

*“a movement to draw together in
bonds of comradeship the English
speaking peoples of the world”*

*The founder of The English-Speaking Union
(ESU) - Sir Evelyn Wrench in London in 1918*



ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES, 2020-2021



The English-Speaking Union

Victoria Branch

ABN 42004297803

1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT | 3
2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS | 4 - 5
3. ADVOCACY | 5
4. AWARDS | 6
5. COMMUNICATIONS | 7
6. CULTURAL & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES | 8
7. EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES | 8
8. FINANCE & INVESTMENTS | 9
9. GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION | 10
10. PROPERTY | 10 - 11
11. MEMBERSHIP & GENERAL MEETINGS | 11
12. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION | 12
13. JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH KINDRED SOCIETIES | 12

1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Major new initiatives for The English-Speaking Union (Victoria Branch) [ESU] during the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 were the launch of a completely refreshed Awards program and the commencement of major capital works to improve the kitchen facilities in our building, ESU House, in Ascot Vale.

We responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by using video-conferencing for meetings when lockdowns prevented face-to-face gatherings. Regrettably, we had to cancel some events that would otherwise have been held 'in person'. We have used our website, the *Journal*, email bulletins and social media to provide current and relevant information.



Our Branch continues to work collegially with the branches in Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia, as part of the Australian English-Speaking Union Ltd. I am the current president of that national organisation. As AESU President, I and AESU Honorary Secretary Chris Perriam represented Australia's ESU Branches and participated online in the 2020 International Council Meeting held in October 2020 in New York. Government travel restrictions severely hampered both Australian ESU branches' national activities and ESU international activities in 2020 and continue to do so in 2021.

The ESU extends special congratulations to long-term member and centenarian Frances Nicholls MBE who was awarded an OAM (Medal in the Order of Australia) in the Australia Day honours list (January 2021) for 'service to the community through a range of roles'. We also congratulate new social member, Dr Liz Rushen, who was awarded an AM (Member in the Order of Australia) in the Queen's Birthday honours list (June 2021) for 'significant service to community history and heritage preservation'.

I am grateful to members of the Council who have devoted their expertise and considerable personal time in assisting in many direct ways with the management of our organisation.

I thank all members for their loyalty and support during this challenging year.

Robert Furlan
President

2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The ESU Council worked to implement its Strategic Plan for 2020-2023. This Plan was developed by the Council and staff during the previous financial year and was finalised in October 2020. Key elements of the Plan include:

Mandate

The English-Speaking Union (Victoria Branch) is a charity established for the purpose of making the English-speaking peoples of the world better known to each other and of engaging in any educational work designed to further that end.

Vision

An engaged community embracing our English-speaking heritage, culture, identity and connections.

Mission

To shape the future by promoting the heritage, culture, identity and fellowship of the English-speaking peoples.

Values

LOYALTY

We love and advocate the heritage and culture of the English-speaking peoples.

CO-OPERATION

We establish and foster personal and community relationships.

RESPONSIBILITY

We hold ourselves accountable for providing quality educational, cultural and community programs to support our vision.

RESPECT

We act with integrity, ensuring what we do is ethical and honest.

Our Strategic Pillars

Consolidate our Culture

By promoting and advocating the traditions and identity of the English-speaking peoples.

Be active within the Community

By sponsoring our cause actively in the community.

Develop our Capability and Capacity

By being an effective and efficient organisation.



2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS (Cont'd)

Directors oversee each area of activity, as follows:

| Area of responsibility | Responsible member of the Council |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Advocacy | Robert Furlan |
| Awards | Robert Furlan |
| Communications | Margaret Birtley AM |
| Cultural & social activities | Rupert Griffin |
| | Mark Moncrieff |
| Educational initiatives | David Murphy |
| Finance & investments | Dennis Katsonis |
| Governance & administration | Robert Furlan |
| Property | Geoffrey Mills |

Short reports on each of these activity areas are provided in sections 3-10 on the following pages.

