

“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, 2022-2023



The English-Speaking Union

Victoria Branch

ABN 42 004 297 803

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1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 has seen several major achievements for The English-Speaking Union (Victoria Branch) [ESU], with a focus on capital works.

Our headquarters in Ascot Vale is included on the Victorian Heritage Register which means that we have obligations to the Heritage Council of Victoria whenever we need to make repairs or changes to the building. In 2019-2020 we recognised that the chimneys required maintenance and undertook preparatory stabilisation of these. During 2021-2022, we engaged Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd to write a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the entire building. This document, completed in December 2022, provides us with a 'best practice' guide for all future work at our premises, including high-level maintenance and repairs, and supports our applications to the Heritage Council for permit exemptions. We thank Landmark Heritage's Natica Schmeder and her associates for their careful and rigorous work in creating our CMP.



In June 2023 we finalised a contract with Abode Restoration Pty Ltd to complete a number of major repairs as defined by the CMP. This includes work on the stone chimneys and slate roof, lightning conductor, stone windowsills and timber window frames. Our focus with Abode has been on high-level work because of the investment we've had to make in scaffolding and associated permits. Additional work has, however, also been undertaken at ground level by Abode's skilled masons and carpenters. Special thanks are due to Geoffrey Mills, one of the elected directors on our Council, for his leadership of our Building committee. We also thank heritage architect, Trudy Rickard, for her work as our Contract Administrator. We look forward to the building's restored appearance when the scaffolding, hessian and hoardings are removed.

Our investment program continues to generate good yields to support our activities.

Our Awards program attracts strong interest and is assisting many 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 October we welcomed a new Administrative Officer. Unfortunately, she resigned in April to pursue opportunities in Sydney. We thank Sophie for her contribution.

In the absence of paid staff since April, members of the Council have undertaken many essential tasks as volunteers. I offer particular thanks to Dennis Katsonis who resigned from the Council in August 2023, having served as Treasurer for more than 11 years.

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 stepped down as president of the national organisation in September 2023.

I thank all members for their loyalty and support. I am also 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.

Looking ahead, I am delighted to announce the launch of three new strategic initiatives in 2024: a Writer's Residency at ESU House, a nationwide Poetry Prize and a scholarship for a university student to work on a creative project that is inspired by our Sir Owen Dixon Library. These will be managed by ESU member Lucas Smith.

Robert Furlan

2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

In June, the Council revised its Operational Priorities with the aim of encouraging more members to contribute to the work of the organisation.

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

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

So that we are an effective and efficient organisation.



Directors oversee each area of operational activity. Responsibilities at 30 June 2023 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 areas where activity has occurred during the year are provided in sections 3-8 of this document.

3. GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

The Council is the governing body of the ESU. During the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, the Council met on 10 occasions.

One director, Rupert Griffin, left the Council during the year and ceased to be a director in September.

The term of director Geoffrey Mills concluded at the AGM held on 27 November 2022. At that meeting, he was re-elected (unopposed) for a further three-year term.

At the same AGM, Mr Jay Hutchison and Mr Andrea Shershoff were elected for three-year terms: Mr Hutchison as a director and Mr Shershoff as the Deputy President.

This table lists the directors of the Council as at 30 June 2023.

Role	Name	First elected / appointed	Latest election	Number of Council meetings attended
President	Robert Furlan	2006	27 Nov 2021	10
Deputy President	Andrea Shershoff	2022	27 Nov 2022	10
Company Secretary	Margaret Birtley AM	2017	14 Nov 2020	10
Treasurer	Dennis Katsonis	2012	27 Nov 2021	9
Director	Jay Hutchison	2022	27 Nov 2022	10
Director	Geoffrey Mills	2017	27 Nov 2022	9

The ESU employed a part-time Administrative Officer from October to December 2022 and a full-time Administrative Officer from January to April 2023.

4. AWARDS

The Awards program was launched in September 2020. During the 2022-2023 year, the Awards were promoted by direct email, social media and word-of-mouth.

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

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

We note that no awards were made for the November 2022 round of the Junior Leadership Bursary or the December 2022 round of the Minor Project Grant. The Council has decided not to offer the two regional Leadership Bursaries in 2023-2024.

Minor Project Grant (July 2022)

Winner
Professor Kate
Burrige



Professor Kate Burrige of Monash University applied successfully for a grant to support a visit to Australia by Professor Jonathan Culpeper, Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Lancaster University.

Monash Arts organized Professor Culpeper's lecture **Myths about Shakespeare's Language** at State Library Victoria on 22 June 2022.

For those who were unable to attend or would like to relive the event, Monash Arts has kindly made a recording available.

