



President's Report, December 2021

I am honoured to deliver my third President's report at our 2021 Annual General Meeting. We are gathering online again, acknowledging that in the current environment several of our members continue to work from home and to have an inclusive format. After this difficult year, here we are, meeting to continue supporting our Society and its activities, and looking forward to existing and future initiatives. It has been a challenging context, but I am pleased to report that we have continued working towards strengthening our fellowship, and that we have every reason to look forward to a brighter future ahead despite the uncertainty of these days. Thus, I am pleased to share with you our key activities in 2021 and bring to your attention some of the initiatives we wish to pursue in 2022.

I would like to start by highlighting and celebrating our main accomplishments this year. On one hand, we managed to keep our Society active and engaged, continuing to offer different alternatives for our members to meet and engage. Thanks to the dedication and labour of love of Trish Mullen, we have managed to continue hosting **virtual quiz nights** throughout the year, offering our members a friendly, fun, and entertaining option for sharing with other members during a time of harsh lockdowns and uncertainty. When we were not enduring lockdown restrictions, we continued our traditional offerings: This included **lunch talks** with our esteemed member David R Rees in March, and earlier today with Jerry Platt, Peter Baines, and yours truly presenting 'Speeches at Speed' on a range of topics. We are very excited about continuing our lunch talks this coming year, hopefully on more occasions than in 2021. We are also looking forward to continuing our relationship with other alumni societies, especially the Oxford University Society of Victoria. This year we were able to partake over drinks (including Christmas Drinks earlier this week), played (and won!) golf, and continued to discuss new ideas to bring our societies closer. Additionally, we continue our relationship with the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), and we look forward to exploring new opportunities with them.

Now, there were dear traditions we missed this year due to the pandemic's restrictions and the challenges of planning these events in uncertain conditions. This included our Annual Dinner and the Boat Race Dinner, along with other occasions such as lunches, and a new initiative to hold smaller dinners ('dinner for eight') that we had also organised. However, we can assure you that we are determined to hold our Annual Dinner, the Boat Race Dinner, and other important social activities in the coming year. We are already working towards organising the Annual Dinner in early 2022 (if conditions allow). More information soon!

Membership: It is also a pleasure to report a steady number of members throughout the year, meaning our membership remains in the high two hundred, with ten new applications (including some re-joiners). Last year, the Committee decided not to charge memberships fees for the past year (2021), and we are now exploring different options to allow new members to participate. We will also continue to engage with our members via email, our newsletter, and different social media platforms.

Finally, I would like to thank our Committee Members, whose service has been essential for the business of the Society: Michelle Cooper, Jerry Platt, Fabrice Boucherat, Trish Mullen, Annabelle Walker, Peter Adams, Peter Baines, Anita Doraisami, and past-president Antara Mascarenhas. Thanks all for your hard work and dedication. Thanks also to all our members in the Society, for your continuous input and participation. We are very grateful for your membership and support, and we look forward to better times ahead. On behalf of the Committee, *Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2022!*

Raul A. Sanchez Urribarri