



2018 Annual General Meeting President's Report

Dr Iain Butterworth

Introduction

I have served as President since mid-2015. Assuming this role was something of a baptism of fire: it coincided directly with the Australian-American Fulbright Commission Board advising the incoming AFAA Committee that it wished to cease its formal support for AFAA.

To me, the last 12 months represent a period of consolidation and finding our feet. Our achievements can be seen as an orderly process of building on the foundations that we laid in 2015 and 2016:

- From July 2015 to January 2016, when AFAA became an independent organisation, our milestones included:
 - Conducting a substantial organisational review and member consultation;
 - Clarifying our Value Proposition;
 - Developing refreshed Vision and Mission Statements; and
 - Revising our Constitution.
- Milestones achieved during 2016 included:
 - Building a new engagement platform through the launch of our website;
 - Refreshing our membership structure;
 - Building our own membership management and financial management systems;

- Assembling and promoting an extensive [list of local contacts](#) from across Australia, the US and even Japan;
- Maintaining local engagement via regular events in several locations, especially WA, Tasmania, ACT and Victoria;
- Holding some landmark events, including the [WA Annual Dinner](#) and the Victorian Annual Public [Salon](#) that attracted 160 people;
- Maintaining our outreach to scholars and alumni; the US Embassy and Consulates;
- Forging a new relationship with the Australian-American Fulbright Commission.
- During 2017, we presented a new, confident and proactive image to the wider world, and I have been energised by the results.

Our Achievements during 2017

A Refreshed Brand

We were delighted to embrace and adopt our new Logo (see above), kindly developed by Board member, Rebecca Smith. As described by Rebecca, the logo:

“includes some classic imagery that has been stylised/modernised: books, eucalyptus leaves, and a light bulb. This imagery is traditionally associated with the ideals laid out in the AFAA vision - books for knowledge, a lightbulb for ideas, and a wreath to symbolise peace and communication. The eucalypt wreath also adds that sense of Australiana, being both iconic and immediately recognisable.”

The Logo has had a huge, positive impact. We love using it, and people’s reactions are very positive. The logo complements perfectly our website and new Facebook page.

Rebecca recently designed a super business card for me to use at the 2018 Gala Dinner; I am keen to develop a generic business card for use by all Committee members and State representatives.

Rebecca has also helped me design a signature block for the AFAA President’s email address: again, I think that all Committee members and State representatives could make more use of our AFAA Gmail platform and the new branding.

New Facebook page

Built and launched through the creative aegis of Rebecca Smith, our [Facebook page](#) is starting to come into its own. Currently, we have 49 people who have “liked” the page, and a total of 54 people who “follow” the page. The Facebook page has a corresponding Instagram presence, which we have not used much to date.

Effective Communication

As our expert website manager, Vanessa Adams ensures that quarterly news digests are sent to members, and that all relevant correspondence and archives are available on the website. Vanessa

has been able to respond quickly to email enquiries, which has served to build engagement with our members.

A solid and expanding offering of Local Events

As shown on our website's [Events Calendar](#), we have supported our local members to curate a steadily expanding series of events. WA and Victoria have typically provided offerings each quarter. We have encouraged our members and other Scholars to promote events on our website that may be of interest.

We have been delighted to support a flurry of networking activity in Tasmania, and to conduct some groundwork for stronger networking in NSW, SA and QLD. Following on from our inaugural Conference and Gala Dinner (see below), we are likely to support events and networking in QLD and Newcastle.

Inaugural Conference

We were proud to host our inaugural Conference on 17th and 18th November, 2017 in Melbourne. The program delivered stimulating debate and inspiring talks. We were especially honoured to host Professor Billie Giles-Corti at our opening Salon and Prof the Hon Bob Carr as our Keynote on Saturday 18th November.