Click <https://vimeo.com/840293072> to catch up on the thought-provoking discussions and captivating insights shared by Professor Jonathan Culpeper.



Oldham Wedlick Scholarship (November 2022)

Winner
Dr Isabelle Burke

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

Dr Burke (pictured below) is a Research Fellow in the Linguistics Program at Monash University. She will use the Scholarship to research the grammatical differences between Victorian rural and urban English speakers.



Major Project Grant (March 2023)

Winner

Ryan Daffurn



Ryan Daffurn, winner of the 2023 Major Project Grant is an Australian fine artist whose project "An artistic interpretation of Hill End" celebrates the historic village of Hill End in New South Wales. Using this grant, Daffurn will create between fifteen to thirty paintings as well as a published catalogue of these works. This work will unfold over the coming year, leading to several major milestones at its completion in mid-2024. A major feature of this body of work will be a large-scale painting of multiple panels, in the format of an altarpiece. This 'polyptych' (multi-image) artwork will also be launched at the 2024 exhibition.

Photographer: Yves Hernot

Runner-up

Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network

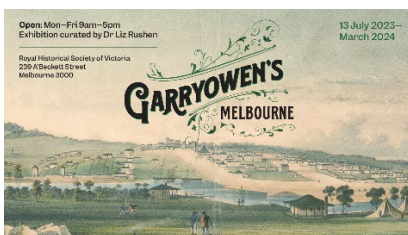


The MMHN's project *Billabongs to the Bolte Bridge* will create an historically accurate, engaging and accessible narrative describing Melbourne's rich maritime heritage located along the Yarra River - a trail threading its way from the former billabongs which are now integrated into the Royal Botanical Gardens, passing significant heritage bridges, the Polly Woodside, dry docks and pump house, mercantile buildings, wharves, and ship turning circles - culminating at Bolte Bridge. This trail reflects the contribution of the Yarra River to the maritime, commercial and recreational evolution of Melbourne.

Minor Project Grant (March 2023)

Joint Winner

Dr Liz Rushen AM

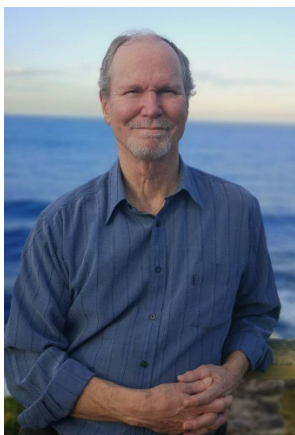


The grant to Dr Rushen supported the design and installation of her exhibition about the life and works of journalist Edmund Finn or 'Garryowen' whose *Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835-1852* have influenced many historians.

Garryowen's Melbourne is on display through to March 2024 at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

Joint Winner

Dr Frank Salter



The grant to Dr Salter will support publication of a forthcoming book of *Collected Essays on the National Question*.

Joint Winner

[Institute of Australian Culture](#)



For further development of the Institute's website content and to assist with the purchase and collection of literature and ephemera relating to Australian culture, history and heritage. This material will be collated in digital form on the Institute's website. The collection will include antique books, certificates, letters, original documents, postcards, and any other type of Australiana which is considered likely to stimulate interest in Australia's heritage and culture. The project will be completed in 2024.

Joint Winner

Side Stream Association

The grant will support a *Quarterly Inquiry Series* during 2023-2024. These Sydney-based events feature eminent thinkers discussing subjects from the 'side stream', i.e. opinions not given a fair hearing in the mainstream. The first of this series presented the theories of Leo Strauss and his philosophical insights.

Young Leader Bursary (April 2023)

Winner

Lucy Sharp, Grovedale



This Bursary is for enrolment in a program that develops leadership skills in young, regionally-based Victorians.

Lucy is already a Queens Scout and was a member of the Victorian Venturer Council for the duration of 2022. With the support of our Bursary, she will further her self-development by participating in the Australian Outward Bound Program in April 2024.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

As at 30 June 2023, all ESU members have provided email addresses, so posted communications are, normally, no longer required.

The ESU uses email 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).

The ESU published seven editions of the *E-News* bulletin: #6 in October, #7 and #8 in November, #9 in February, #10 in March, #11 in April and #12 in late June.

6. 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.

A short video about the *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* was launched at the AGM in November 2022. Published via YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pueKFabX5Sw>), the video was scripted by long-standing member Alan James (1952-2022) and expertly produced by

Final Focus (a Melbourne-based creative business). We acknowledge the generous contributions of members of the Melbourne Shakespeare Society, the Melbourne Dickens Fellowship, the narrator (Dr Peter Groves) and all the cameo presenters, several of whom are ESU members.

