

WAFHO VOICE

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY HISTORY ORGANISATIONS

www.vafho.org.au

DECEMBER 2009



Christmas is approaching fast. It is time to reflect on the year and plan for next year. We can report on some exciting things in 2009. VAFHO was again very active. The Wills and Probates project is going well and many have been

put on the PROV website so that researchers can access them via the internet. This is a wonderful resource and much information can be gleaned to further your family history research.

National Family History Week 2009 was again a most successful time. Many prospective new genealogists were introduced to ways of researching their ancestors. If you have something planned for Family History Week 2010, please send your information to The Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations (AFFHO). This will keep everyone informed and at the same time promote your event.

Dorothy Wickham



The VAFHO committee would like to thank former committee members Dr Peter Prideaux (pictured right with Pat Eade), Shauna Hicks, and Sue Hill (pictured left) for the work they undertook and the years of voluntary service they willingly gave while on the VAFHO committee. Sue Hill seen here at the Shepparton Seminar, organised successful seminars, meetings, and supported VAFHO during her many years working in a voluntary capacity on the committee. Peter worked tirelessly in an honorary capacity, and Shauna organised PROV for many events.

VAFHO Committee

VAFHO AIMS

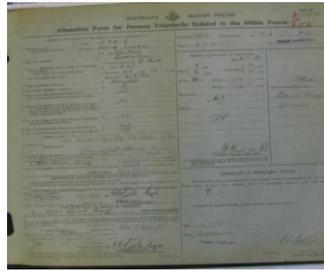
- To promote and encourage the study of genealogy, heraldry, family history and allied subjects throughout Victoria
- To promote and arrange easier public access to public records and record repositories throughout Victoria
- To promote and encourage the preservation of records for family history research
- To co-ordinate the conduct of regular family history conferences and events in Victoria



Happy Christmas
&
New Year



CLOSURE OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Archives - WW1 & WW2

The Director General of National Archives, Mr Ross Gibbs, announced on 13 November 2009 that National Archives would be required to find significant budget savings over the next three years. Mr Gibbs said that, while the decision had been difficult and regrettable, the Darwin office would close in September 2010, followed by Adelaide in 2011, and two Hobart offices in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

See <http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/director-general/index.aspx>

Gibbs decision has been questioned, opposed and the general response from NAA has been regarded by many archivists as unsatisfactory. What has emerged from the meetings is that remarkably little planning seems to have gone into the decision and the arrangements the NAA needs to put in place for the relocation of the records, for support for Commonwealth agencies in those states and the NT, for the future of the staff, and future access to the records. According to the Koori Mail (9 December 2009) "Indigenous groups across the Northern Territory have vowed to fight a decision by National Archives Australia (NAA) to close its Darwin office by 2010. The move has angered not only Indigenous people including Stolen Generations members, but non-Indigenous people who say the office has served an invaluable role in connecting families and communities with their lost history". ...

Ms Baird said the community was still reeling from the decision, which she said had come out of the blue and would have huge implications for the NT. "The Territory and our practices are quite different from the rest of Australia," she said. "None of our bush births were registered, then in 1954 the federal government registered all of these births en masse, which meant a lot of the birth certificates aren't right.

Ms Baird said the decision would have a negative impact on not only the Indigenous community but other institutions like the historical society and education system that relied on accurate records for their work. ...

NAA's Yvonne Kennedy said the closure came in response to the government's mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Statement announced on November 2, and the decision to close the designated offices had not been taken lightly.

"The National Archives is required to save \$700,000 this financial year and \$1.4 million for each of the years through to 2014. As well as the office closures in Adelaide, Darwin and Hobart over the next two-and-a-half years, the National Archives will reduce service costs and services in Canberra," she said. ...

A meeting of the Darwin Archives Consultative Forum was held last week with representatives from NAA in attendance, but no final decision had been made at the time of printing.

Historians, archivists and other interested bodies are concerned with the closures. Letters are being prepared and will be sent to parliamentarians protesting this action. Individuals can write to the relevant minister, Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, Cabinet Secretary and Special Minister of State, GPO Box 2477, Brisbane, QLD, 4001, as well as their local members. A petition has been prepared by Ann Picot (University of Sydney Archives). It can be downloaded from the "News & Events" page of PHA (Vic) website <http://www.phavic.org.au/news/htm> The petition will be presented to Parliament on 2 February 2010.