3. ADVOCACY

The ESU proposed that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) recognise William Alexander Watt by naming a new Victorian electoral division for the federal House of Representatives in his honour. William Watt was President of the ESU in Victoria from 1921 to 1925. He was Premier of Victoria from 1912 to 1914 and later was the Commonwealth Treasurer, Acting Prime Minister in 1918-19 and then Speaker of the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, on this occasion, the AEC chose to acknowledge other distinguished Victorians. We will continue to seek opportunities to promote recognition of William Watt's service to Victoria and Australia.



*William Alexander Watt - ESU President 1921-25
Image credit: National Library of Australia*

4. AWARDS

The ESU has, in the past, offered several scholarships, including travel grants and the Oldham Wedlick Scholarship ‘for the further study and appreciation of the English language’.

In August and September 2020, the Council approved guidelines for a fully revised Awards program, in five distinct categories. Subsequently, these were published on the website. We created online forms to enable easy submission of applications by eligible candidates, and promoted the Awards through paid advertisements via commercial channels (News Corp, Nine Media and *Quadrant* magazine) and also by direct email and social media.

We thank those ESU members (including some members of the Council) who have kindly assisted as members of the judging panels for these Awards.

We congratulate the winners and runners-up in the following categories:

Junior Leadership Bursary (November 2020)

Winner: Ben Okely of Shepparton.

Runner-up: Abbey Lazenby of Nagambie.

Minor Project Grant (December 2020)

Winner: Grace Blake of Adelaide, for research into the WW1 service history of members of the Adelaide University Boat Club.

Major Project Grant (March 2021)

Winner: Dr David Martin Jones, an Australian based in London, for research into ‘Sin, Crime and Hate Speech’.

Runner-up: Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network for improvement of its digital advocacy via its website, and the management of online events.

Minor Project Grant (March 2021)

Winner: The Melbourne Scots, for assistance with the publication of a revised edition of ‘The Melbourne Scots Songbook’.

We note that no awards were made in the following categories:

Oldham Wedlick Scholarship (November 2020)

Young Leader Bursary (April 2021, extended to June)



Dr David Martin Jones



Grace Blake, photographed by Jim Healey



Ben Okely leading junior Scout troop's activities

5. COMMUNICATIONS

The ESU publishes six issues of its *Journal* each year. These appear in the even-numbered months of the year.

We also use email (or phone and/or Australia Post) to communicate our latest news to members and to a wide range of community groups and educational organisations.

The ESU has refreshed the appearance of its two social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) to align with our new brochure that promotes social membership.

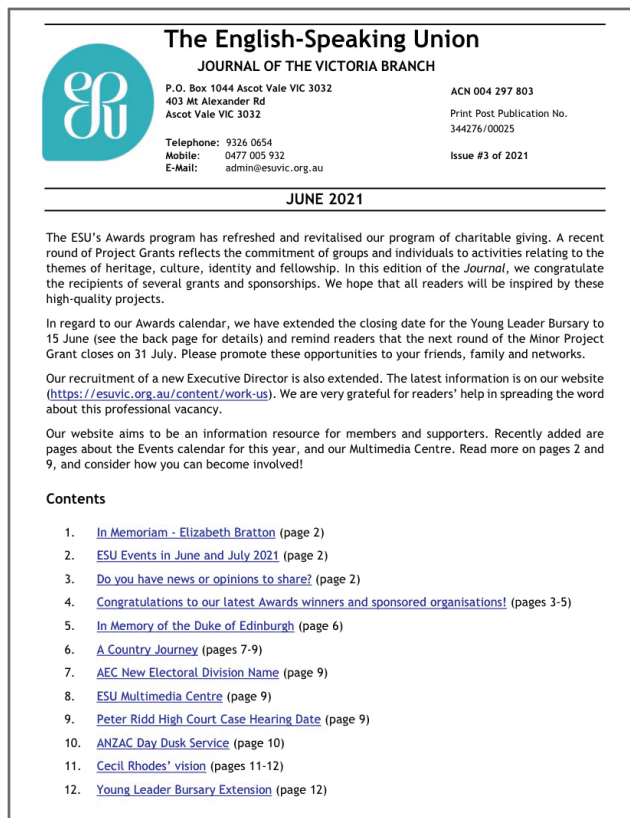


Image: The front cover of the June 2021 edition of the Journal



ESUVicBranch @ESUVicBranch · Mar 8

Only a week to go before applications close (on 15 March) for this grant of \$10,000. Online applications welcome from individuals and organisations in #Australia. Focus is on the heritage, culture, identity and fellowship of the English-speaking peoples. #artsAUGrants #grants

