

*“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, 2021-2022



The English-Speaking Union

Victoria Branch

ABN 42004297803

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1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 has seen several major achievements for The English-Speaking Union (Victoria Branch) [ESU].

Our investment program is generating good yields to support our activities. Our Awards program is attracting strong interest and has already assisted several individuals and organisations to complete projects that promote aspects of the heritage, culture, identity and fellowship of the English-speaking peoples and thus advance our mission. In addition, our headquarters in Ascot Vale now has a fully functioning and beautiful kitchen, fitted out appropriately.



In September we welcomed a new Executive Director and were disappointed when he decided to resign at the end of February, after six months. One of his initiatives was the conversion of the *Journal* to an *E-News* format. Our long-term Executive Officer also resigned in early June. We thank Andrew for his contribution and in particular we thank Mark for his contribution and commitment to the ESU over a period of six years. A recruitment process is now underway to employ administrative support. In the absence of paid staff, members of the Council have undertaken essential tasks. Communications and events have been less frequent, but will resume when we have people in place to co-ordinate and manage activities.

In April we engaged Final Focus, a video production company, to create a short video about the History of the English-Speaking Peoples. The video script was written by Alan James who unfortunately died before his script could emerge in video form. This video will serve as a fitting legacy to his vision. Several ESU members volunteered to perform cameo roles in this video and we thank them for their enthusiastic and impressive video performances. We are also deeply grateful to members of the Melbourne Shakespeare Society and the Dickens Fellowship (Melbourne Branch) and acknowledge their generous contribution of time and expertise. We expect to publish the video via YouTube before the end of 2022.

In June we sponsored a Toastmasters District 73 Youth Leadership program. This public speaking program, delivered by Toastmaster volunteers to students in school classrooms, builds confidence in public speaking and teaches practical communication skills. It was a credit to the program to witness the development of students over the six-week duration of the program, with many students becoming proficient in communicating in public with confidence and verve.

We have continued to use videoconferencing for meetings when lock downs and ill health prevented face-to-face activities. We have also configured our technology so that meetings can be conducted in 'hybrid' mode, using videoconferencing to allow those who are unable to attend face-to-face gatherings in our Board room to participate in our meetings and deliberations.

Our Branch continues to work collaboratively 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.

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

I thank all members for their loyalty and support.

Robert Furlan

Some highlights of the year



Poems we love

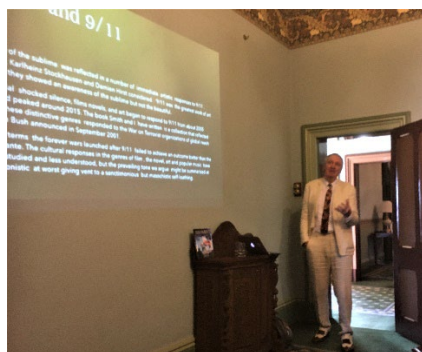
Let's share some joy by celebrating the poems we love!
Bring at least one of your favourite poems to read to the group at this free Zoom event, on Saturday 28 August at 2 pm (Melbourne time).
Original compositions are most welcome!

Please register before 12 noon on Saturday to receive the Zoom link.
Further information: <https://esuvic.org.au/content/poems-we-love>

Organised by The English-Speaking Union (Victoria Branch).



On a summer's evening in February (*below*), the eminent performer John Derum presented works by C J Dennis to an enthralled audience.



On two nights in March (*left & right*), Dr David Martin Jones delivered reports on the impressive research that he completed with support from the ESU's 2021 Major Project Grant.



May 2022

Left: Andrea Shershoff, representing Bonfire Books, is congratulated by President Robert Furlan on winning the Major Project Grant for 2022.

Centre: President Robert Furlan (on the left) congratulated Tim Ferris and, in absentia, Liz King, on winning the Major Project Grant runner-up award.

Right: Dr Martin Hess delivered a thought-provoking lecture on Critical Speech.

2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Council reviewed its Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 during February and March, revising the Operational Priorities for the period from March 2022 to June 2023.

