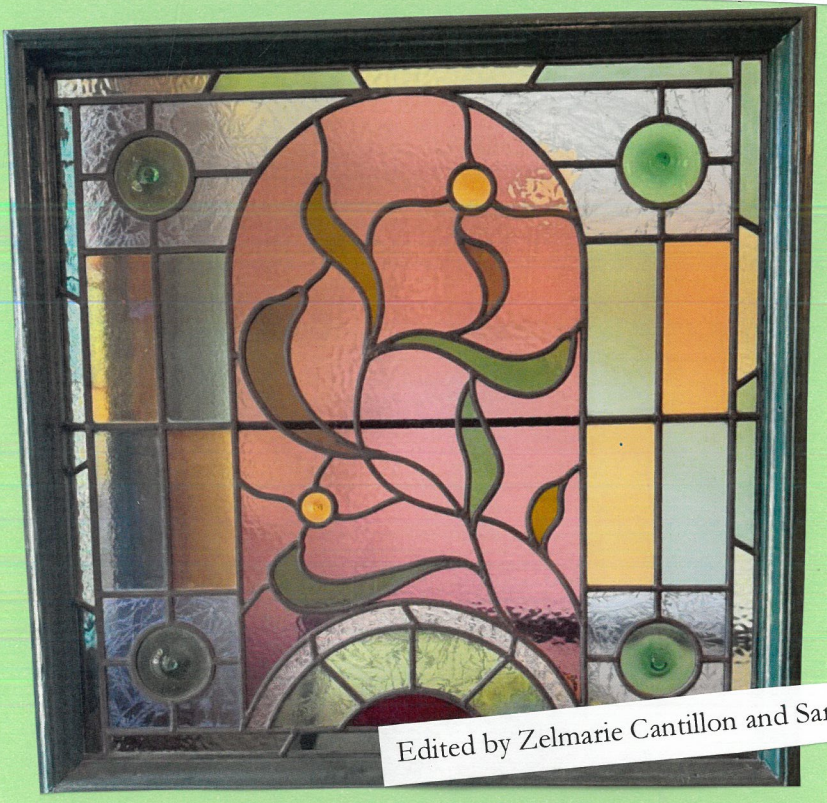
Preserve,

Protect,

Promote



Organisational Sustainability and the Bayswater Historical Society



Edited by Zelmarie Cantillon and Sarah Baker

Sustaining Community Heritage zine series

Series editors
Professor Sarah Baker
Dr Zelmarie Cantillon

The Sustaining Community Heritage zine series emerges from an Australian Research Council-funded project, 'Co-creating a sustainable future for the community heritage sector'. This project explores the organisational sustainability of Australia's volunteer-managed galleries, libraries, archives, museums and historical societies which serve important functions in shaping public history through the collection, preservation and display of local, everyday and marginalised heritages. However, the sector faces a sustainability crisis. Mounting pressures pose a threat to the long-term futures of volunteer-run heritage institutions, putting at risk the diversity and accessibility of the nation's historical record. In this project, we collaborate with representatives from community heritage institutions across Australia to co-develop strategies for recognising value, measuring organisational sustainability and creating benchmarks for sustainable practice.

The zines in this series capture the work of the project as it unfolds, enabling volunteers in community heritage organisations to communicate their experiences and knowledge creatively and accessibly. We approach the zines as a way to facilitate a networked, co-designed understanding of organisational sustainability from a range of institutional contexts. The zines in the series identify challenges, but they also seek to build on existing resources, capabilities and ambitions already in place for the pursuit of viable futures.

For project updates and other issues of this zine series, see:
https://communityheritagetoolkit.com/