ESUVicBranch @ESUVicBranch · Jan 27

The ESU Victoria Branch is launching its inaugural Major Project Grant, offering an award of up to \$10,000 to the successful applicant. Applications close on 15 March 2021. Further information is available at: esuvic.org.au/content/major-...



Image: ESU is building a presence on Twitter and has used the social media platform to promote our interest and causes



The English-Speaking Union Victoria

November 11, 2020 · 🌐

Today is the 11th of November, which is Remembrance Day, where we honour those who sacrificed for us. This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The English-Speaking Union Victoria Branch believes that it imperative to support our past and present servicemen and women. We encourage people to watch the Remembrance Day online broadcast hosted by the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance at 10:45am. The link to view the online broadcast on either You... See More



SHRINE.ORG.AU

Remembrance Day 2020 | Shrine of Remembrance

While we are unable to mark Remembrance Day by gathering to...

Image: ESU uses Facebook to promote our Grants and Scholarships as well as promoting historical causes

6. CULTURAL & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The ESU was pleased to host the following in-person events:

2020

Saturday 19 December - End-of-year lunch (with a Christmas theme) at The Last Jar hotel in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne

2021

Saturday 27 February - BBQ dinner

Friday 9 April - Social Night

Sunday 25 April - ANZAC Day Dusk Service and BBQ

Friday 21 May - Social Night

Saturday 26 June from 6:30 pm - A British Comedy TV Show Night

We thank those who helped plan and deliver these activities.

We also thank those who planned activities that then had to be cancelled, often at short notice, because of Victoria's health restrictions and lockdown arrangements.

7. EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

No educational activities could be offered during 2020-2021, mainly because of the uncertainty of access to ESU House while the Victorian government's health restrictions were in force.

The completion of *Old English Interactions*, an online course in Old English, has been delayed because of other workload priorities.

A professional editor was engaged to assist with the completion of *In Bonds of Comradeship: The English-Speaking Union Victoria Branch 1919-2019*, our centennial history. We expect that the book will be available to order via a print-on-demand service later this year.



Image: The beginnings of Old English
Image Credit: Wikipedia

8. FINANCE & INVESTMENTS

Financial report

The ESU's audited financial report is provided as a separate document for members at the AGM.

Sponsorships

The ESU provided funds to sponsor:

- Speech and Drama Teachers Association of Victoria: to support the implementation costs and prizes for the Association's next Performance Festival (TBC 2022).
- C J Dennis Society: to support aspects of the C J Dennis Poetry Festival & Poetry Competition (November 2021).
- British Australian Community (BAC): to support the delivery of Britfest, a celebration of British culture and heritage. This sponsorship was contributed during 2019-2020 but Britfest could not be held during 2020. The BAC has therefore carried the funds forward, hoping to be able to host the festival in November 2021.

Donations

The ESU made donations to:

- Dr Peter Ridd's campaign to have the High Court of Australia hear his appeal against James Cook University's decision to dismiss him. The ESU has also declared publicly its support for freedom of expression and academic freedom of enquiry.
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award in Australia, in honour of the life and service of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, who died in April 2021. Prince Philip served as President of the ESU of the Commonwealth from 1952 to 2011.

9. GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

The Council is the governing body of the ESU. During the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, the Council met on 11 occasions (i.e. once per month except in January). The term of one director, Margaret Birtley, concluded at the last AGM; she was re-elected unopposed. There was therefore no change to the directors during the year.

