



## **NATIONAL TRUST TASMANIA**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 24 OCTOBER 2021**

### **REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

I am pleased to present the National Trust Tasmania Annual Report for 2020-21. The year when our state has been isolated from the outside world to protect us all from the advance of the Covid-19 epidemic has presented the Trust with a set of challenges. Challenges for which the organisation was not exactly prepared.

The biggest challenge has been financial. The National Trust Tasmania has for many years been asset rich and cash poor. The magnificent buildings which we present to the public, including many visitors to Tasmania, are extremely expensive to operate and maintain.

The National Trust UK has a policy of not accepting the gift of any buildings or land unless it comes with sufficient resources to generate the income necessary to maintain it. This is very definitely not the case in Tasmania where in a normal year the Trust generates enough income to operate and looks to fundraise to finance routine maintenance and occasionally is able to tackle major repairs. In a year when our income has dropped dramatically this situation has been thrown into stark relief.

Only at Clarendon, where the Trust has spent a grant from the Tasmanian Government, for which we are extremely grateful, has any longer-term maintenance been possible. At last year's Annual General Meeting I flagged the need to adaptively reuse some of the Trust's properties to generate the funds necessary to properly maintain them. Our strategic plan for the post-covid world makes this a priority.

Another big challenge thrown up by the epidemic has been the retirement of many long-serving volunteers. The Trust is extremely grateful to all those volunteers who work year in year out and I can't thank them enough for everything they do. When our properties were able to reopen, some older and more vulnerable folk decided not to take the risk of going out in public. We quite understand and would just like to say thank you for your years of service. We hope you will stay in touch as members and come and visit some of our beautiful properties when the pandemic has finally passed. The Trust is responding by looking to recruit more volunteers and by inaugurating a full workplace health and safety audit to ensure best practice.

The last year has been particularly challenging for the NTT staff who have gone to extraordinary lengths to keep the organisation viable. Staff who were previously on JobKeeper had to accept fewer hours as income tightened cross the year. I would like to extend the thanks of the Board and all members for the marvelous job they have done. Two key members of staff have moved on and our thanks are due to Christine Parker the extremely hard-working Executive Secretary who left in November. Managing Director, Matthew Smithies left the office in December and resigned in July 2021.

Life was made significantly more complicated by a burst pipe in the State Office in Launceston which necessitated packing up all the files and moving out. With staff working from home or temporary digs in Franklin House or the Old Umbrella Shop we decided to close the State Office and review the situation when life begins to return to normal. Thanks, are also due to those on the Board who have stepped up and filled in for staff who were no longer with us.

The Board has gone to great lengths to keep members engaged while our properties have been closed and people have not been able to travel. Apart from the reduction in dues to reflect the closure of our properties introduced last year we have continued to produce regular and informative newsletters and arranged a series of events to celebrate the Sixtieth Anniversary of the organisation. At the southern event for former office bearers and major supporters I was delighted to be able to single out for thanks the members of former Macquarie Group who had raised funds over many years to purchase important objects for the Runnymede collection. The Trust's Patron, Governor Kate Warner hosted a delightful fundraising event at Government House to bring the Sixtieth celebrations to a fitting close.

The lack of experienced marketing professionals on staff has been another weakness exposed by the pandemic. Tourism in Tasmania has changed dramatically during border closures and the Trust has not been resourced to respond. The Board's focus, however, has been on keeping the Tasmanian Government abreast of developments at the Trust and working to obtain additional funding to enable a restructure to take place and move the organisation towards a sustainable future. As members will be aware an extra grant of \$300,000 for the Trust was provided in the recent State Budget. We look forward to collaborating with the Minister for Heritage, the Hon Roger Jaensch on the implementation of our post-Covid strategic Plan.

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to all the Trust staff and volunteers who have gone to remarkable lengths to keep the organisation operating and to acknowledge the extraordinary work of my colleagues on the Board. Thank you all!

Nicholas Heyward

Chair