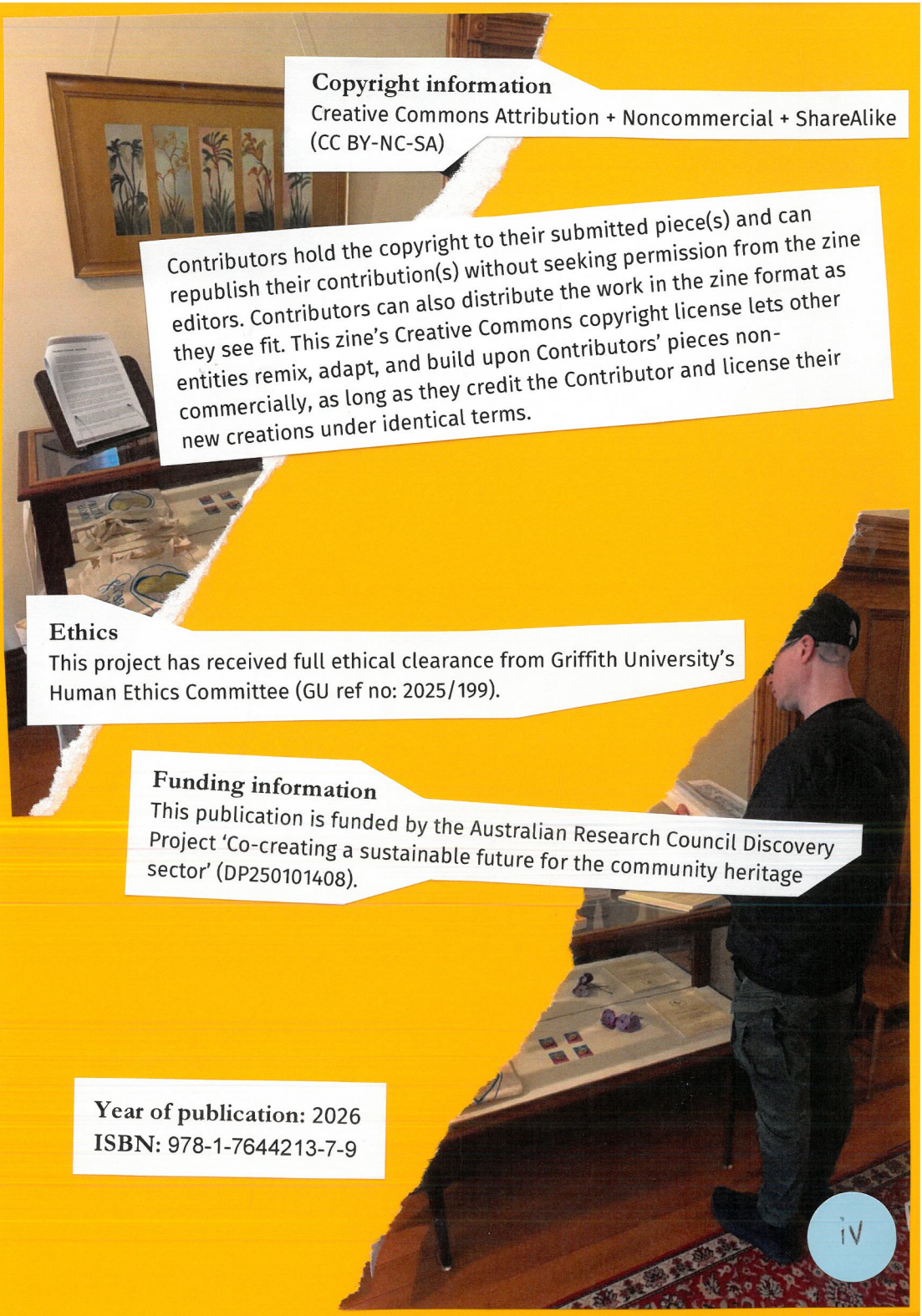
Preserve, Protect, Promote: Organisational Sustainability and the Bayswater Historical Society

Editors
Zelmarie Cantillon
Sarah Baker

Contributors
Cale Black
Glen Cookson
Lewis Cox
Margaret Wade



Published by Community Heritage Press



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Ethics
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Preserve, Protect, Promote: Organisational Sustainability and the Bayswater Historical Society

Editorial



About the Bayswater Historical Society

The Bayswater Historical Society (BHS) was formed in 1991 to 'preserve, protect and promote the local history'[1] of the City of Bayswater in Western Australia, located about 7 kilometres northeast of Perth's CBD. The home of BHS is Halliday House (originally named 'Leighton'), a local government-owned historic home which was built in 1892 and occupied by the same family for almost a century.

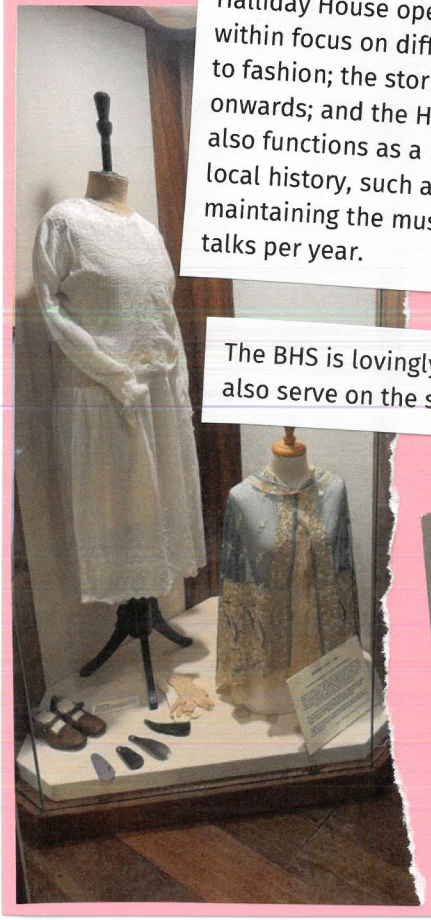
[1] Glen, interview







Halliday House operates as a museum under the care of the BHS. Exhibits within focus on different aspects of local history, with displays dedicated to fashion; the stories of a working-class Bayswater family from the 1930s onwards; and the Halliday family and their descendants. The museum also functions as a resource centre for residents seeking to learn about local history, such as the history of their own homes. In addition to maintaining the museum and its exhibits, the BHS hosts about six public talks per year.



The BHS is lovingly cared for by about six to eight active volunteers who also serve on the society's management committee.



The title *Preserve, Protect, Promote* comes directly from the Bayswater Historical Society's mission, reflecting the organisation's commitment to safeguarding and sharing the history of the City of Bayswater. Throughout the interview with the Society Secretary, Glen, these three words were returned to repeatedly as guiding principles that shape everything from caring for collections and heritage places, to running public talks, historic walks and exhibitions. Together, the three Ps capture the ethos of an organisation that sees local history as something to be actively cared for, shared and championed within the community.



Preserve, Protect, Promote also signals how organisational sustainability depends on all three parts of this mission working together. Promoting history is intertwined with preserving and protecting it; promotion is the work that makes preservation and protection possible. Preservation and protection cannot be achieved through strategic plans alone, nor simply by caring for collections behind closed doors. They rely on the ongoing work of advocacy, collaboration and community engagement. For Bayswater Historical Society, this involves building relationships with local government, schools, community groups and the wider public to secure support, resources and recognition.

Outline of this zine: What's inside?