CLOSURE AT PROV OF CORONIAL INQUEST FILES

On 3 December 2009 an email was distributed by Sarah Gebert from the Department of Justice, Victoria in relation to coronial files held at PROV. She was advising that the Keeper of the Records, Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) "has advised that we should seek your views in relation to a proposed declaration under section 9 of the *Public Records Act 1975*". She asked to receive comments on the **retrospective** nature of this proposal by COB Friday 11 December 2009.

Background

Government has recently reformed the Victorian coronial jurisdiction following the release in September 2006 of the Victorian Parliament Law Reform Committee Report into the *Coroners Act 1985*. The *Coroners Act 2008* (the Act) was subsequently developed and articulates a new court access to documents framework which specifically overturns the presumption of public access. The Act commenced on 1 November 2009.

Closed coronial files

Once a coronial investigation is complete, the file is transferred to the custody of PROV and is immediately available for public inspection unless the Minister responsible for PROV takes action to close them under the *Public Records Act 1975*. Currently, closed coronial files which are transferred to PROV are withheld from public access for a period of **10 years**. As you may be aware, the coronial jurisdiction requires an independent investigation into the death of an individual and a state intervention into a private experience of families. To perform this role coroners collect personal and sensitive information relating to deceased and living persons, including information which may relate to health status, child protection and suicide. Information could also relate to a deceased person's family members, employers, friends and others associated with the coronial investigation. Not only is the information intensely private and personal in nature, it can also be very graphic (eg autopsy reports, photographs etc.). Coronial files can also deal with the deaths of children.

It was therefore proposed that a declaration be made for coronial files to be closed for a period of 75 years and that the declaration should relate to files commencing on 1 June 1986. The Keeper of the Records asked the Department of Justice to consult with the public as the effect of this declaration would mean that coronial files that are currently available to the public (from 1 June 1986) will no longer be open to the public. This proposal was carefully considered and took into consideration a number of factors including the following:

- The current period of 10 years for closure of a coronial file is insufficient given the nature of their contents. The request therefore is curative in that it addresses an inadequacy of a current policy.
- The data provided by PROV in relation to public usage for files from 1935 to 1998 for the period relating to 1 May 2008 to 30 April 2009 shows a distinct reduction in search requests from 1985.
- Interested parties with sufficient can make an application to the Coroners Court for access to files held by PROV if they meet the statutory requirements under the *Coroners Act 2008*. The Coroners Court can make counsellors available for this purpose.
- The proposed declaration will benefit the next of kin and families of the deceased by allowing only applicants with sufficient interest to access private and personal information regarding the deceased and other parties contained on a file from the relevant date. This position reduces further hardship on families; and
- The request is consistent with the new legislative access to documents framework which contains no presumption of public access to closed coronial files under the *Coroners Act 2008*.

VAFHO are in the process of responding to both the closure of NAA offices and the closure of coronial inquests at PROV..

S H E P P A R T O N S E M I N A R



Clare Gervasoni giving a talk at the Shepparton Open Day

On 1 August Dorothy Wickham and Clare Gervasoni delivered prepared talks on goldfields research to a group at the Shepparton Library. The day was arranged by Sue Hill and Jan Parker. Exchanges of ideas and information throughout the day resulted in a biography from Shepparton resident Jacqueline Cheyne, being published in a new book.



Jan Parker and Sue Hill perusing documents at Shepparton Library

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE VICTORIA (PROV)

***Provenance* – 2009 issue online – now calling for contributions for 2010 issue**

Provenance is the free scholarly journal of Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) which holds the archives of the State of Victoria. *Provenance* features peer-reviewed articles, and other contributions, that present research drawing upon records in PROV custody. If you are researching PROV records and have an interest in writing an article then consider submitting an article to *Provenance*. We are now calling for articles for the 2010 issue of *Provenance*. The submission deadline for the upcoming issue is 31 March 2010.

Subscribe to *Provenance* or make an enquiry about contributing to the journal, by contacting the Editor, Dr Sebastian Gurciullo: by phone on (03) 9348 5600; or email provenance@prov.vic.gov.au. Prospective authors can find further information about submitting articles in the [Brief for contributors](#).

