

President's report to the AGM April 2025.

It has been another difficult year for all of us in the tertiary sector, with continuing job losses and funding cuts. Symptomatic of a political environment inimical to the humanities in New Zealand, was the government's disbanding of the Humanities Panel of the Marsden Fund – announced in December 2024 by the Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology. The Marsden Fund is just about the only source of funding in New Zealand for major projects that include medieval and early modern studies. A petition was organised by the New Zealand Historical Association to protest: on behalf of ANZAMEMS, I included our support for the petition, joining thirty-five other signatories from associations across many disciplines. The National government though is implacable in pursuing an agenda against 'economically unproductive' research. In this context, we must continue to celebrate the work our members do, and advocate publicly for its value to society.

For our Association, a cause of more sorrow and shock has been the death of Chris Jones in July 2024. He was president of ANZAMEMS between 2015 and 2021, and many of us will have fond memories of him in Christchurch in February 2024 at the last ANZAMEMS conference, which he co-organised and did so much to make a success. I would like to pay tribute to him for the enormous contribution he made to the Association. In recognition of his work, the General Committee decided to name a new book prize in his honour (open now for submissions), and to commission a special issue of *Parergon* dedicated to the themes of his research. A full obituary will also be published there. These decisions were followed by news that Chris had left a legacy to ANZAMEMS; in March 2025, we were told this amounted to nearly \$63,000 AUD, an extremely generous and unexpected sum. The General Committee is considering ways in which Chris's generosity might be best used to serve the aims of our Association and would like to canvas opinion from members. Some possibilities for managing the donation are suggested in the Treasurer's Report on the proposed budget for 2025.

ANZAMEMS events and activities.

Conference at Melbourne, December 2025.

We are looking forward immensely to the conference at the end of this year. 225 papers have been submitted (including 32 panel proposals). The work for this is onerous, and it began early in 2024. I would particularly like to acknowledge the huge efforts already put in by

Sarah Corrigan, Matthew Champion, and Charlotte-Rose Millar, and others, to make a seemingly impossible task possible.

Seminar series

ANZAMEMS held a seminar on 26 November 2024 at UWA on: “Intercultural encounters and materialities in the medieval and early modern period”. This was part of the Congress of HASS. We are grateful to Dr. Kirk Essary, A/Prof Jaqueline Van Gent (at UWA), and A/Prof Matthew Champion, for their work in making this a successful event.

Post graduate initiatives

Alexandra Forsyth is stepping down as Postgrad Rep Aotearoa/New Zealand. I thank her for the work which she did so well in this role. The many reading and support groups she organised and co-hosted have been invaluable. I also thank Jenny Davis Barnett for initiating and running on-line Writing and Peer Support Group meetings. It is forums like these that help foster the sense of a wider post-graduate community, and which support the difficult art of writing theses.

Maddern-Crawford Network

A/Prof. Dolly MacKinnon and Prof. Megan Cassidy Welch have stepped down from their roles as co-convenors. We are extremely grateful for all the work they have done for the network, and for post-grads and ECRs, over so many years.

Prizes and Awards.

We were pleased to announce not just the new Chris Jones Book prize, but also a new publication subvention scheme (to help with publication costs that a publisher may not meet). To encourage and support post-graduate research, new criteria have been announced for the George Yule Prize, aimed at post-graduate students, linking the prize with papers to be given at the conference this year, and with possible publication by *Parergon*.

Entry to the other ANZAMEMS prizes is now open: the Anne M. Scott *Parergon* Prize, the Patricia Crawford Postgraduate Prize, the Philippa Maddern ECR Publication Prize, and the Constant Mews Early Career Publication Prize. The closing date is 1 August 2025; winners will be announced at the conference.

Parergon.

Two handsome and fascinating issues of *Parergon* appeared in 2024, one themed around 'Transforming the Early Modern Archive: the Emerson Collection', one with special focuses on Renaissance art and science, and the aesthetics of medieval and early modern poetry. There are two more issues in the pipeline for 2025, one containing a special sub-issue on the Aristotelian soul in early modern China, another themed round medieval English attitudes to the external world. *Parergon* currently sits within the top 6.6% of journals on Project Muse; its H-Index continues to rise and was at 12 for 2024.

Parergon is central to the profile and finances of ANZAMEMS and is not put together without considerable time and expertise. I would like to thank Prof. Rosalind Smith and Prof. Sarah Ross for their outstanding work as editors, Dr Claire McIlroy as reviews editor, and the whole of the Early Career Committee.

Administration

ANZAMEMS continues to maintain a good financial position. It returned a small profit in 2024, despite budgeting for a deficit (expecting membership fees to be lower in a non-conference year). There has been an increase in royalties earned from *Parergon*. We are mindful that an upcoming conference, as usual, will also add considerably to costs. I would like to thank our Treasurer, Prof. Katie Barclay, for ensuring these budgets are managed so transparently and effectively.

The General Committee has further explored potential registration with ACNC (the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission), as referred to at our last AGM. I thank A/Prof. Matthew Champion for investigating the matter in a free consultation with FAL lawyers in Melbourne. On the basis of his report, the General Committee decided at its meeting on 7 March 2025 not to pursue this further for now: the advantages of registration are too small or would not benefit the Association except in circumstances that are unlikely to happen.

On membership fees, as reported at the last AGM, the decision was taken to adopt a new tiered subscription rate in 2024. This appears to be working well, with little apparent loss in numbers. The purpose was partly to continue keeping subscription costs low for post-

graduates and the 'precariously waged'. We are grateful to those members whose fees have been significantly increased and have continued their membership.

ANZAMEMS has moved its mailing list from UWA servers to MailChimp, a more stable option which is currently free to use. It now has a LinkedIn page, and a subscription to Fedica to manage its multiple social media accounts. We are in debt to Dr Matthew Firth, Communications Officer, for much of this, and for regular postings and other work – including advocating for a strategic deactivation of our Twitter/X account.

General Committee Business

I thank all members of the General Committee, for their many hours of work on behalf of the Association and its members. I extend particular gratitude to Dr Kathleen Neal who has had to withdraw from her role as Secretary. Her work for the committee has been exemplary. We are fortunate that Dr Grace Waye-Harris agreed to be co-opted on to the Committee to take up this important role. I also thank Dr Brid Phillips, who will also be stepping down as a committee member, for all the time and work she has put in for ANZAMEMS.

The General Committee has continued its established pattern of meeting four times annually by Zoom, with subcommittees meeting as needed. I cannot thank Dr Marina Gerzic enough for her tireless work as our Executive Administrator. Her knowledge of all aspects of the Association's business helps ensure that our complex administration runs as smoothly as possible.