Content for this zine was created during a two-hour workshop held on 22 May 2026 with three volunteers. Zel, one of the project's co-leads, facilitated four activities aimed at encouraging the participants to think creatively about organisational sustainability.



To begin, participants were asked to write on sticky notes as many words as possible that they associate with 'organisational sustainability'. They were then invited to assemble the sticky notes on a piece of card in a way that might demonstrate the connections between these words.

The next activity utilised the preliminary framework of organisational sustainability created by Zel along with the project's other co-lead, Sarah. This was used as a tool for BHS to self-evaluate how they are performing against different dimensions of organisational sustainability. In this 'traffic light activity', participants were asked to use green, orange and red highlighters to map performance against the indicators. Green indicated strong performance, orange was used for good performance but with some risks identified, and red was used where more attention should be focused.



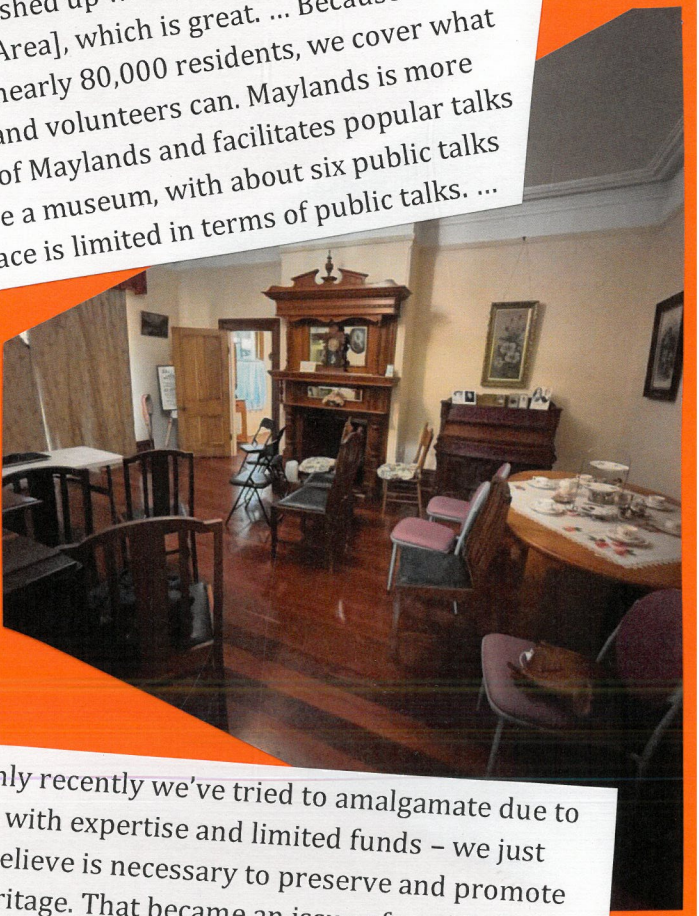
The final activity invited participants to respond to writing prompts to elicit reflections on BHS's longevity and future, as well as the rewards and challenges associated with volunteering.

Also dispersed throughout this zine are excerpts from an interview undertaken with BHS Secretary Glen, as well as snippets of discussions that took place during the zine workshop.

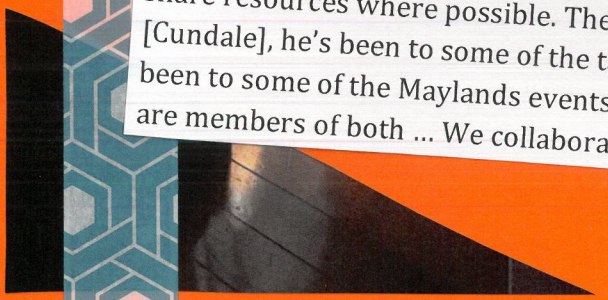
Zelmarie Cantillon
Sarah Baker



Glen: There's another historical society: Maylands. Maylands used to be separate from Bayswater but then the councils amalgamated, so we finished up with two historical societies [in one Local Government Area], which is great. ... Because the LGA of Bayswater includes nearly 80,000 residents, we cover what our limited resources and volunteers can. Maylands is more specific to the suburb of Maylands and facilitates popular talks and walks. We're more a museum, with about six public talks over the year. Our space is limited in terms of public talks. ...



We're different. Only recently we've tried to amalgamate due to limited volunteers with expertise and limited funds – we just can't do what we believe is necessary to preserve and promote our history and heritage. That became an issue of workload and complexity, so we said we can keep talking to one another and share resources where possible. Their chairperson, Keith [Cundale], he's been to some of the talks that I've done here. I've been to some of the Maylands events – and some of our members are members of both ... We collaborate where we can.



(1) The key to longevity is positive relationships between the volunteers Taking the time to respectfully listen & share with one another.

Also equally important have respectful meaningful relationships with the LGA – Staff & Councillors.

Maggy: You always need ongoing recruitment. Because, you know, members tend to, they're all retirees, usually, and they tend to not stay for very long, so you're constantly recruiting. And you must have a good relationship with the council. … We're dependent on them. So it's good to build up a good relationship with them, which is quite difficult.

Cale: Not with me. <laughs>



Zel: Well one of them is on your committee, that's excellent.