This table lists the directors of the Council as at 30 June 2021.

| Role | Name | First elected | Latest election | Number of Council meetings attended |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| President | Robert Furlan | 2006 | 25 Nov 2018 | 10 |
| Deputy President; Secretary | David Murphy | 2013 | 25 Nov 2018 | 8 |
| Treasurer | Dennis Katsonis | 2012 | 25 Nov 2018 | 10 |
| Director | Margaret Birtley AM | 2017 | 14 Nov 2020 | 10 |
| Director | Rupert Griffin | 2016 | 30 Nov 2019 | 11 |
| Director | Geoffrey Mills | 2017 | 30 Nov 2019 | 10 |
| Director | Mark Moncrieff | 2019 | 30 Nov 2019 | 10 |

The Council is assisted by two members of staff, each of whom is employed on a full-time basis in administrative roles.

ESU House was officially closed from 2 July to 8 December 2020. The staff worked mostly from home during that period.

10. PROPERTY

Regular maintenance and repairs to ESU House have continued as required. Two major projects are reported here:

New kitchen

A limitation of ESU House when we purchased the building in 2017 was its lack of a kitchen. In 2021, the Council appointed Better Bathrooms and Kitchens to finalise a kitchen design and to undertake all necessary works. Activity commenced on-site in May. We anticipate that the new kitchen will be operational by the end of September 2021. ESU House is a building that is registered with the Heritage Council of Victoria for its heritage significance. This registration protects the building against random and

10. PROPERTY (Cont'd)

incremental changes that would compromise the heritage status of the building. To enable the kitchen works to proceed, we therefore sought (and received) 'permit exemptions' in order to:

- Remove and replace the floor of the kitchen.
- Replace the electric hot water storage system inside the building with a gas-powered instantaneous system, located on an external wall.

Chimneys and roof

During 2019-2020, we undertook temporary stabilisation of the chimneys at ESU House, which had deteriorated over the decades. In order to plan the necessary permanent repairs to the chimney, roof and gutters, we sought advice in March 2021 from a heritage architect and a number of experienced builders. Using their quotations, we applied for a Living Heritage Grant from Heritage Victoria to support the considerable expense of this essential work. Unfortunately, we learned in August 2021 that our application was not successful.

Looking ahead

Council has decided to fund all the high-level repairs from the ESU's reserves. Council will be tendering for the services of a heritage professional who can develop a Conservation Management Plan that will guide all future work at our premises, including the repairs to the chimneys and roof.

11. MEMBERSHIP & GENERAL MEETINGS

The Annual General Meeting for 2019-2020 was held by video-conference on 14 November 2020.

In June 2020, the Council decided to offer a free ESU membership extension for the 2021 calendar year to all current members. This recognised the unprecedented circumstances that our Branch and our members have had to confront because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council hopes that this action reduced the burden on those who are experiencing difficulties, and thanks existing members for their past contributions.

With sorrow, we record the passing in March 2021 of Elizabeth Bratton, a long-term ESU member and regular volunteer with ESU activities.

12. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

Our President is the current President of the Australian English-Speaking Union Ltd (AESU).

The AESU's activities during 2020-2021 were severely constrained by the pandemic and restrictions on interstate and overseas travel.

AESU's 2020 AGM took place in August 2020 using video-conferencing. All branches reported a hiatus in normal activities during the financial year.

The AESU's President and Honorary Secretary participated online in the International Council Meeting held in October 2020 in New York.

13. JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH KINDRED SOCIETIES

ESU representatives attended a Commonwealth Day dinner hosted by the Council of British and Commonwealth Societies in March 2021. The guest speaker was Mr. Steph Lysaght, British Consul-General for Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

The ESU continues to provide administrative assistance to its Corporate member, the British Australian Community Inc.

On 14 April, alongside representatives of many loyalist societies in Victoria, several ESU members attended a Solemn Choral Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral (Melbourne) to celebrate the life and service of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.



Image: Pictured are Culture and Social Committee Mark Moncrieff, British Consul General Victoria Mr Stephen Lysaght, ESU Vice President David Murphy, and Chair ESU Property Committee Geoffrey Mills

“a movement to draw together in bonds of comradeship the English speaking peoples of the world”

