

# THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (Inc)

## GUIDANCE FOR FORMING NEW SOCIETIES

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document contains guidance to assist in the establishment of a new Historical Society.

An Historical Society may be established in any town or district within Western Australia. If one exists near you, investigate its goals and operations before proceeding as you could be duplicating a similar organisation.

### 2.0 FORMATION

There are certain steps that should be taken before deciding to form a Society:

#### 2.1 First determine whether a similar organisation doesn't already exist.

- Establish whether there is community interest in having a Society by calling a public meeting. A convenor will be needed to chair this meeting
- Discuss your idea with local councillors, local librarian, MP etc. for support.
- Arrange a venue at either a school, community hall, library, heritage building
- Date, time and agenda to be arranged by convenor
- Advertise the meeting with flyers at local libraries, community service groups, schools, community notice boards, editorial articles and interviews with community media (newspaper, radio)
- Notify the Administrative Officer of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (RWAHS) [histwest@git.com.au](mailto:histwest@git.com.au) of the meeting and invite a representative to attend as they can provide assistance. Also consider extending the invitation for a representative from any historical societies in nearby towns or suburbs.
- Outline why an Historical Society is needed and the benefits to the community.

#### 2.2 This very first meeting will indicate whether there is sufficient interest in the community for you to proceed. Indicators of such an interest would be:

- A minimum of five interested people that would enable a committee to be formed (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, committee member/s)
- These people would have to be willing to commit time to the new Society and regularly attend meetings.
- One of the first tasks for this group would be to draft a Constitution (see attached as an example)
- Draft a vision and mission statement (see attached as an example) and develop a strategic plan
- Set subscription fees
- Find a location to meet in regularly

#### 2.3 If there is low attendance, or doubt that office bearers can be appointed at this meeting, an alternative is to set up a working group to further the establishment of a Society and carry out the tasks set down in 2.2

### 3.0 CONVENING AN INAUGURAL MEETING

Advertise a date, time and venue for this meeting.

- The convenor can call for a signing of a register of the people present who generally become the foundation members.
- The convenor calls for nominations for the election of committee office bearers. If more than one nomination is received, a secret ballot should be held.

- The first office bearer is the President. On election, the Chair is then taken over by this nominated person and the convenor stands down. The President then calls for nominations to fill the other committee positions such as Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and a committee member.
- The Society now has a management committee.
- The new Chairperson, can declare the *Formation of the Society* giving it an agreed name.
- If a draft Constitution has been prepared, the Chairperson calls for a mover and seconder so that it can be adopted for discussion. If this is adopted then the Constitution is given effect and can be used for Incorporation if desired at a later date.
- The President may deal with other recommendations made by the working group. For example: the annual subscription for the first financial year and honorary auditor or auditors. The Treasurer can commence collecting subscriptions from foundation members once a fee is agreed.
- The elected committee can then arrange for further meetings to work on the draft constitution, organisational goals, meeting times etc.

#### 4.0 WHY HAVE A COMMITTEE AND INCORPORATION?

To run an organisation effectively from one meeting to the next, it is often easiest to elect a committee who is responsible for the running of the organisation. This committee enables the Society to:

- Carry out the agreed vision and goals
- Operate effectively
- Be accountable

Once a Society has become established, it may in time have to manage a range of items and responsibilities that it can fulfil with greater ease and transparency if it is an incorporated body. In addition, becoming an incorporated Society means that the organisation becomes a completely separate entity from its members. Information about incorporation can be found on the [the Dept. of Commerce's website \(http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/Content/Business/Associations/index.htm\)](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection/Content/Business/Associations/index.htm). Such items and responsibilities may be:

- Collections – accession, documentation, care, research, storage
- Funding – operating funds, budgeting, fund raising, grant applications, expenditure
- Information and communication – public promotion
- Volunteers, consultants, contractors, visitors and staff

#### 5.0 DEVELOPING YOUR SOCIETY

Your Society will need a regular meeting place. Investigate possibilities through your local government authority via your councillors or community services department. If you already have a collection or start collecting documents and artefacts you will need:

- organised and manageable collection guidelines focused on area, date or theme
- comprehensive collection record including ownership status of all items (forms for donations)
- collection housing, storage and care
- potential development of interpretation and display
- the development of a collection policy so that you don't become the repository for other peoples' junk.

Information that could help you with some of the above points includes:

- The Federal Government's guide to assessing the significance of collections (Significance 2.0). The document can be found at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/significance2-0/>

- The Collections Australia Network has developed National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries. This can be found at:  
[http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector\\_info\\_item/107](http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector_info_item/107)
- Information about the conservation of historic buildings or places has been developed by Australia ICOMOS<sup>1</sup> in their Burra Charter. This document can be found at:  
<http://australia.icomos.org/publications/charters/>

## 6.0 ANNUAL PROGRAM

Plan a program for the year. Ideas could include:

- readings and lectures
- tours and visits
- memorials and historic places
- publicity and promotion newsletter

- 6.1 Reading of historical papers or guest speakers, followed by discussion can help maintain the interest of members. The Council of RWHAS has papers for loan.
- 6.2 Excursions: conduct regular excursions to known local historical places; research the stories for the excursions, record places for future plaques.
- 6.3 Old buildings of historical interest, government or private, should be recorded if practicable by taking photographs and writing a physical description of the building. Check whether your local government has already developed a Municipal Inventory – a listing of heritage buildings in your local government area. Further assistance in this area can be found on the Federation of Historical Societies website <http://www.history.org.au> which has an online resource '*Heritage Identification and Protection*' which discusses how to proceed with identification of historic places and where to go to get assistance and funding.

