



## **Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc**

### **Interim President's Report 2021-2022**

What a tumultuous year!

The blight of the Covid-19 pandemic continued through 2021-2022, although the Northern Territory's remoteness did spare our community from the more severe lockdowns experienced 'down south'. But worse was to come.

On 31 July 2020, the Society received advice that the Northern Territory Government had been served with a notice from the new owners to quit the premises at 84 Smith. Initially, the requirement was to relocate within one month, a seemingly impossible task. However, library and Archives NT, within the mega Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, appeared with a ready-made solution – relocate across the road to the RCG Building held under lease to the Territory Government until 2027. A reprieve until January 2021 to pack up and move was also available.

With the library's closing on 11 December ahead of Christmas, the RCG Building option was still on the table, only to evaporate days later. Instead, the Territory Government offered a \$45 0000 grant enabling the Society to procure its own premises on commercial terms. Then began a most stressful period for the Executive Committee and, in particular, for our President, Keven Young. Using Keven's professional skills and experience, the hunt for new premises continued for months. Every time an opportunity arose, the space proved too small, isolated, expensive, or technically inadequate to support the compactus units. In addition, Executive Committee members received an education in the realities of commercial leases – obligations imposed on the lessee, hidden clauses, body corporate fees, rental escalations, and so on. Finally, on 23 June 2021, the Society signed a lease agreement with Carpentaria Disability Services Ltd securing this suite in the Harry Giese Building. Preceding this by a day, the Society formally entered into the Five-Year Funding Agreement with the Northern Territory Government.

Effectively, the Society was closed to its members and the public from December 2021 until September 2022. Throughout this period, our Secretary June Tomlinson kept up the appearance of normalcy by regularly distributing the E-Newsletter. Despite the lack of access to databases and library resources, the Society maintained a modicum of services.

Many votes of thanks need placing, as always, with the risk of missing out on someone. Edie Webber, Janet Leather, Gail Macgregor, Patsy Hickey, and June Tomlinson packed up at 84



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Smith immediately post-Christmas in record time. From there, the Society's furniture, equipment, books and records were stored at the RCG Building, always under a lingering threat of moving to other temporary storage immediately.

Finally, our goods and chattels were moved to the Harry Giese Building in late June. Then there was the seemingly impossible challenge of fitting 165 m<sup>2</sup> of material into the new space of only 125 m<sup>2</sup>. The volunteer team worked tirelessly and magically created a functional home for the Society. Much of this work took place after the end of the 2021-2022 year and should be covered in next year's report. However, it is important to note these contributions now, and hopefully, next year's report will be all about genealogy, family history, and successful GSNT projects.

Eddie Webber, Janet Leather, Gail Macgregor, Patsy Hickey, Neil Blakely, and Joan Angeles were again to the fore. Brian Nichols sorted armed services records and books, Dianne Tessman laboured over the cemetery records, and Michael Bratchell helped with placing books on shelves. At the same time, our Librarian, Ruth Sheridan, had to continually cull books and magazines. Julie Andrew took on the unenviable task of going through all the indices replacing the deteriorating plastic sleeves. While distribution was not always possible, Dianne Tessman and Jeanice Levez produced three editions of *Progenitor* in this period. All of this was under the watchful eye of June Tomlinson with her organisation skill. So while to describe the Family History Place as a snug fit is an understatement, the outcome, in my opinion, is a professional resource centre.

Although the relocation was fraught and, at times, the communications tense, we must acknowledge the financial support of the Northern Territory Government and the efforts of Patrick Gregory, Senior Director, Library and Archives NT, to ensure the continuing operations of the GSNT. Following our difficult experiences with real estate agents and potential landlords, it was a relief to be steered towards Carpentaria Disability Services Ltd and its Property Manager Owen Dutton. As a non-governmental organisation, Carpentaria and Owen were sympathetic and empathetic toward the GSNT and its plight. We look forward to a continuing constructive relationship over the next five years.

In January of this year, one of our great contributing members – Peter Thomas – passed away. Peter was a font of knowledge and wisdom with broad history interests. Personally, I enjoyed our talks on military history.

In April, our President, Keven Young, resigned from the position. During this intensely busy time, Keven had also come down with covid, and we need to acknowledge his sterling efforts. I understand that Keven joined the GSNT in 1998 and served as President for around twenty



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years. In addition to his administrative and project work for the Society, as June Tomlinson says, Keven was a great family history detective.

Finally, to repeat the statement above, may 2022-2023 be a year of successful genealogical study and family history research and an effective reference and research centre operation.

Neville Jones  
Interim President

1 October 2022