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

2022

Saturday 10 December End-of-year picnic and BBQ with a Christmas theme (at Lincoln Square, Carlton), in co-operation with the British Australian Community plus family and friends.

2023 (at ESU House)

Thursday 26 January Australia Day gathering over an evening meal.

Friday 3 March *Friday Night Forum* - discussing the Voice referendum.

Wednesday 5 April Launch of *Anthology of Australian Verse 2023*, published by Bonfire Books with support from the ESU's Major Project Grant 2022.



Friday 21 April



Meet an ESU Award Winner! - Dr Jackie Watts OAM, inaugural Chair of the Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network, and Michael O'Brien CSC, spoke about the Network's establishment, roles, objectives, current progress and language. The Network has won several ESU awards.

This event was promoted as part of the Australian Heritage Festival 2022.

Tuesday 25 April

ANZAC Day Service and BBQ lunch.

Friday 5 May

Friday Night Forum - discussing Modern Corporate Governance and the Diversity Inclusion & Equity Agenda.

We thank those who helped plan and deliver these activities.

7. FINANCE & INVESTMENTS

Financial report

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

Sponsorships

Sponsorship awarded during 2020-2021 to the [Speech and Drama Teachers Association of Victoria](#) supported the Association's Performance Festival (deferred until 28 August 2022 because of the Covid 19 pandemic). ESU President Robert Furlan presented prizes at the event in 2022 and is pictured in the photograph below with members of the SDTAV organizing committee.



Sponsorship awarded during 2021-2022 to the [Independent School of Philosophy](#) provided subsidy of the students' fees for a six-week course on Shakespeare's tragedy, *Othello* from July to September 2023. The first few sessions of the course were held at ESU House, with some participants attending via online video-conferencing.

During 2022-2023, the ESU approved funds to sponsor:

- A new tri-annual journal of commentary and analysis, to be titled *Observer and Review*. The content of each issue will include an editorial, essays, reviews, opinion pieces, and other relevant notes about the arts, culture, meta-politics, history, jurisprudence, books and film.
- *Mathilde Magazine*, <https://www.mathildemagazine.com/about>



8. PROPERTY

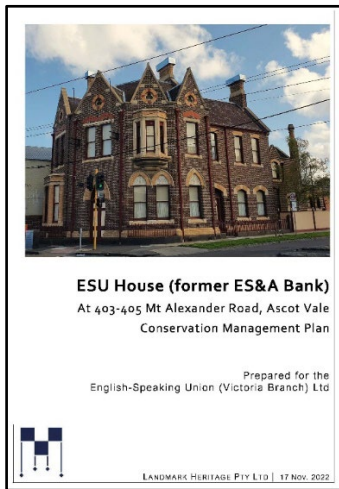
Regular maintenance and repairs to ESU House have continued as required. Two major projects occurred during this year:

Conservation Management Plan

In December, Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd completed a Conservation Management Plan for our building.

High-level repairs

In June, Abode Restoration Pty Ltd was contracted to undertake the necessary permanent repairs to the chimney, roof and gutters and other high-level maintenance work.



Above left: The front cover of the Conservation Management Plan (November 2022).
Above right: The detailed image shows the temporary metal caps on the main chimneys, designed to protect the stone tops until repairs can be completed.

Looking ahead, Abode Restoration will undertake its contracted work during the next financial year. We then plan to restore the interior plaster and paintwork where, prior to the roof repairs, these were damaged by rainwater that entered the building.

9. MEMBERSHIP & GENERAL MEETINGS

The Annual General Meeting for 2021-2022 was held in hybrid mode (in person and by videoconference) on 27 November 2022.

With sorrow, we record the passing during 2022-2023 of three long-term ESU members:

- John Kennedy died in August, aged 92. An Oxford law graduate, he proudly served in the RAF and had a passion for heritage and history. He regularly attended ESU events.
- Douglas Clowes died in October, aged 80. He recently became a Social Member of the ESU. He was a past President of the Royal Society of St George and in that capacity was a valued delegate and contributor to the Council of British & Commonwealth Societies.
- Gwendolynn (Lynn) Gage died on 24 October. Lynn served on the ESU Council from 2010 to 2017 and attended many ESU events, the last being our Anzac Day service in April 2022.

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

10. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

Our President was President of the Australian English-Speaking Union Ltd (AESU) throughout the 2021-2022 year. The AGM took place on 10 November 2022 by videoconference.

11. JOINT ACTIVITIES WITH KINDRED SOCIETIES

In February, several members of the Council attended a Council of British & Commonwealth Societies reception for Office Bearers of member organisations at the Kelvin Club.

**“a movement to draw together in bonds of comradeship
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