce new historical evidence and secure it through an urban growth coalition.

The central claim is that Chinatown's public history is not only written but built, curated, and serviced as a catalyst for intensive precinct development. Symbolic streetscapes, pedestrianisation, festival calendars, interpretive signage, curated archives, and civic or museum exhibitions operate as a proof making apparatus that diverts attention from development questions such as housing justice and ecology. They stabilise legible difference, translate contested histories into consumable atmospheres, and render the precinct governable within global city logics of tourism, property, and transnational mobility. This apparatus also sustains strategic ambiguity, allowing overseas Chinese and Australian Chinese to remain related yet autonomous identity positions that can be accepted, and financialised, across conflicting ideological demands.

By tracing this two-way mechanism in Sydney, the paper reframes late twentieth century Chinatown making as narrative governance embedded in neoliberal urban renewal, managing the public intelligibility of conflict while organising flows of capital, visitors, and value through the precinct form.

Conduct After Capture: The Australian Korean War POW captivity experience's influence upon British Commonwealth protocols and training

Dr Robert Wyse

An overlooked aspect of the Australian prisoner of war experience during the Korean War, is the role it played in shaping the development of a uniform British Commonwealth policy on conduct after capture and resistance to interrogation training. Before the conflict, Australian and other Commonwealth militaries devoted little time to preparing personnel for the possibility of captivity. However, the treatment and behaviour of prisoners held by Chinese and North Korean forces prompted a substantial reassessment of existing assumptions and training practices. Through analysis of submissions made by British and selected Commonwealth armed services to the 1953 committee tasked with formulating a unified policy on this subject, this paper highlights how deeply embedded views among senior British officers influenced the committee's conclusions, and restricted opportunities for meaningful policy reconsideration. This paper demonstrates that these entrenched attitudes, combined with subsequent concerns about the effectiveness of Chinese political indoctrination, drove a significant

expansion of conduct after capture and resistance to interrogation training across Commonwealth forces in the ensuing decades.

Changing Our Mind About Keats: Women and Femininity
Susan Xia

Since the 1980s, coinciding with the rise of feminist literary criticism, critics have analysed Keats's letters for evidence of his anxiety about gender, especially in his thinking about women and the feminine. Often, these critics also take a biographical approach to Keats's poetry, with a particular focus on his narrative poems, in search of further evidence of Keats's contradictory feelings toward women which, they claim, result in his desire to suppress and silence them. However, Keats's narrative poems have an alternative story to tell. Examining the representation of women in Keats's narrative poetry, and refusing the reduction of poetry to biography, this paper argues that Keats's female characters are in fact transgressive figures, challenging many of the ideals of femininity perpetuated in early nineteenth-century Britain.

In order to demonstrate this new perspective on Keats's thinking about women and the feminine, this paper will analyse conduct manuals and that were circulating in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, as well as other writings on gender such as early feminist manifestos, to establish the feminine ideal that was popularised in the period. This paper will interrogate how the figure of the desexualised virgin came to be venerated, resulting in an equally passionate condemnation of women who expressed desires outside of this increasingly narrow ideal. From here, the paper will analyse how four of Keats's female characters – Isabella, Madeline, the Belle Dame and Lamia – challenge the feminine ideal. Ultimately, this paper seeks to shift the perspective on Keats, from a poet who sought to suppress the female and feminine, to a poet who thinks of women as complex, exceeding the limitations of a narrow ideal.

Indigenous People and Affairs in Australia's Chinese-Language Newspapers, 1894 – 1912
Dr Daozhi Xu

Australia's Chinese-language newspapers published a diverse range of opinions about Indigenous people and affairs at the turn of the twentieth century. Reflecting Chinese domestic exigencies, these newspapers projected Chinese apprehensions about the Chinese race, nation state, and diasporic community onto Indigenous Australians. The corresponding Indigenous images fell into three interconnected categories: a 'dying' race, a colonised nation, and a dispossessed people. First, from primarily a racial perspective, some Chinese news articles echoed racial discourses circulating in China and expressed concerns over China's fate, by reinforcing the image of Indigenous Australians as an inferior and 'dying' race. Second, through the lens of nation states,

some articles drew parallels between the British occupation of Indigenous Australia and the encroachment on China by British and other imperial powers, wherein Indigenous Australia was recognised as being 'sovereign' like China was sovereign. Third, speaking of Indigenous Australians as a people, some articles addressed the similar suffering endured by Indigenous and Chinese peoples under imperial control, and the shared racial exclusion experienced by Indigenous Australians and Chinese migrants. This paper will give a panoramic view of the Chinese news coverage of Indigenous people and affairs between 1894 and 1912. The nuances and implications of these perspectives promulgated within and beyond Chinese communities in Australia, as well as their limitations, will be analysed.

An Antipodean Catalyst: How John Keane's Understanding of Civil Society Helped Change the Eastern Bloc's Political Imagination

Hexiong Yang

In The Life and Death of Democracy, the Australian political theorist John Keane proposes a new model of democracy that relies on civil society groups and watchdog institutions to replace older models of governance. The formation of Keane's ideas on democracy and civil society is directly linked to the political reality and changes of the Eastern Bloc of Europe, and Keane's ideas can be understood as both a catalyst beforehand and a summary afterward of communism's fall in that region. This paper will critically examine the role of Keane's ideas and notions of civil society in the change of mind, the change of route, and the downfall of communism in the Eastern Bloc by tracing the intellectual genealogy and influences in Keane's formation and narration of civil society.