The ESU's strategic directions remain unchanged, as follows:

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



Our Strategic Pillars



Directors oversee each area of operational activity. Responsibilities at 30 June 2022 were:

Area of responsibility	Responsible member of the Council
Advocacy	Robert Furlan
Educational initiatives	
Governance & administration	
Awards	Margaret Birtley AM
Communications	
Cultural & social activities	
Finance & investments	Dennis Katsonis
Property	Geoffrey Mills

Short reports on each of these activity areas are provided in sections 3-10 of this document.

3. ADVOCACY

In November, the President wrote to three Victorian MPs: Clifford Hayes (Sustainable Australia Party), Adem Somyurek (Independent) and Rod Barton (Transport Matters Party). The letter encouraged them to vote against the Public Health and Wellbeing (Pandemic Management) Bill 2021 because the proposed legislation ran counter to the principles of parliamentary democracy and because the Bill's proposed penalties and enforcement provisions were excessive and intrusive. The Bill subsequently passed the Upper House of the Victorian Parliament but with significant amendments.

4. EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

No educational activities were offered at ESU House during 2021-2022, mainly because of the uncertainty of access to ESU House while the Victorian government's health restrictions were in force.

In June, ESU sponsored a Toastmasters District 73 Youth Leadership program. This public speaking program, delivered by Toastmaster volunteers to students in school classrooms, builds confidence in public speaking and teaches practical communication skills. The President represented ESU at some sessions and, over the six-week duration of the program, witnessed students becoming proficient in communicating in public with confidence and verve.

Our centennial history *In Bonds of Comradeship: The English-Speaking Union Victoria Branch 1919-2019* has been edited professionally and is now being prepared for publication.

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

5. GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

The Council is the governing body of the ESU. During the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, the Council met on 12 occasions.

The term of three directors and office-bearers, the President (Robert Furlan), Deputy President (David Murphy) and Treasurer (Dennis Katsonis) concluded at the AGM held on 27 November 2021. All three were nominated and re-elected (unopposed) to their roles.

Two directors left the Council during the year:

Mark Moncrieff resigned in February.

David Murphy ceased as a director in May.

In June 2022, Council resolved to appoint two people to fill these vacancies. Mr Jay Hutchison and Mr Andrea Shershoff took up their appointments at the July 2022 meeting of the Council.

David Murphy's departure means that, since June, the ESU has lacked a Deputy President. The position will be open for election at the 2022 AGM.

On 27 February 2022, Council appointed Margaret Birtley as Secretary, replacing David Murphy.

This table lists the directors of the Council as at 30 June 2022.

Role	Name	First elected	Latest election	Number of Council meetings attended
President	Robert Furlan	2006	27 Nov 2021	11
Deputy President	<i>vacant</i>			
Secretary	Margaret Birtley AM	2017	14 Nov 2020	12
Treasurer	Dennis Katsonis	2012	27 Nov 2021	9
Director	Rupert Griffin	2016	30 Nov 2019	8
Director	Geoffrey Mills	2017	30 Nov 2019	12

The ESU employed a full-time Executive Officer for most of the year; he resigned on 9 June 2022. The ESU recruited a full-time Executive Director who was employed from 1 September 2021 through to 28 February 2022 when his resignation took effect.

ESU House was officially closed during the Victorian government's fifth and sixth pandemic lockdowns (16 – 27 July and 6 August – 21 October 2021). The staff worked mostly from home during that period.

At the AGM held on 27 November 2021, the members approved a special resolution to amend the ESU Victoria Branch Constitution in order to enable the ESU to meet regulatory requirements to apply for a club liquor licence. Following the resignation of the Executive Director and the reduction of administrative support, the Council has deferred its plans to apply for such a licence.

6. AWARDS

The Awards program was launched in September 2020. During the 2021-2022 year, the Awards were promoted 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 kindly assisted as members of the judging panels for these Awards.

In June, the Council agreed to introduce a new Travel Bursary during 2022-2023.

We congratulate the winners and runners-up in the following categories, and note that no award was made for the November 2021 round of the Junior Leadership Bursary.