Expert conference logistical support was provided by Sharon Osman. Our publicist was Tracy Routledge, Managing Director of TRPR. We secured active promotional support from the US Embassy in Canberra and the US Consulate in Melbourne, and also the Australian-American Fulbright Commission. We made full use of our Website, Facebook and other social media.

The theme of our conference was **Leadership in a new era**. Our question was: **how can we help strengthen economic prosperity, cultural vibrancy, environmental responsibility, and social justice for this new global age by providing leadership to form a new agenda?** This conference brought together leaders from across these four broad thought streams (economic, cultural, environmental, and social). We were honoured to host speakers from across Australia and the US. For full schedule and photos, visit the [conference schedule](#).

We learned a lot from this experience, and plan to host something similar in Canberra to coincide with the 2019 Gala Dinner.

A Strong, Fresh Committee

One of the great outcomes of the Inaugural Conference was the opportunity to engage some of our speakers as AFAA Committee members. We are delighted that Daniel McNamara (ACT) and Caroline Smith (QLD) have come on board for 2018. During 2017 we were also honoured to welcome Rebecca Smith (WA). As noted above, Rebecca has played a significant role in building our brand.

2018 Gala Dinner

I was grateful for AFAA funding to attend the Fulbright Gala Dinner on 27th February. About 300 people attended the Great Hall at Parliament House. I was delighted that Elizabeth Brooke (AFAA's Victorian Convener) and Susanita Dudley (ACT) were also able to attend. Pablo Jiménez (Fulbright Commission's Alumni coordinator) was seated with us. I managed to introduce myself to about 50 people, including half of the visiting US Scholars and 2018 Australian Awardees. Whilst I would love to have had a chance to share my business card with everyone, it simply was not possible, given the size and scheduling of the event.

- Acknowledgement of Country - and Alumnus welcome - was provided by [Dr Michelle Deshong](#)
- The widely admired Jeffrey Bleich, the previous US Ambassador to Australia, flew across for about 12 hours, especially to attend the dinner. His speech was marvelous - calling for an international culture based on Technology, Truth and Trust.
- The big news was a new \$10 million program of U.S.-Australia Fulbright Scholarships, funded through a philanthropic donation. According to the US Embassy's Facebook posting, "The new scholarships are set to become the most comprehensive and generous of the Fulbright catalogue, covering travel and living expenses, as well as the full tuition costs at any U.S. university." Photos from the dinner and details on the new Kinghorn Foundation-funded Fulbright Future Scholarships are available [here](#). This five-year endowment will bring to 60 the number of Australian Scholars. My personal question is whether 'more is better'; however these new awards are focused on "kick-starting innovative business collaborations that foster the creation of new jobs, and further the development of impact-driven emergent technologies"
- I don't think that any of the 2018 awardees are from the areas of performing arts. The focus was strongly on STEM -- although I did meet the marvellous Anne Pender, who is going to research the experiences of successful Australian writers living in the US.
- Visiting Americans and new Australian Scholars were keen to engage -- I have since invited all awardees to make use of their free membership. Several have done so, and 'liked' our Facebook page.
- There is a strong new cluster of Fulbrighters based in Newcastle, NSW. We have a great opportunity to engage them now.
- Elizabeth Brooke and I met the NSW/QLD alumni coordinator for the US Consulate -- she is keen to engage. We also met two engagement officers from the US Embassy, one of whom helped us to promote the AFAA Conference.
- I mentioned our mooted 2019 Conference in Canberra (to coincide with the next Gala Dinner) to many new and visiting scholars - they are already keen to present their work. I think that the conference proposal for Canberra is a good one.
- Everybody's reaction to AFAA and the business card was overwhelmingly positive. (This includes Jeff Bleich, to whom I gave a couple.)
- At the end of the evening, I met Peter de Cure, the Chairman of the Fulbright Board. I have since followed up with email correspondence, and look forward to meeting with him in Melbourne. As I wrote to Mr de Cure, with a small Fulbright community spread over a wide

continent, we are keen to ensure that current and past Fulbright scholars enjoy the best possible experience. With this in mind, we look forward to the prospect of building stronger connections with the Australian-American Fulbright Commission's Board of Directors.