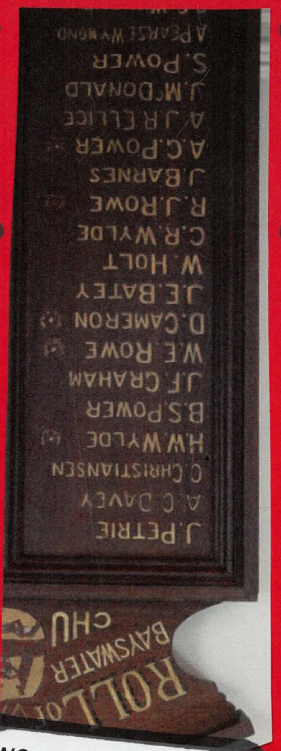
Maggy: I mean, we love Cale. He's excellent. … Really, the big thing is retention. You will get a lot of people who do come, but then, you know, they drop off. So you've got to try and retain them.

- members-ation
- input
- information
- leader
- ongoing recruitment.
- history-

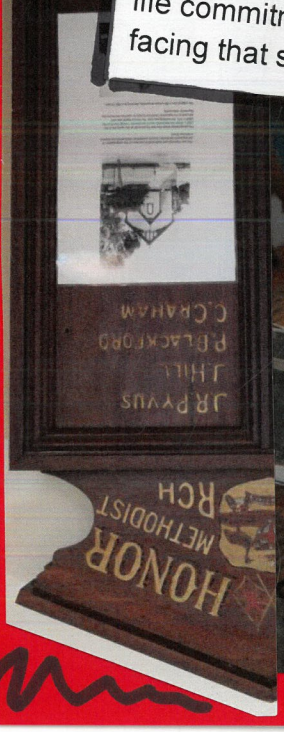




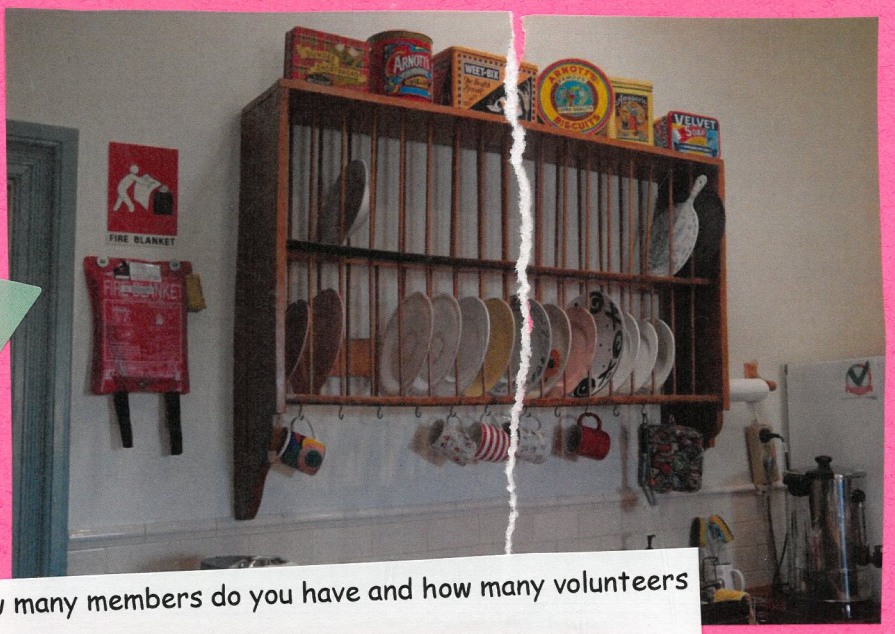




Glen: Workload is important. To be honest, we are just barely keeping up. And I probably put in about three days a week, which I enjoy, but there are other family, friends and healthy life commitments. It is hard and a lot of organisations are facing that same issue of diminishing volunteers.







Zel: How many members do you have and how many volunteers do you have?