Minor Project Grant (July 2021)

Joint Winner

For purchase of historic Australian publications to be added to the Institute's website (via scans and transcripts)

[Institute of Australian Culture](#)



Joint Winner

For historical research for a walking trail, 'Birrarung Marr to the Blue Lake'

[Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network](#)



Image of Northbank walk
courtesy MMHN and Jeff Malley

Oldham Wedlick Scholarship (November 2021)

Winner



The Scholarship supports further study and appreciation of the English language.

Jordan Grantham will attend Columbia Publishing School's six-week program in editing, journal publishing and book publishing

Minor Project Grant (December 2021)

Winner

[Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network](#)

For a children's book about Melbourne's maritime history and heritage



Major Project Grant (March 2022)

Winner

[Bonfire Books](#)

For publication of a new anthology of Australian poetry (including contemporary works)



Runners-up

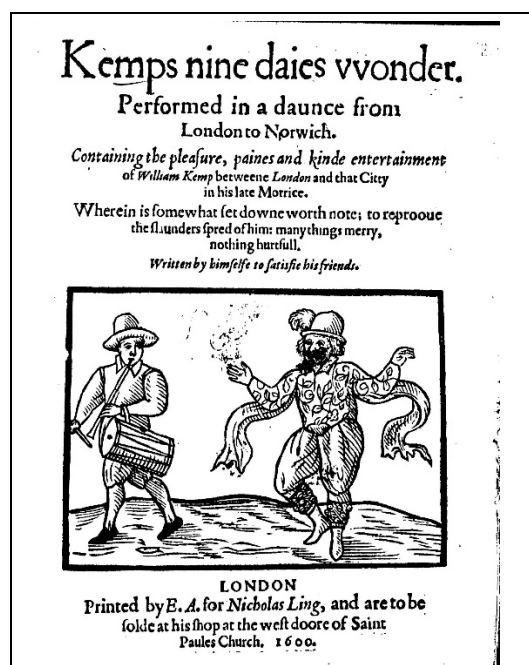
For research towards 'Many Things Merry', a stage play about a Morris-dancing journey taken in 1599 by Shakespearean comic actor, William Kemp



Liz King



Tim Ferris



Minor Project Grant (March 2022)

Joint Winner

[Institute of Australian Culture](#)

For further development of the Institute's website content



Joint Winner

[East Melbourne Historical Society](#)

For part of the cost of publishing 'The Residents who Roared'



Joint Winner

[Essendon Historical Society](#)

For part of the cost of digitising the Essendon & Flemington 'Chronicle', 1882-94



Joint Winner

Philip Castle

For research into 'White working class experiences of the Western cultural revolution'



Joint Winner

Dr Martin Hess

For research into 'Two centuries of global British-based democratic policing'



Young Leader Bursary (April 2022)

Winner

Fiona Schilling,
Wangaratta

For enrolment in a program that develops leadership skills

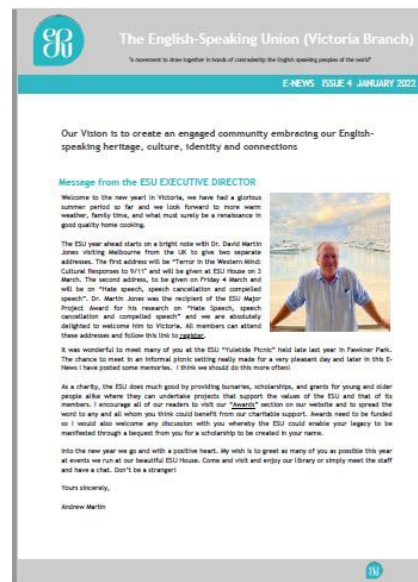


7. COMMUNICATIONS

The ESU published the final edition of its *Journal* in August. Its *E-News* successor was published monthly from October through to February.