To achieve the aim of this paper, I shall argue that the intellectual lineage of Keane's understanding of civil society is highly Eurocentric and it almost exactly coincides with the conventional intellectual history of Europe. Consequently, I argue that Keane's Eurocentric lineage is precisely why his understanding of civil society could be systematically developed and serve as a catalyst for the change of mind in Europe—the very soil of its intellectual history—rather than elsewhere. In the end, based on the example of Keane, I shall propose a further question: to what extent, shall the intellectual historians from Australia take the burdens and legacies from the intellectual history of Europe?

Changing Our Minds about Medical Students through the Pages of 'The Speculum', 1884-1915

Prof Neville Yeomans

It was in 1884, twenty-four years after the medical school at The University of Melbourne began, that its students produced the first issue of their newspaper, 'The Speculum'. This paper examines what insights their writing offer about students' life and priorities from

Speculum's inception until WWI. It is unsurprising that articles often discussed their teaching and teachers, and some were educational: essays on particular diseases, and lectures reprinted verbatim. Obsession with examinations was no different in the late nineteenth century than today. Many entries concerned sport and smoke nights, but the students apparently attended theatre performances in groups, and the male students were clearly devotees of some female actresses. Then we read about the first pioneering women, finally admitted in 1887. Articles that followed illustrate how they were received—both positively and negatively. Another feature was the profusion of student poetry. A regular contributor, writing in faultless iambic pentameter, was Professor Harry Brooks Allen—one of the early graduates of the Melbourne school, a polymath and long-serving academic. I searched hard for any discussion of Australian Federation in the issues from 1899-2001, to no avail. Clearly this momentous event had not registered with medical student journalists. When war broke out, 'The Speculum' brought stories from the front by alumni, often full of bravado and less than they might have been about the tragedy and futility. These pages give insight into the thinking of colonial medical students of that time, changing this author's mind from his earlier imagining.

Saving Tasmania's Last Wild River: How film changed a continent's relationship with wilderness

Logan Yogi

In 1976, as the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission prepared to flood the Franklin-Gordon wilderness area, environmentalists began crafting a series of films that would forever change how Australians saw the Bush and themselves. Over the next few years, the Tasmanian Wilderness Society deployed a specific, yet evolving, visual media strategy that transformed a remote Tasmanian wilderness into a site of national heritage and belonging for mainland Australians. This project examines how six environmental documentaries produced during the campaign–The Last Wild River (1977), Tasmania's South West: A Wilderness in Question (1979), The Franklin Wild River (1980), Franklin River Journey (1980), Gordon Splits (1982), and Huon Cry (1983)–employed a visual and rhetorical lexicon to mobilize unprecedented public support for wilderness preservation.

This environmental and cultural history analysis reveals how the Franklin River documentaries built upon a long history of romanticizing Tasmanian wilderness through picturesque and sublime aesthetic techniques pioneered by nineteenth-century artists like John Glover and twentieth-century photographers like John Watt Beattie. The films used these techniques to immerse viewers in nostalgic, romantic landscapes while systematically excluding Indigenous presence from the land, constructing wilderness as untouched, pristine, and available for settler appropriation.

The Franklin documentaries' success lay not in creating entirely novel ideas about wilderness, but in adapting Tasmania's existing visual wilderness lexicon on screen. This project demonstrates the crucial role of the environmental documentary in both shaping modern environmentalism in Australia and elevating the cause of wilderness preservation to a matter of Australian national identity.

La China: An Ephemeral Chinese–Mexican Community in San Antonio and One Family's Extraordinary Journey across Asia, Mexico, and the United States
Shouyue Zhang

Chong Kung Dong, a native of Guangdong, China, migrated to Mexico in the early twentieth century before becoming entangled in the Mexican Revolution along the U.S.–Mexico border. During the U.S. Punitive Expedition against Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa in 1916–1917, Dong served as one of several hundred Chinese logistical personnel attached to General John Pershing's forces. Although the expedition failed to capture Villa, Pershing brought 527 Chinese refugees, or "Pershing Chinese," back to the United States, despite the ongoing enforcement of Chinese exclusion laws. Eventually, 365 of these Chinese migrants, including Dong, benefited from U.S. Public Resolution No. 29 (1921), which granted them legal residence as an exception in recognition of their military service.

They settled in a neighborhood locally known as La China in San Antonio. There, they operated small businesses and formed close ties with Mexican American communities, facilitated by their fluency in Spanish. Dong ran a gambling house in a Chinese Freemasons Lodge and married a Mexican woman. Together, they raised a family whose subsequent generations continued to serve in the U.S. military, with deployments in Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan.

By the 1960s, La China itself was erased through urban renewal. The Central West Area Project displaced low-income and racialized communities and destroyed over 90 percent of the neighborhood's buildings. Tracing the rise and disappearance of La China alongside the Dong family's overseas service and interracial marriages, this presentation illuminates how marginalized individuals navigated shifting regimes of exclusion and empire in the twentieth century.

Imperial Fascists in New South Wales: Who were the Interwar Australians who joined the New Guard?
Anthony Zougras

The New Guard of 1930s Australia is a group who, for the most part, is forgotten in modern memory. Its members, those not named Campbell or De Groot, aren't well-known in popular memory or well-studied, and as such the Guard's social character has continued

to be a question to historians. A lack of quantitative data and documents from the Guard itself have been cause of much of this. However, through the use of digitised newspapers and local historical societies, I have begun to build biographies of Guardsmen from all walks of life, from the working class to upper. This paper will examine a group of these 'forgotten' New Guardsmen, detailing the process undertaken to uncover their life history and explaining who they were. These include businessmen of the highest order within Sydney's upper class, travelling dentists, farmers, plumbers, and too many councillors to count. Through these case studies, questions such as who the Guardsmen were, why they joined, and how similar the Guard was to other interwar fascist groups in terms of its social character will all be explored. Finally, this paper will seek to examine whether, in the face of lacking quantitative data, a true social character can be revealed from case studies alone.