You can search the [current and back issues](#) for subjects, names and places of interest.

Provenance Issue No 8 – 2009 is now available [online](#).

NATIONAL FAMILY HISTORY WEEK 2009

VAFHO President Jenny Harkness opened National Family History Week 2009 at the Public Record Office Victoria, North Melbourne complex. Many prospective new genealogists were introduced to ways of researching their ancestors. If you have something planned for Family History Week 2010, please send your information to The Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations (AFFHO). <http://www.familyhistoryweek.org.au/EventsVIC.htm>. Click on this page to submit an entry. This will keep everyone informed and at the same time promote your event. Add your event please.



Jenny Harkness, President VAFHO, opening Family History Week 2009



Public Record Office Victoria. Jenny Harkness opening NFWH; RHS Leslie Berry receives acknowledgement of her service to family history.

FAMILY HISTORY FEAST

Family History Feast, held annually during National Family History Week, is a day of free information sessions for family history researchers at the State Library of Victoria. It includes the annual Victorian Association of Family History Organisations (VAFHO) Don Grant Lecture. State Library of Victoria in conjunction with National Archives of Australia, Public Record Office Victoria, Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and Victorian Association of Family History Organisations holds special sessions. In 2010 it will be held on Monday 3 August in SLV Theatrette. Check Library website closer to the event for program details.

DON GRANT LECTURE

VAFHO have participated in national family history week for many years by holding the don grant lecture which is open to all and free. Guest speaker this year was the well-known historian and author Professor Patricia Grimshaw. The lecture was held at the State Library of Victoria Roadshow Theatrette on Monday 3 August 2009. Pat kept us all enthralled with her lecture on *Family history and women's history: critical intersections*. She spoke on the central

role of women in the family and gave anecdotal examples from her own family history by which we were truly entertained.

Professor Patricia Grimshaw is a Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne, where, since 1977, she has taught Australian, Pacific & United States history. She has undertaken extensive work in gender history and was co-founder of Women Studies at the University. In 1985 she co-edited *Families in Colonial Australia* and in 1999 co-edited a special edition of the Women's History Review, 'Revisiting Motherhood: New Histories of the Public and Private'. She authored/co-edited *Women's Rights and Human Rights: International Perspectives* (2001), *Creating A Nation* (1994/2006) and *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (2007).



Members of VAFHO Committee
Jenny Harkness, Sue Hill, Pat Eade



Guest Speaker
Prof Patricia Grimshaw



Anne Burrows SLV, Jenny Harkness
VAFHO, with Prof Patricia Grimshaw

FIRE AND FLOOD: SAVING YOUR TREASURES

In response to the devastating 2009 Victorian bushfires VAFHO organised a free conservation seminar **Fire & Flood: Saving Your Treasures** on Saturday 19th September 2009 at the SLV Theatrette. This seminar catered for everyone who had an interest in preserving history for future generations. The broad range of excellent speakers included Sarah Slade (SLV) *Significance Assessments & Memory Victoria*, Alice Cannon (SLV) *Disaster Preparedness*, David Parker (NAA) *Storage to Mitigate the Effects of Disaster*, Reg & Mary Kenealy *Marysville Historical Society*, Glen Turnbull (RHSV) *Rebuilding the Marysville Collection*, Merrick Morris (PROV) *Disaster Recovery Networks*, and Oliver Threlfall (Steamatics) *Photograph & Document Recovery*.

After the heart rending story told by Mary Kenealy, of how she and Reg packed the collection from the historical society, phoned for advice, and did "all the right things", before the devastation of Marysville by bushfires early in 2009, there was hardly a dry eye in the theatre. The Marysville Historical Society collection was lost but luckily Reg and Mary escaped with their lives.

After the many informative and interesting talks a session of questions and answers was held and expert advice given freely. The exchange of ideas and helpful hints was a highlight of the afternoon. An article by Sarah Slade, one of the speakers is included in the following pages of VAFHO Voice.



In between proceedings, VAFHO Seminar
Fire & Flood: Saving Your Treasures



Speakers:
Fire & Flood: Saving Your Treasures

Memory Victoria

A STATEWIDE LOCAL HISTORY INITIATIVE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Sarah Slade
Storage, Preservation and Conservation Manager
State Library of Victoria

Memory Victoria was one of a suite of Statewide projects conducted under the auspices of the Library Board of Victoria to assist in the development of the Victorian public library network.