Front page of the ESU's *Journal*,
August 2021



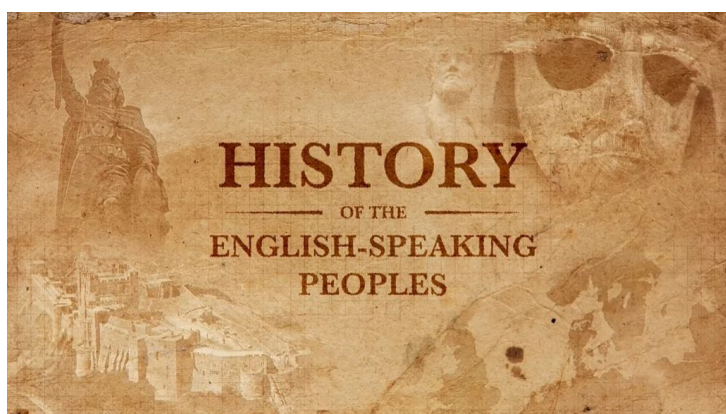
Front page of the ESU's *E-News*,
January 2022

The ESU has also used email (or phone and/or Australia Post) to communicate relevant news to members and to a wide range of community groups and educational organisations. The ESU operates two social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter).

8. CULTURAL & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Sir Owen Dixon Library continues to expand through purchases and donations. Its holdings relate to the history and culture of the English-speaking peoples.

In April we engaged Final Focus, a video production company, to create a short video about the History of the English-Speaking Peoples, scripted by member Alan James. Pre-production activity progressed well during the reporting year. A premiere screening is being planned for November 2022. The title image is shown here:



The ESU was pleased to host the following social events during the year:

2021

Saturday 26 June	A British comedy TV show night (at ESU House)
Saturday 28 August	'Poems we love' (via videoconference)
Saturday 11 December	End-of-year picnic and BBQ with a Christmas theme (at Fawkner Park, South Yarra), in co-operation with the British Australian Community

2022 (at ESU House)

Friday 18 February	Social Night
Thursday 24 February	'John Derum reads CJ Dennis poetry'
Thursday 3 March & Friday 4 March	Two lectures by Dr David Martin Jones (winner of the 2021 Major Project Grant): 'Terror in the Western Mind: Cultural Responses to 9/11' and 'Hate speech, speech cancellation and compelled speech'
Monday 25 April	ANZAC Day Service and BBQ lunch
Friday 6 May	'Critical speech - addressing censorship and cancel culture in an age of restricted expression', a lecture by Dr Martin Hess

We thank those who helped plan and deliver these activities. Images from selected events are included below.



Above (left and centre)

Members, friends and family celebrated the end of 2021 with a BBQ picnic and a visit from Santa in South Yarra's beautiful Fawkner Park.

On the right (and above right)

President Robert Furlan led the ESU's Anzac Day ceremony on 25 April. Participants then shared memorabilia and recollections of service by family members in WW1 & WW2.



9. FINANCE & INVESTMENTS

Financial report

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

Donations

In March, the ESU made a donation to the Red Cross to support flood recovery in NSW and Queensland.

Sponsorships

Funds provided in the previous financial year enabled the C J Dennis Society to deliver the C J Dennis Poetry Festival & Poetry Competition via videoconference in November 2021. The ESU was represented at the event by Robert Furlan (President) and Margaret Birtley (Awards convenor). Edited recordings of [the morning session](#) and [the afternoon session](#) are available on YouTube.

During 2021-2022, the ESU approved funds and in-kind assistance to sponsor:

- [Toastmasters District 73](#) for its Youth Leadership program, a public speaking program delivered by Toastmaster volunteers to students in school classrooms, builds confidence in public speaking and teaches practical communication skills. ESU's book prizes recognise high performing and most improved students. We are delighted to support a program that encourages young people to express themselves confidently in the classroom and in their everyday lives.
- [Independent School of Philosophy](#) for a six-week course (July-September 2022) on Shakespeare's tragedy, *Othello*.

Sponsorship awarded during 2020-2021 to the [Speech and Drama Teachers Association of Victoria](#) supports the Association's next Performance Festival (deferred until 28 August 2022).



