

# HISTORICAL SOCIETIES: STRENGTHENING *and* PROMOTING COMMUNITIES

Australia is served by around 1200 community history and heritage societies, operating in every electorate and local government area across the nation. Collectively they harness the skills and energy of approximately 100,000 members and volunteers who contribute hundreds of thousands of hours of work, which the FAHS conservatively values at \$144 million per annum. They add incalculable social value through:



Building safer, stronger communities, bonded by a shared understanding of local history and heritage and an intersectional exchange of knowledge.



Contributing to lifelong learning, from providing history education to school students, to developing digital skills for older Australians to facilitate social engagement.



Creating enriching visitor experiences, especially in regional Australia where cultural tourism is a major source of revenue.



Helping to tell the story of the world's longest living culture, showcasing our national identity, and seeking to preserve our cultural heritage through engagement, education, and storytelling.



Supporting the health, mental health and well-being of older Australians, providing active ageing activities and skills that contribute to society, and continue to be valued in the senior years.

# MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS *of* VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY HISTORICAL *and* HERITAGE SOCIETIES

## FOSTER VOLUNTEERING

For enhanced social cohesion, inclusion and wellbeing. The social, cultural and mental health benefits of volunteering are well known. Historical societies contribute significantly to their local communities through the opportunities they offer for voluntary work, fellowship and contributions to their wider community.

## EXHIBITIONS *and* MUSEUMS

Most societies mount at least small exhibitions, but many occupy premises that enable them to operate museums. A significant proportion of the latter are situated in non-metropolitan towns where they contribute to the local economy through heritage tourism.

## DEFEND

Increasingly, historical societies have become active in the defence of built and social heritage, and in advocating for the preservation of heritage sites in the face of inappropriate development.

## SHARE

Societies are major publishers of local history both hard copy and digital, and through lectures and other accessible formats they promote knowledge of and interest in local history and heritage. Visits by volunteers to schools, and by students to societies, educate our young people in our history and heritage. Tertiary students use collections for research and practicums.

## COLLECT *and* PRESERVE

Societies have collected and preserved millions of items which tell the story of Australia's cultural heritage and the Distributed National Collection. Increasingly their images, documents and artefacts, are being digitised and made available online, often through the Commonwealth-funded National Library of Australia Trove platform.

## RESEARCH

Society volunteers undertake research both as part of the work of their society and in responding to queries from members of the public.

## ONLINE *and* SOCIAL MEDIA

Through their websites and social media presence, societies are using modern digital technologies to publicise their presence, to increase their outreach, to make their collections widely available and to advocate for local history and heritage.

The Federation of Australian Historical Societies is the peak body that represents the network of Australia's 1200 community historical and heritage societies at the national level. Its constituent members, representing every state and territory are: Canberra and District Historical Society; Royal Australian Historical Society; Historical Society of the Northern Territory; The Royal Historical Society of Queensland; History Trust of South Australia; Tasmanian Historical Research Association; Royal Historical Society of Victoria; Royal Western Australian Historical Society.

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FEDERATION *of*  
**AUSTRALIAN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**