In 2001, a *Directory of Local History Collections in Victorian Public Libraries* was compiled as part of the Statewide Public Library Development Projects. The *Directory* indicated that nearly all Victorian public library services are custodians of local history collections, or house collections belonging to a local historical society, and that these collections vary greatly in size, content, condition and the degree to which they have been organised.

The *Memory Victoria* project aimed to provide the following opportunities:

- assistance for Victorian public libraries to better manage their local history collections;
- allowing libraries to obtain expert assessment, advice and training otherwise unaffordable and difficult to co-ordinate by Victorian public libraries;
- planning tools and assistance to public libraries with funding applications and other advocacy processes;
- an overview of significant collections housed within Victorian public libraries; and
- creating and increasing public awareness of local history collections in Victorian public libraries.

To achieve this, the *Memory Victoria* Workgroup developed a three-year program entitled *The Victorian Public Library Local History Collection Program*. Fifty-seven branches from 34 Victorian public library services (there are 45 Victorian public library services) participated in this program.

As local history collections can be an overlooked or low priority area of public library service, the *Memory Victoria* project needed to assist the library service to address the needs of these collections in a realistic and practical manner. To this end the project was designed to give staff with responsibility for the local history collection staged advice that would:

- enable them to make informed decisions;
- not have a major impost on their time, and;
- enable them to use the information given to apply for grants to implement key recommendations.

The aim of the *Memory Victoria* project was to provide guidance to public libraries for the better management, care and accessibility of their local history collections; assisting public libraries to advocate for the resources they need to support their local history collections; and, raising the profile of and engagement with local history collections in the community.

To achieve this aim it initially focussed on providing guidance to public libraries for the better management, care and accessibility of their local history collections. It was decided that the first step needed to be providing those responsible for the local history collections with information about the significance of their collection. This would provide a context for later decisions about how best to care for the collection and which items to give priority to.

The significance assessments were then followed-up with a series of preventive conservation workshops that would give staff responsible for the local history collection information about simple, inexpensive steps that can be taken to minimise risks to the collection.

The third stage was to arrange for private conservators to visit each collection, providing a written report that outlined the main recommendations for each individual collection along with a suggested 5-year conservation plan.

This staged approach was determined so as not to overwhelm those responsible for the collection with visits and reports, and also to allow time for consideration of the recommendations made by the specialists at each stage of the project. At the end the public libraries would have a clear idea of the importance of their collection, preventive conservation skills, a 5-year conservation plan and written recommendations that could be used to apply for further funding assistance in addressing the recommendations.

These parts of the project were modelled on the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grants (CHG) Program. This program has been in operation for 15 years and "aims to preserve and provide access to locally held, nationally significant cultural heritage collections across Australia. The program provides grant funding of up to \$15 000 for preservation projects and preservation and collection management training through community based workshops. Community organisations such as historical societies, museums, public libraries, archives, Indigenous and migrant community groups which collect and provide public access to their cultural heritage collections are eligible to apply. CHG is funded by the Australian Government through the National Library of Australia; the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; the National Archives of Australia; the National Film and Sound Archive and the National Museum of Australia." (National Library of Australia 2008a)

Although public libraries are eligible to apply for these grants there has not been a high application rate from Library Services. In the three years from 2005 – 2007 11 applications were granted to Library Services throughout Australia, out of a total of 241 Community Heritage Grants awarded (National Library of Australia 2008b).

The key difference between the CHG Program and the *Memory Victoria* project was that in *Memory Victoria* all of the organisation of the specialists, administration of the visits and decisions about the content of the assessments visits, reports and training was arranged centrally by the *Memory Victoria* project team.

This meant that for the individual Library Service the whole program was on offer: rather than the Service having to:

- find out about the grant;
- decide what to apply for;
- apply;
- possibly have to reapply next year if there was a problem with the application;
- find the specialist to undertake the work;
- arrange for the visit; and
- pay the specialist on receipt of the final report.

It also meant that the *Memory Victoria* Project Group could obtain a complete picture of the significance, condition and care of local history collections in public libraries throughout Victoria. This overall picture could then be used to assist public libraries to advocate for the resources they need to support their local history collections in the future.

