

Friends of the National Library of Australia Inc.

23rd Annual General Meeting – 14 November 2016

Chairman's Report

Good evening, Friends. My name is Robyn Oates and I am Chair of the Friends of the National Library Committee. I am delighted to bring you the Chairman's report for 2016.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my fellow committee members who have given so much of their time, their care and their own professional skills as well as their great sense of camaraderie, to our activities and decisions over this past year. Three members will step down, having served the maximum three years as committee members. They are John Seymour, Alan Kerr and me. (John and Alan have been 'gold' and I thank them for their three years of commitment and many hours of work.) Also, Alan Ives has been unable to sustain his commitment to the Friends Committee because of ill health. I thank him for the steadfast support he has given the Friends in many different ways over many years.

2016 was another successful year for the Friends of the National Library. Allowing for small variations, our membership has maintained itself within the 1900-2000 band. Although this is sound, we recognize the need to maintain our numbers. A sub-committee was convened in October to develop a strategic plan for increasing and consolidating Friends' membership.

2016 saw a total of eight functions held by the Friends so far, with one event still to come in late November.

Our new membership benefits program and the NLA Discount to Friends members of 15% off all online ticket purchases to National Library events have been taken up with gusto.

Running events is not always a profitable exercise. We depend completely on the sale of tickets to cover overheads. Nevertheless this year the White Gloves evening; the Friends & Australian Garden History Society joint lecture; the popular Coffee with a Curator; the Friends exclusive viewings of Celestial Empire and the S. T. Gill

exhibition all made modest profits. The second Harold White Lecture, although well patronized, ran at a loss.

Our last event of the year will be a private viewing for members and their guests, of the new Library exhibition *The Sell: Australian Advertising 1790s-1910s*. This will be your first opportunity to hear curator Dr Susannah Helman speak about creating the exhibition, delving into the colourful past of print and audio advertising. I do hope you'll be able to join us for this event on Friday 25 November.

The Friends Book Club is now a separate entity. It has been renamed the Lake View Book Club, and continues to meet on the last Tuesday of the month in the Friends Lounge at 6.15p.m.

In 2016 we have made clear moves into electronic communication. Our weekly e-newsletter is compiled in the Friends office and the statistics show that these emails get a considerably higher "hit and open" response than the average for such a newsletter. Our renewals are now sent by email and we are moving towards a digital quarterly newsletter.

This year has seen the closure of the NLA Print Room. We thank the Library for the ongoing in-kind support for editing, design and production management of the newsletter and e-flyers and for media liaison, subject to available resources.

The Friends now fund two fellowships. *The Friends of the National Library Creative Arts Fellow* for 2016, Micharne Cloughley, produced a stirring performance created from her research into the Hazel de Berg Oral Histories of Australian women. Micharne made inspiring, imaginative use of the recordings. Not only did the performance highlight this superb NLA Collection but it held the audience spellbound. We look forward to following her career as an Australian screenwriter.

The Creative Fellowship presentation is now a free event, jointly managed by the Friends and the Library as one of the Library's annual public lectures for all fellowships. We thank the Library for taking us on board and we also thank Robyn Holmes for the many hours she gives to preparation for the selection process.

The current *Friends Travelling Fellow* is Monika Sjuneko [SHO-NAY-KO] and she will speak to us about her fellowship later this evening. She kept us informed, in real time, through her blog from the Bibliotheque National in Paris and the British Library in London.

There are many people who work behind the scenes to make all of these wonderful things happen. I especially acknowledge our Friends Office: Sharyn O'Brien, Kelli Turner and Belinda Jessup. Our splendid Executive Officer, Sharyn, has returned after 12 months on secondment. In Sharyn's absence Kelli Turner did a sterling job and we are most grateful for her diligence and commitment. Our Friends Administration Officer, Belinda Jessup has moved proficiently into the position this year. They have been of utmost value to the Friends and I thank them sincerely.

Also, I acknowledge the support of the National Library itself, through Anne-Marie Schwirtlich and her dedicated staff. Our organisation simply could not flourish without the continuing generosity of the NLA itself and on your behalf I extend our thanks to our Director and her staff.

Friends, that completes my account of our 2016 year.

I now call upon our Treasurer, James Ferguson, to present the financial report.

Robyn Oates

Chair

Friends of the National Library

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