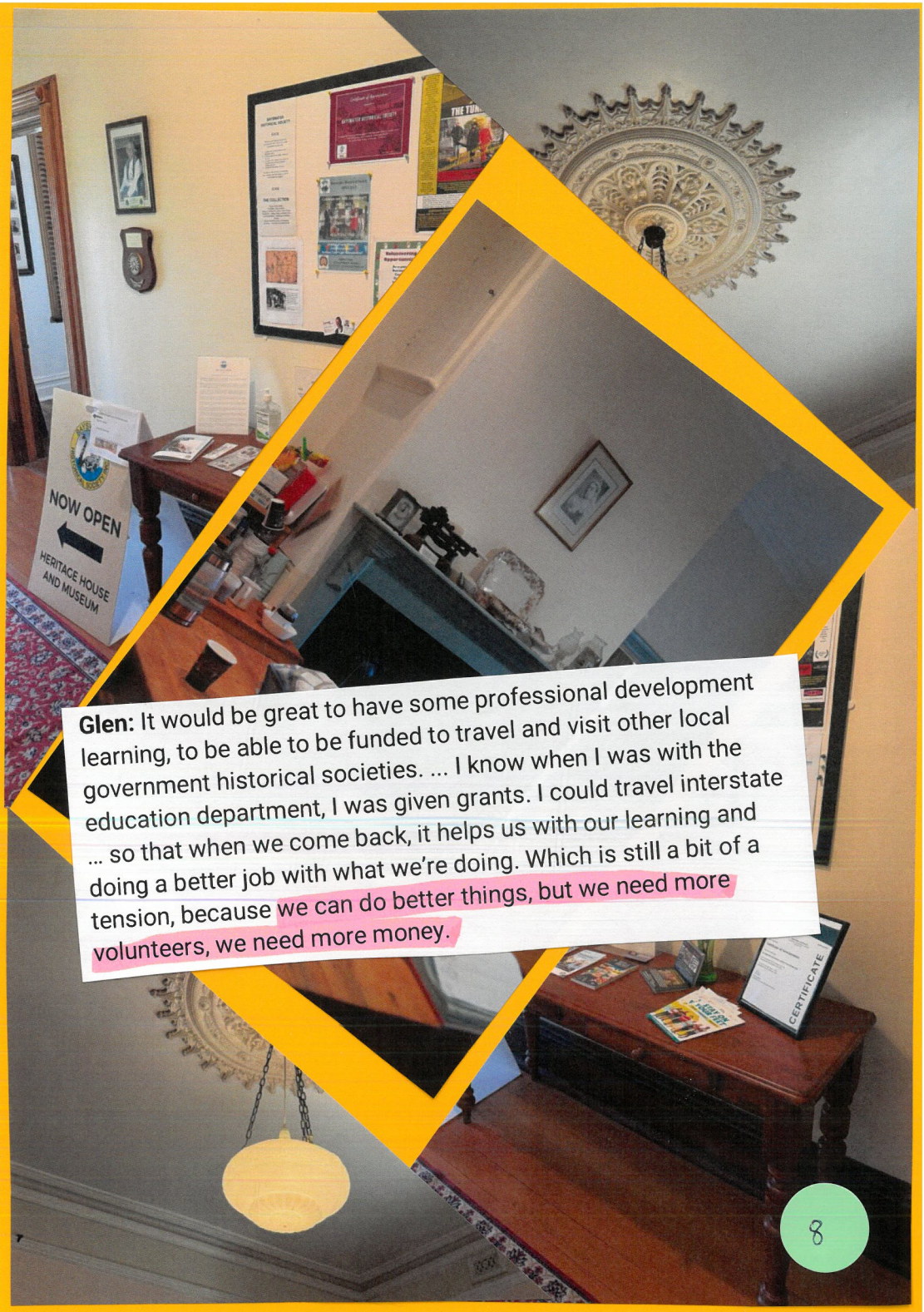
Glen: On our books we've got about 120-odd people. I think financial members is less than that, but I'm not going to kick someone out because they can't pay the fee.

Glen: We don't want to make it cost-prohibitive to be a member and be involved



LEWIS

Dimension	Category	Strengths-based indicator
Governance	Participation	Adopts a participatory, democratic mode of governance
	Collaboration	Builds alliances and partnerships with like-minded organisations
	Strategies, policies and procedures	Emphasises strategic planning and clear recordkeeping
	Regulatory requirements	Attains and maintains accreditation/legal status and adheres to regulations
Resources	Funding	Procures funding from diverse sources
	Volunteers	Recruits, trains and retains a skilled workforce
	Space and equipment	Secures an appropriate venue for artefacts and activities
Volunteer experience	Social atmosphere	Cultivates an inclusive, welcoming social environment
	Personal rewards	Provides opportunities for volunteers to activate their interests and learn new skills
Community engagement	Accessibility	Ensures venue and activities are accessible
	Visibility	Engages in outreach and builds a strong reputation
	Intergenerational engagement	Pursues younger audiences and volunteers
	Flexibility and dynamism	Adapts to changing local, political and social contexts



Glen: It would be great to have some professional development learning, to be able to be funded to travel and visit other local government historical societies. ... I know when I was with the education department, I was given grants. I could travel interstate ... so that when we come back, it helps us with our learning and doing a better job with what we're doing. Which is still a bit of a tension, because we can do better things, but we need more volunteers, we need more money.

Glen: I was hoping that if the local government employed a couple of people, professional heritage/history people, that would support our work, not necessarily do, but support. They, the local government, could talk to other organisations to really support the work that we do. Help facilitate new volunteers, access funding opportunities, apply for grants, etc.



But we just do what we can do. Unfortunately, it's a sad reflection that people in positions of power and decision making don't value history as it's seen to slow down building developments and business profits. This is limited and narrow thinking. World best practice demonstrates that good business and supporting heritage is a profitable partnership.