Once the program for providing guidance to public libraries for the better management, care and accessibility of their local history collections and assisting public libraries to advocate for the resources they need to support their local history collections had been determined, the final step was to raise the profile of and engagement with local history collections in the community.

To achieve this final part of the aim a 'roadshow' taking significant items from local history collections to audiences in schools and public libraries around Victoria was developed. This 'roadshow' was modelled on the State Library of Victoria's successful *Travelling Treasures* program.

In *Travelling Treasures*, the State Library of Victoria's collection experts take to the road with a selection of the Library's treasures. The treasures are shown at free evening talks given by the State Library's heritage collection experts at public libraries. During the day, Library

education staff present the treasures to Grade 5-6 students at local primary schools. The program offers audiences the chance to see some of the Library's most precious collection items and ask questions about them (State Library of Victoria 2008).

In the *Memory Victoria* Roadshow, five significant items from five local history collections were selected and taken on tours to regional Victoria. The theme for selection of the items was 'significance'. Each location in the tour consisted of a daytime school session and an evening information session where the items were shown and their significance discussed. This final stage of the three year project was important as it linked back to the original identification of the importance of local history collections and gave them a state-wide and public profile.



Montrose Cottage, Eureka Street, Ballarat
Courtesy Central Highlands Regional Library

Outcomes

The *Memory Victoria* project was successful in a number of key ways:

- it achieved its key aims of providing guidance to public libraries for the better management, care and accessibility of their local history collections; assisting public libraries to advocate for the resources they need to support their local history collections; and, raising the profile of and engagement with local history collections in the community;
- it provided the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian Public Libraries Network with a clear picture of the significance, condition and needs of the local history collection held in Victorian public library services, building on the work of the Statewide Public Library Development Projects in compiling the *Directory of Local History Collections in Victorian Public Libraries* in 2001; and
- in 2007, the *Memory Victoria* project was awarded the Art Portfolio Leadership Award, by the Minister Lynne Kosky.

References

National Library of Australia, 2008a. accessed July 2008. <http://www.nla.gov.au/chg/>

National Library of Australia, 2008b. accessed July 2008.

<http://www.nla.gov.au/chg/recipient.html>

State Library of Victoria, 2008. accessed July 2008.

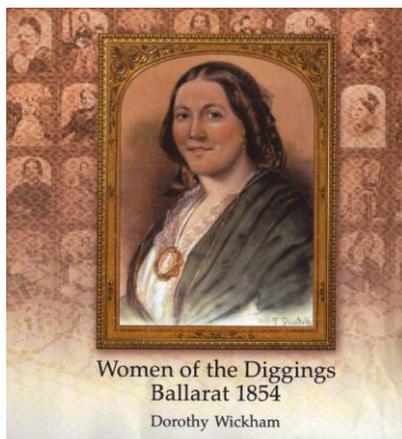
<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/events/2008/travelling-treasures/index.html>

EUREKA CELEBRATIONS



Women's Day - A special group at Eureka Luncheon – Old Colonists' Club, Ballarat
Left to right: Judy Verlin (Mayor of Ballarat), Clare Gervasoni, Dorothy Wickham, Hon. Julie Bishop MP, Laurel Johnson, Valda D'Angri

Women of the Diggings: Ballarat 1854 written by Dorothy Wickham was launched by Catherine King MP at Australian Catholic University, Ballarat, on Eureka Day, Thursday 3 December 2009. The Annual Eureka Lecture delivered by Dr Wickham highlighted the contribution and significance of Women during the Eureka event.



Conventional romantic views of the Victorian goldfields are challenged in Dorothy Wickham's latest book *Women of the Diggings: Ballarat 1854*. The role and lives of women on the diggings are given a voice. Contrary to popular belief the majority of women on the goldfields were not riotous nor were they prostitutes. Wickham brings the lives of "ordinary" women on the goldfields "alive" through the pages of her book.

Women of the Diggings: Ballarat 1854 is set in Ballarat during the year of the Eureka uprising. It is the result of over 20 year's research. Part one encompasses 10 chapters dealing with themes such as birthing, disease, death, dying, marriage, work and public protests. Over 1000 biographies of the women associated with Ballarat in 1854 are uncovered in part two. The beautifully illustrated book includes a comprehensive index, selected bibliography, and appendices.

