



DEPARTMENT of the
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

ISSUE 2 :: OCTOBER 2008

ALUMNI *Newsletter*



Alumni Association cocktail evening a huge success

The inaugural alumni reception held on 14 March at Old Parliament House was voted a huge success by all who attended.

Around 80 alumni attended the function and many had to be ushered out of the front doors of Kings Hall an hour after the function had formally ended! Everyone seemed to meet at least one colleague who they were surprised to see. Next event will see an even stronger turnout as word gets around.

Clerk of the House of Representatives, Ian Harris, was delighted at the turnout

and indicated that the presence of so many alumni was an indication that “you share my view of the desirability of such an organisation.” He went on to say that an alumni association went far beyond social meetings; it facilitated the exchange of professional knowledge and benefit the HoR by “building a community of informed and interested former staff to achieve its goals and strengthen its links with the community.”

Alumni Board Co-Chair, Gillian Gould, expressed the Board’s delight at seeing

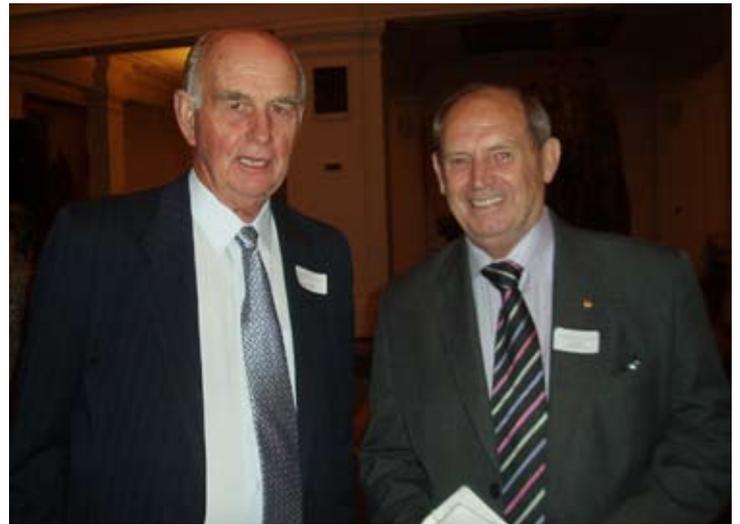
so many people at the inaugural event. She said that although many informal networks already existed, a formal alumni association was an important and welcome initiative and “just the beginning of things to come.” Most of us who work, or have worked, in Parliament “deem it to be a special privilege to do so”, she said, and “the alumni association will provide opportunities to continue to share in that special experience.”

I am sure that all alumni present at the function will echo the sentiments of the Alumni Board in thanking the Clerk, the Department and Marion Bartlett (People Strategies) for organising such a wonderful event.

The photos below give a flavour of the evening.



Ian Harris, Gillian Gould and Marion Bartlett welcoming the alumni.



Past and present Clerks, Lyn Barlin (Alumnus) and Ian Harris.



A great turnout for the inaugural event



Mixing and mingling.

Reminiscences of former Clerk Jack Pettifer

As we celebrate milestones such as the 20th Anniversary of the New Parliament House and 81st Anniversary of the Old Parliament House, what better way to get a picture of our Parliament in the past than taking a few threads from the memories of a former Clerk and one of or most senior Alumni.

Jack Pettifer, Clerk of the House of Representatives from 1977 to 1982, kindly agreed to be interviewed to reveal the memories he had of earlier times. His memories go further back than many of his fellow alumni – he lived in the Old Parliament House soon after it was first opened, as his father was appointed Housekeeper.

His father had served in Parliament since 1901 in Melbourne, and moved the family to Canberra, in 1933, when he was appointed Housekeeper. As Housekeeper he was provided with accommodation for his family. Consequently Jack Pettifer spent his childhood living in Parliament House. The Housekeeper's quarters, at the rear of Parliament House on the Senate side, had not been planned for a family, and Jack Pettifer ended up without a bedroom. He said that a room adjacent to the House telephone exchange, some 50 feet down the corridor was found for him.

In the early 1930s Parliament only met for two or three sessions a year and there were far fewer members. During recess, he said, Parliament was very quiet after about 4.00pm. "In these longer periods of relative inactivity I found the smooth corridors and smooth concreted areas in the courtyards ideal places to use my roller skates", he said. He went to the Refreshment Room to play the modern "Radiola" radiogram and sometimes had a friend over for tennis on the garden courts. The garage behind the building made an excellent place to practise his tennis strokes.

A vertical steel ladder which allowed access to the flagpoles was used by the young Jack Pettifer to gain roof access for sunbaking, conveniently private due to a 5 or 6 foot wall.

Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, Jack and his sister Jean Pettifer all attended Telopea High School. Gough was in Jean's year, and even then Jack Pettifer remembers Gough Whitlam as larger than life.

After leaving school Jack Pettifer thought it would be advantageous to secure a job in the public service, and through home study and evening tuition classes, passed the third division clerical exam. He subsequently attended night typing classes and studied accounting by correspondence.

He applied for a vacancy in the House of Representatives in 1939 and worked in the Department until his retirement in 1982, his employment only interrupted by war service in the Royal Australian Air Force.

Among his major achievements was the production of the first House of Representatives Practice, being Secretary of the Select Committee on *Hansard*, which led to the issue of a daily *Hansard*, and as Secretary to the New and Permanent Parliament House Committee from 1966-69, covering much of the preliminary organisational work for the building of the new Parliament House.

There is much more to say about Jack Pettifer C.B.E., but we have run out of space in this issue. It was a pleasure for this Alumnus to share the memories of a former clerk, whom I had not had the pleasure to meet while working in the Department. 

NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE CELEBRATES ITS 20TH BIRTHDAY

Friday the 9th of May was the 20th anniversary of the opening of New Parliament House. Parliament House architects Romaldo Guirgola and Richard Thorp had a special reunion with the designer of the forecourt mosaic, Michael Nelson Jagamara.

The mosaic is made up of 90,000 hand-guillotined granite pieces in seven different colours telling an Aboriginal story of native animals such as kangaroos and possums coming together for a celebration at a central meeting place.

The two days of celebrations included a 200-strong choir of schoolchildren, performances by top Australian artists including Dein Pery's Tap Dogs, musical ensemble Electra, a lecture on parliamentary architecture, and an Open Day on 10 May. 

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE TURNS 81

On the same day as New Parliament House celebrated its 20th Anniversary, Old Parliament House turned 81.

Old Parliament House has been restored and rejuvenated to turn it into a living museum of the parliament as it was in its heyday. Since 1988 the Old Parliament House has become a portrait museum and a display where visitors can sit in the Chambers where governments were made and defeated, and where some of the most important speeches were made. They can also see the rooms, left as they were, where former Prime Ministers worked. 

Further information:

For any further information on alumni events or information please contact email - Alumni.reps@aph.gov.au

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