Awareness

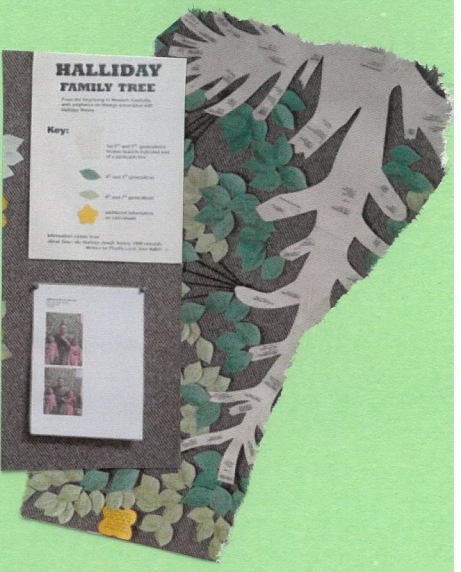
Financial Sustainability

Relevance

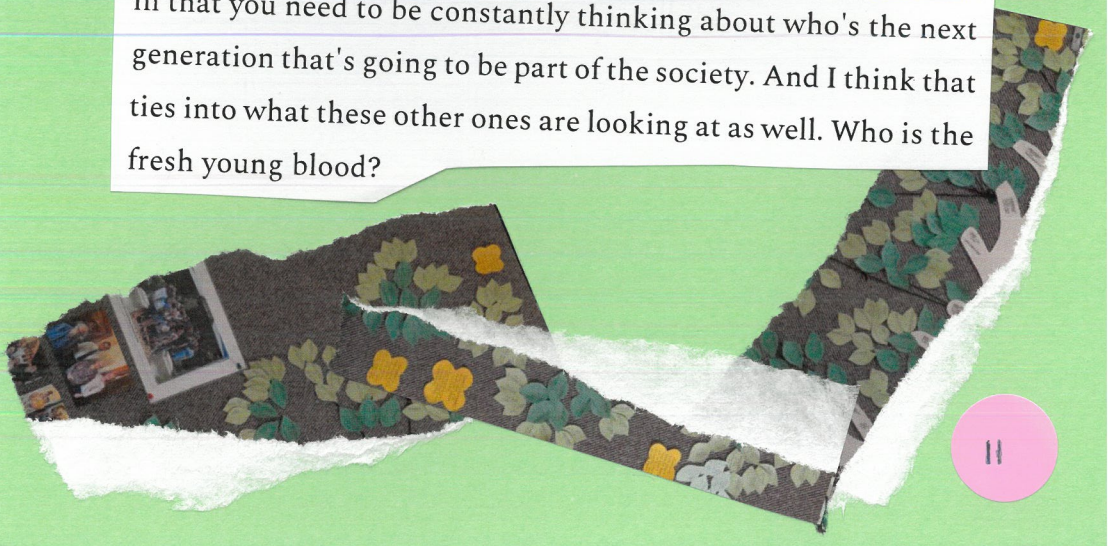
Appeal

Renewal





Cale: ... public awareness of the organization. I think about relevance as well, and that's not necessarily just the purpose of what the society is for, but the things that you put on as well. ... So relevance to who you're looking to appeal to ... And renewal in that you need to be constantly thinking about who's the next generation that's going to be part of the society. And I think that ties into what these other ones are looking at as well. Who is the fresh young blood?



LEWIS 115

The key to the Bayswater longevity so far has been its dedicated Members. All of its members have other demands of their time. They have family and work priorities. Some are retired. Its success stems from a total commitment of its members, and I'm stealing a quote from our thing here, to promote, preserve and protect the history of the Bayswater area.

Lewis: The key to Bayswater Historical Society's longevity so far has been its dedicated members. All of its members have other demands of their time. They have family and work priorities. Some are retired. Its success stems from a total commitment of its members, and I'm stealing a quote from our thing here, to promote, preserve and protect the history of the Bayswater area.

Glen: In December, over 150 days ago, in the storm the Jacaranda tree here lost a branch, killed the fence and it killed some other structure around there. Luckily for us, the volunteers, I immediately wrote to them and said, "You've got a damaged fence, you need to come and fix it." Time went on and it took a number of emails for them to eventually come out and have a look at it and say, "Yes, okay, well we'll need to get the insurance cover because we haven't got that sort of money." And they have the insurance obviously; it's a part of their policy. They've got the money to do it but they still haven't done it. It's a matter of – priority and limited funds.



I met with the CEO on Wednesday, "What's happening?" ... the baseline is, this happened 150 days ago, the fence is still not fixed. If it was your fence at your place, or the main fence around the City of Bayswater offices, it would have been fixed. That tells me, I might be wrong, but my hypothesis is that we're not a high priority. We're not seen to garner a lot of votes in people ...

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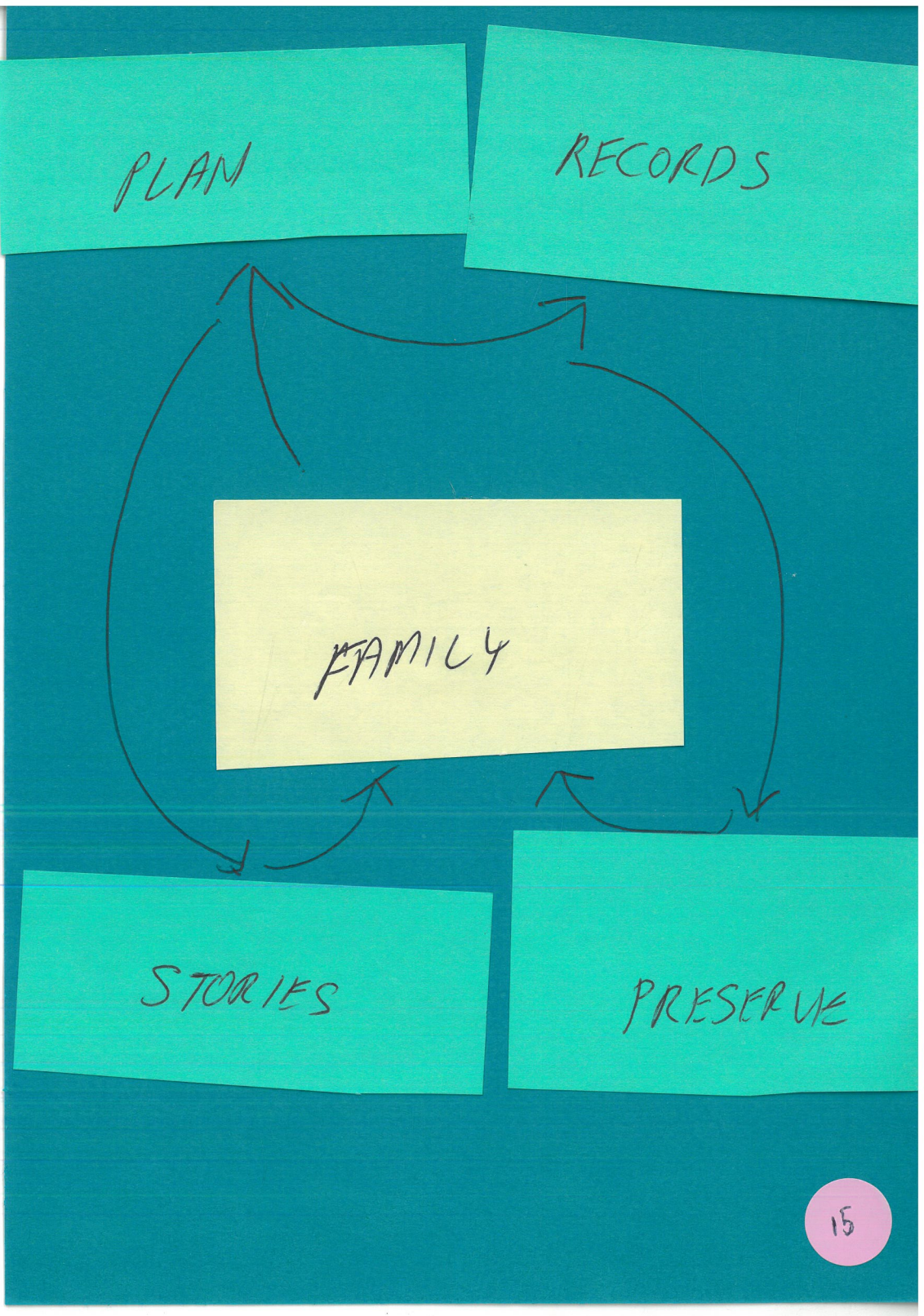
lots of potential not enough time.