Available from GSV, Book City, and Ballarat Heritage Services
info@ballaratheritage.com.au

The Eureka Luncheon held on Sunday 6 December also celebrated the significance of women on the goldfields. The MC (Mistress of Ceremonies) was Clare Gervasoni (ESMA committee member). Guest speaker Hon. Julie Bishop MP spoke on the value of opposition to debate and discussion, and how Eureka was influential in ensuring the concepts of equality, liberty and freedom throughout Australian society. Judy Verlin, Mayor of Ballarat, responded and thanked Julie Bishop. Dorothy Wickham then spoke of the Women of Eureka, praising the previous work of Laurel Johnson *Women of Eureka*, and the works of Val D'Angri, protector of the Eureka Flag, a descendant of Anastasia Withers, and co-author with Dorothy Wickham and Clare Gervasoni, of *The Eureka Flag: Our Starry Banner*.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION (CHHA) ANNUAL EXPO

There was an array of displays and societies at the CHHA Annual EXPO **What's in a Name? The Origins of the names of our towns and suburbs** held on Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 October. The venue was Ballarat Special School, Gillies Street, Wendouree. There was ample free parking and wheelchair access. A good weekend was had by all who attended.

INDEXING PROJECT

In the indexing project we desperately need more indexers to finish this on the due date. Please contact Di on fauna6@gmail.com if interested.

GMAGS MULWALA HISTORY EXPO

Goulburn & Murray Association of Local & Family History Groups presented their 10th Annual Local and Family EXPO at Club Mulwala on 21 November 2009, with lots of exhibitors, displays, speakers and publications.



Jan Parker about to cut the cake at the 10th Annual Local and Family EXPO

WHAT'S ON? 2010

WELCOME BACK COUSIN JACK! CORNISH PROGRAM

Eaglehawk Dahlia & Arts Festival, Wednesday 17 March to Sunday 28 March 2010 will showcase Cornish activities including Family History, Displays, Tours, Cornish Language Cass, Heritage Lectures, Bardic Ceremony, Cornish Dance Class, Street Procession, Festival Dinner and Cornish Church Service.

STATE CONFERENCE 2010 *THE BORDER AND BEYOND*

There was much movement of people between New South Wales and Victoria (and beyond) especially in the mid 1800s. As family historians, many will already know that birth, death and marriage certificates for Victoria (then the Port Phillip District of New South Wales) can sometimes be found in the NSW archives. Convict records can also at times hold clues of past relatives. The VAFHO State Conference 2010 is to be held 28 – 30 May 2010 on the border of Victoria and New South Wales at the Mulwala Club, Yarrowonga. Appropriately, the theme of the Conference is *The Border and Beyond*.

NICK VINE HALL AWARD

Nick Vine Hall Award-open to all member organisations of AFFHO-see their website for details- www.affho.org

THE FRANCES BROWN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE TO FAMILY HISTORY IN VICTORIA

The Frances Brown Award is named in honour of Frances Brown the first President of VAFHO and former Genealogy and Local History Librarian at the SLV. The award was instituted to recognize the extraordinary voluntary contributions made by many dedicated and selfless Victorian family historians and is announced at the Victorian Family History State Conference. All member organisations have been sent the details by email. A Nomination Form can also be found on the following page.



Victorian Association of Family
History Organisations Inc.

**FRANCES BROWN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
TO FAMILY HISTORY IN VICTORIA**

Nomination form

Name of nominee-----

Address-----

Tel-----Email-----

Name of nominating VAFHO member organisation

Nominee's contribution to Family History / Genealogy in Victoria

Please provide a short statement including the following information

**Nominees service to family history / genealogy (please include positions held, length of time served, projects completed or assisted with)*

** Details of any publications/ indexes or projects produced by this nominee. Please include the significance of these to family history in Victoria*

** Attach any supporting documentation and a recent photo of the nominee, if possible*

Signature of President/ Secretary of nominating organisation

Date-----

Telephone-----Email-----

Please return before 28 February, 2009

Di Christensen, VAFHO Secretary, PO Box 10, Glen Waverley, 3150
Phone: 03 9703 2985 Email: fauna6@gmail.com