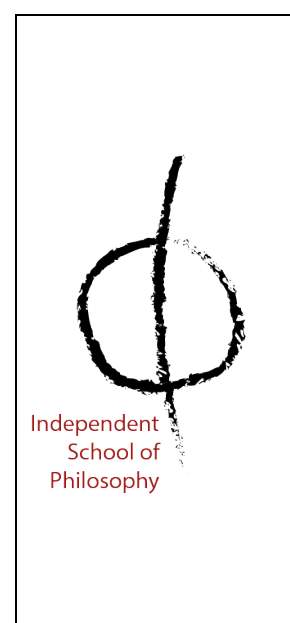
C J Dennis (1876-1938)



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE



SPEECH & DRAMA
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
OF VICTORIA



10. PROPERTY

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

New kitchen

A brand new, fully equipped kitchen has been successfully installed at ESU House and is now fully operational. Maximum care was taken to ensure that all renovations and fittings were done with a sense of elegance and style as well as a commitment to the building's heritage significance.

Australian products that display design excellence were carefully selected, as well as traditional products from the UK.

The customised cabinetry was made by craftsmen in Melbourne from solid timber Victorian Ash stained to match the building's existing timber, bevels and mouldings.

A stunning feature is the English-made Falcon Classic Deluxe cooker, standing where a cooker previously stood (as shown on plans from the 1950s).

Condari, the only wholly Australian-owned range hood company, supplied its Rangepcraft Plasma that uses space-age technology to decompose odour molecules into oxygen, carbon dioxide and water, eliminating the need for ducting (which would damage the building's heritage fabric).

Another impressive feature is the Shaws fireclay Butler sink, handcrafted in Darwen, north-east England. This design has been made since the company was founded in 1897, so it is authentic to the period of ESU House. The sink is paired with a tap from the Winslow collection by Brodware, a Sydney based company which has been designing, engineering and manufacturing its products in Australia since 1964. Using state of the art inFinium PVD technology, the coating of the tap has been molecularly bonded to the metal, creating a brass finish which is resistant to scratching, tarnishing, abrasion, corrosion and discolouration.



Conservation Management Plan

In October, following a competitive tender process, Council contracted Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd to develop a Conservation Management Plan that will guide all future work at our premises, including high-level maintenance and repairs and potential development of an *al fresco* BBQ and outdoor eating area.

Chimneys and roof

Following the resignation of the Executive Director, the Building committee has explored alternative strategies for providing professional supervision of the necessary permanent repairs to the chimney, roof and gutters and other high-level maintenance work and is close to announcing a solution.

11. MEMBERSHIP & GENERAL MEETINGS

The Annual General Meeting for 2020-2021 was held by videoconference on 27 November 2021. At the end of 2021, the Council decided to offer a free year of social membership to friends of current ESU members and was pleased by the response. After three years as social members, individuals and households can apply for full (voting) membership.

With sorrow, we record the passing during 2021-2022 of two long-term ESU members:

- Avril Smith died on 7 September 2021. She served on the Council for many years and assisted with several committees and numerous activities.
- Alan James died on 4 April 2022. His contributions to various committees, including the Finance committee and one of the Awards judging panels, are sadly missed. One of his final achievements for the ESU was the script for the History of the English-Speaking Peoples video.

We extend sincere condolences to the family and friends of these members.

12. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

Our President is the current President of the Australian English-Speaking Union Ltd (AESU). Its activities during 2021-2022 were severely constrained by the pandemic and restrictions on interstate travel. The AGM took place on 30 October 2021 via videoconference.

The AESU's Honorary Secretary and the President of the ESU Queensland Branch participated online in the International Council Meeting held on 9 December 2021.

13. JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH KINDRED SOCIETIES

The ESU continued to provide administrative assistance to its Corporate member, the British Australian Community Inc., through to its October AGM when BAC members elected a President based in NSW and a Secretary based in Queensland. Following a transition period, the BAC Committee now manages its affairs independently. By mutual agreement, the ESU continues to provide space for storage of the BAC's archival records.

Alongside representatives of many loyalist societies in Victoria, ESU members attended a Choral Evensong service at St Paul's Cathedral (Melbourne) on 6 February to mark the Platinum Anniversary of the Accession of Her Majesty the Queen, and a service at St John's Anglican Church (Toorak) to celebrate the Queen's Birthday on 5 June.

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



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