Hard

XX OK but with more volunteer staff could be open extra days?

well OK

poor


PLAN
RECORDS
FAMILY
STORIES
PRESERVE

Zel: What would you say are the organisation's top priorities for the next five years to maintain sustainable operations?

Glen: As per our [motto], preserving, protecting and promoting the history. Promoting, it's talking with people, networking, public displays, public talks, historic walks, that's engaging and promoting, linking up with the local schools and taking care of artifacts that are given to us. Or in the next room there, we've just acquired a 1905, the original map of Bayswater and Maylands. Which was $1,850, that was in an antique shop in Claremont, which is a very posh suburb, which was spotted by Wendy – and we wanted it but didn't have the money. So our chairperson, who is a mate with the local real estate agent, who is a multimillionaire now, anybody in real estate, he said "Yeah, listen, I'll buy it, donate it to you," so we've got it.



Zel: Okay, that's fantastic. I was going to say, how did you afford to buy that with the yearly budget?

Glen: We will acknowledge his generosity by having a short ceremony and placing a plaque near the map.

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	Flexibility and dynamism	Adapts to changing local, political and social contexts

(2) Hope for the future that the BHS —

become a more supportive & funded organisation with the LGA.

Fulfilling our vision of preserving, protecting & promoting the history of the people + places of the City of Bayswater

18

→ PTO

The BHS + its work supports the local community in creating for community members – a sense of belonging, connectiveness & community harmony – being enriched by different cultures, ages expertise.



Zel: What do you think is the value of this initiative to the community, if you could put that in a few sentences to capture what you've told me already?



Glen: It promotes and sustains community cohesion. And it helps with a sense of wellbeing and a sense of belonging, which in turn supports community cohesion. It's also about supporting mental health. With schoolkids, it gives them a sense that this is their place, so they feel this is their community and home. It's all just a plus. It enriches our local community, but also the wider community. People connect. The old people that come here that are in their eighties, nineties. They come and want to tell their story about when they grew up when there were rabbits running around and what happened years ago. They want to tell their story and have someone to listen. We can just see in their faces, they're just so happy– I have put some of those stories into a little book and given it to them to share with family and friends. To see the joy on the faces of people, that tells me it's valuable.

enriching.

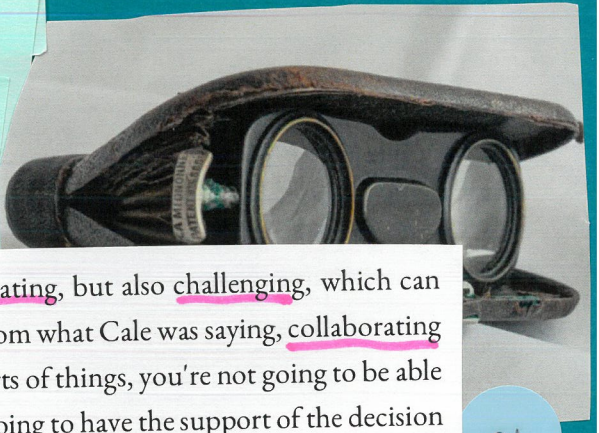
Stimulating

Challenge

Collaborate.

Networking.





Glen: It must be enriching, stimulating, but also challenging, which can be a positive thing, but a little bit from what Cale was saying, collaborating and networking. Without those sorts of things, you're not going to be able to recruit new people. You're not going to have the support of the decision makers – people with the money to sustain what we're doing.

The key to BHS's longevity so far is...

- The current members

To secure the BHS's future, what we need most is...

- Permanent archives

If the BHS were to cease operation, I would feel...

- disappointed.

What I hope for the future of the BHS is...

- continues as it is — recruitment & historical discussions invite monthly.

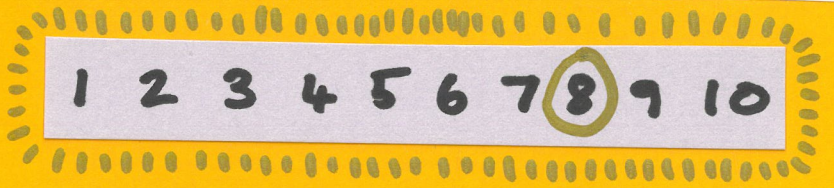


The most rewarding thing about being part of the BHS is...