Encourage the observance of anniversaries of local or historic importance in your district such as: the gazettal date of your local town or the anniversary of your local CWA or other community organisations or an important building in your area. These anniversaries could also encompass aspects of state history such as Foundation Day or ANZAC Day. Publicity: Your local newspaper and radio station are great resources for promoting your Society's work and seeking new members. You could also move into the area of online mediums such as: developing a website, social media, blog, e-newsletter or online mailing lists.

## 7.0 LOCAL HISTORY

- 7.1 Research work - Encourage your members to undertake research work on your local history. This can be done individually or in small groups on topics suited to their own particular interests.

### **Suggested subjects for research:**

- Aboriginal people – names of clan groups occupying the district and individuals. Details of customs, language and dialect. Significant aboriginal place names, sites and artefacts. Invite a local Aboriginal elder or other representative to assist you in compiling this information
- Origin and meaning of names and places – hills, creeks, parks, township, street names etc.
- Significant dates such as those of settlement, cattle or sheep run, mining or logging camp, water source, etc.
- Names of residents, biographical details, occupations, photographs
- Explore the various settlement themes in your district (this can be found in your municipal inventory) and add to this information
- Patterns of immigration, minority groups and also more recent changes in the area

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<sup>1</sup> International Council of Monuments and Sites

- History of local government in the district from the establishment of a Road Board, first members, tasks, achievements
- Notable incidents in the history of the district, birth or residence of persons who have achieved distinction, notable public movement originating in the district
- Economic and social development – including the growth of the community through business. Development of transport, communication, farming techniques and machinery, water supply, lighting, roads.  
Organisations: farmers, labour and political, community service, women, clubs, lodges, friendly societies, music, drama, art etc
- Local churches and cemeteries
- Schools, government and private – places and buildings, early housing for the teacher, how did the children get to school, changes in teaching methods, establishment of Parents and Citizens' Associations
- Sport and recreation, history of civic centres, volunteer fire brigades, recreational parks, swimming pools and local organisations
- The impacts of war including the local RSL, Red Cross, war loans, volunteer movements, memorials, etc.

**Sources for research include:**

- Newspapers, municipal and court records, electoral rolls, postal directories, war service records, rate books, passenger lists, school attendance records, cemetery headstones and records, church memorials, baptisms, marriages and burials, monuments, wills, minute books of societies and clubs, annual reports and records of businesses and professional firms
- Some places within your area may already have been listed on the State Heritage Register. You can check at <http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au>
- Records about your area and its people may also be found in J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian history, the State Records Office of Western Australia, National Archives of Australia as well as the archives of your local council, churches and schools.
- Online resources include catalogues of the State Library of Western Australia ([www.slwa.wa.gov.au](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au)), National Archives of Australia ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)), and the National Library of Australia's Trove ([www.trove.nla.gov.au](http://www.trove.nla.gov.au)).

7.2 Oral history interviews – interviewing residents can provide a more personal view of local history. The interviews can be digitally recorded and transcribed for easier sharing and searching.

## **8.0 COLLECTION OF OBJECTS**

The collection of objects should include detailed documentation, correct storage and suitable housing, such as in an historical building owned by the local authority. Guidance for collection would be in a collections policy adopted by the Society. The Museums Australia website contains useful information on collections policy and publications ([http://museumsaustralia.org.au/site/resources\\_collection\\_resources.php](http://museumsaustralia.org.au/site/resources_collection_resources.php))

Items collected should ideally relate to your district and could include:

- Old books, newspaper cuttings, letters and diaries, commercial and legal documents, maps, plans and other ephemera
- Photographs of people, buildings, places and events
- Coins, stamps, medals
- Aboriginal weapons, utensils, ornaments. Liaison with the WA Museum, The UWA Berndt Museum and/or local indigenous community is highly recommended.
- Agricultural implements and equipment
- Toys and childhood items

- Textiles and clothing
- Domestic items
- Items relating to local trade, industry and business

## 9.0 SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION

Affiliated Societies Committee, Royal Western Australian Historical Society (Inc) contact:

<http://www.histwest.org.au>

Museums Australia (WA): <http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/site/wa.php>

National Trust of Australia (WA): <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wa>

WA History Council: <http://www.historycouncilwa.org.au>

J.S. Batty Library of Western Australian History: <http://slwa.wa.gov.au/?a=1030>

Federation of Australian Historical Societies: <http://www.history.org.au>

## 10.0 SOURCES OF GRANT FUNDING

Lotterywest provides a range of grants for various projects. See their website for details -

<http://www.lotterywest.wa.gov.au/grants>

Department of Culture and the Arts Connect Funding - <http://www.dca.wa.gov.au/funding>

Federal Government Volunteer Grants - <http://grants.gov.com.au/volunteer-grants.html>

WA History Foundation - <http://www.wahistoryfoundation.org.au/>

National Library Community Heritage Grants - <http://www.nla.gov.au/awards-and-grants/chg>

Funding for community projects is also sponsored by large corporations such as Optus, Telstra and most banks.

Local governments can also provide assistance.

For regional areas only:

Royalties for Regions – <http://www.drd.wa.gov.au/rfr/Regional-Grants-Scheme/Pages/default.aspx>

Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal - <http://www.frrr.org.au/>

Private foundations

If your organisation is registered as a Deductible Gift Recipient then privation foundations and organisations can provide funds to your society and obtain tax deductions for their donations.

Information on how to become registered for this can be found at:

<http://www.ato.gov.au/nonprofit/pathway.aspx?pc=001/004/006>

It is now possible to apply for DGR status while registering with the new Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission ([www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au)).

You may also find it helpful to visit or network with other historical societies for their ideas and support.