Suggestions for the Year Ahead

Building local networks

For 2018, I think that it is well within our reach now to build a Strategic Plan that delivers the following milestones:

- We build a schedule of events for each major city to host at least one event each quarter;
 - Each major city hosts one event to welcome scholars;
 - Each major city hosts one ‘fun holiday-style’ event (such as 4th of July or Thanksgiving);
 - We activate and support our [local contacts](#) to engage our members and other contacts to host at least one informal activity;
- A big national event (suggest a second Conference or major symposium to coincide with the 2019 Gala Dinner).

(re)Engaging new and past Scholars

As always, one of the existential challenges facing all community organisations is membership. Reading through the history of AFAA, I was struck by this ongoing narrative. Now, however, with our current brand, engagement platform and approach, I think that we are in a strong position to consolidate and build our membership base.

I have one strong memory from the Gala Dinner. One alumna whom I met indicated that she had dropped away when the Commission split from AFAA, but that she would now re-connect. Immediately following the Gala Dinner, several current Scholars (US and Australian) took up our invitation for free membership. With a strong, confident presence, robust social media platform, website and outreach program, I have every reason to expect that this will result in ongoing membership. Furthermore, with stronger ties to the Commission, the US Embassy and Consulates, as well as good relations with Australian Universities, I am confident that we will be able to consolidate and expand our membership.

I recommend that we frame an expanded membership base as a key outcome of our overall engagement strategy.

Reinstating AFAA's investment in the Walker Scholarship Fund

I am keen for AFAA members to discuss options for reinstating our annual investment in the Walker Scholarship Fund.

Background

The Australian Fulbright Alumni Association was launched during Australia's 40th Anniversary Fulbright celebrations that were held in 1989. The Inaugural President of the Association was Professor Bill Walker, a two-time Fulbright winner. Following Prof Walker's passing, at the 1992 Annual General Meeting it was decided that an annual Fulbright Scholarship would be offered in his name. To be known as the W G Walker Memorial Fulbright Scholarship, it was to be funded in part from annual member subscriptions and in part from the Australian-American Fulbright Commission. Inaugurated in 1993, by 1999 the Walker fund stood at \$100,000.

ANU managed the Walker funds for AFAA until 2004, when they were transferred to the Commission. At around this time, AFAA also signed an MOU for the Commission to administer the Association entirely.

Our understanding is that:

1. Whilst the Walker fund has been funded entirely by AFAA members, the fund is held by and administered by the Commission.
2. While the fund has received no donations or inputs for several many years, it has been close to fully-funded and not really requiring much financial maintenance.
3. We can assume that each and every year, the Walker Fund still pays for a scholarship.

Vanessa Adams has been searching Annual Reports for mentions of the Walker fund being named as the Walker Scholarship. The last official record that Vanessa has found dates back to around 2008.

We propose that, should we agree to reinstate funding for the Walker Scholarship, we would ask the Commission for the following:

1. Clear reinstatement of documentation on the Commission's website about the named scholarship (We would request this, regardless of what we decide about reinstating AFAA annual contributions to the Walker Fund);
2. A link for alumni donations to go directly into the fund; and
3. For the AFAA President to present the annual award at the Gala Dinner

Proposal:

The Walker fund is AFAA's legacy. Members often relay that they are keen to contribute towards something such as a Scholarship.

I propose that the Committee discusses policy options for investing a percentage of all membership fees directly into the Walker Scholarship Fund.

Summary

I have had a great year, and I am really proud of all the outcomes that we have achieved together. I have been involved in AFAA and Fulbright activities for very selfish reasons – I love to meet interesting, authentic and passionate people. I would be honoured to keep serving AFAA in this role.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Butterworth', written in a cursive style.

Dr Iain Butterworth, 22nd March 2018