- are the current members & activities I am involved in.

Zel: On a scale of one to ten, one being low and ten being high, how resilient would you say the organisation is to change?

Glen: That's a good question. That's hard, there's so many different factors. We've survived for 30-odd or more years and there's been a heck of a lot of challenges and pressure on limited volunteers, but it does depend on the people. Like the people we've got at the moment, we're eight, because we are resilient, we won't succumb.



Zel: So the current committee and everything, you would rate that at an eight?

Glen: Yeah, but if I had a heart attack or Monica got run over or Lewis slipped and broke his – that would be huge, the people that do the work, that's huge. We are working really hard to get other people. That's why when Cleo rocked up as a 23-year-old with a master's degree in history – she's a lovely person, intelligent, easy going, friendly, reminds me of my own 29-year-old daughter. I enjoy working with her and hopefully, encouraging and understanding. And she helped set up or reestablish a MOSAiC software package to record artefacts and records, but none of us have been fully trained to use the software. For example, this is a map that's just been donated of the primary school. Now that should be catalogued and digitised. None of us have done it yet. There's a lot of stuff. She could do it but she's working full-time now. So we need more volunteers or funds to employ people.

Zel: There's just not enough people to do it.

Glen: Yes. I came at a good time because the people that used to run the place, they did it happily and they did a lot of fantastic work, [but they] got old, had health problems, and they left en masse. And now they're in aged care or they've passed away.

If the Bayswater Historical Society were to close, it would be a tragedy. History empowers us as people to embrace the future and not repeat the mistakes of the past. History is vital to human society to evolve.

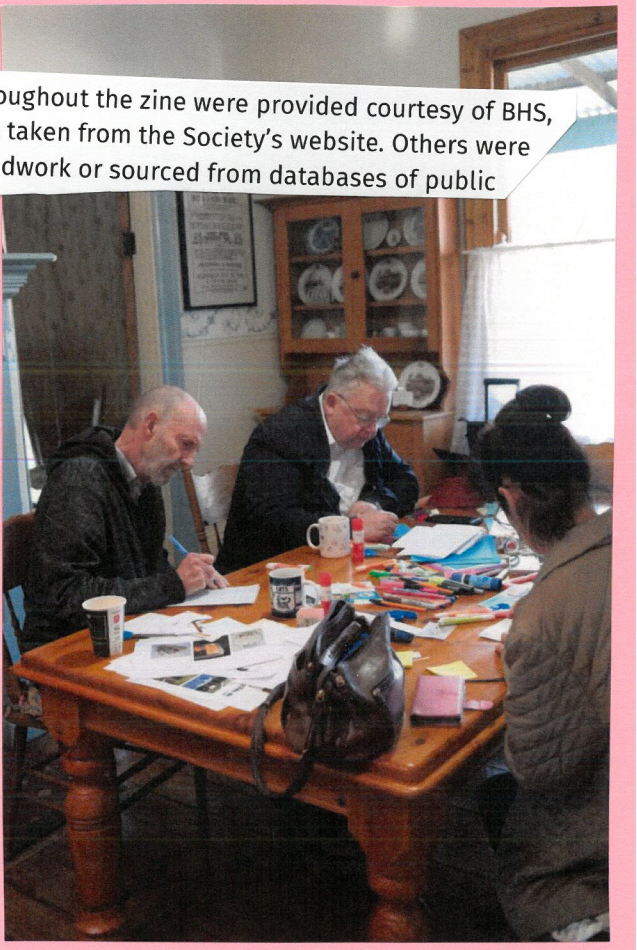
Lewis: If the Bayswater Historical Society were to close, it would be a tragedy. History empowers us as people to embrace the future and not – bit of a cliche here, sorry – repeat the mistakes of the past. History is vital to human society to evolve.

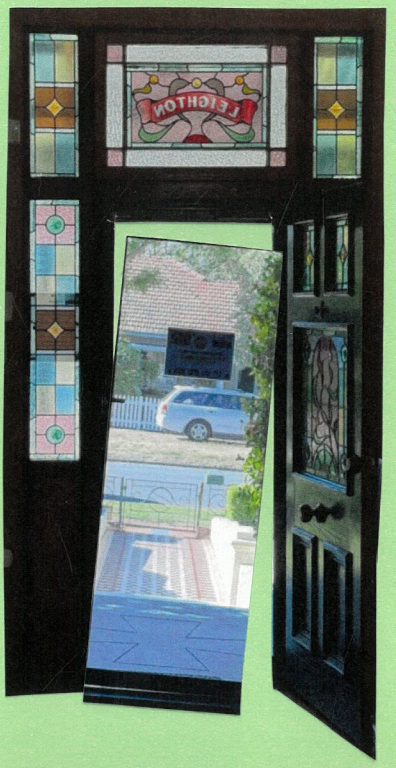
Acknowledgements

Thank you to the volunteers of the Bayswater Historical Society who engaged with this research. Your willingness to share experiences and offer your views on the sector's organisational sustainability are central to creating a zine series that captures viable futures for community heritage organisations.

Special thanks to Glen for being Zel's main point of contact for the research and for helping to arrange the zine workshop.

Some images used throughout the zine were provided courtesy of BHS, with additional images taken from the Society's website. Others were taken by Zel during fieldwork or sourced from databases of public domain images.





Compiled by Zelmarie Cantillon

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