



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION
Australia

QUEENSLAND BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

October 2020

2020 AN “ANNUS HORRIBILIS”?

Queen Elizabeth II used the phrase “annus horribilis” or “dreadful year”. She was not, at that time, referring to the year 2020, or maybe she was being prophetic. 2020 has certainly been the year of “When?”. We have all been living on borrowed patience, waiting for the time when circumstances will change and life will gradually start resuming something like the pattern we once knew, when we didn’t know how good things were.

For bodies like the English-Speaking Union the year 2020 has in many ways been an un-year, a year when we were unable to undertake our regular activities because of government regulations about people assembling. The coronavirus has much to answer for, and we haven’t finished with it yet.

TECHNOLOGY AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Technology has filled many of our needs for communication. Since February the Board of ESU Queensland has been meeting by Zoom, a software program which enables people in different locations to participate in meetings, lectures, conversations and more. In theory it would not have been a problem if some of our members had been located outside Australia, since Zoom covers most of the planet.

The combination of technology and Covid-19 has brought to the fore a number of possibilities which could bear on the future trajectory of ESU (Queensland). I shall have more to say about these matters at the Annual General Meeting in November. In the meantime, given the current restrictions of public gatherings, we will resume with a lecture to members delivered by Zoom.

Using Zoom is actually very easy. You connect your computer, tablet or phone to the Internet, as you do when you check the news or visit websites. I will have sent you an invitation to the meeting by email, and the message contains a line which you are instructed to click on. When you do so the computer automatically connects you to the meeting. Board member Julia Ponder and I will be offering a guided introduction to Zoom for members who wish it. These sessions will take place before the Zoom lecture on October 18th. An invitation will also go out by email.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- October
18 October, 6.30pm Online introduction for members to using Zoom (times TBA by email)
Zoom lecture by Emeritus Professor Roly Sussex, President, ESU (Q):
“Communicating under Covid”
- 1 November, 6.30pm Discussion: “Which writer has had the greatest influence on English?”
Place: Clovelly Estate, 210 Musgrave Rd, Red Hill
Each speaker will argue their case for their chosen writer.
Then members attending will be asked to discuss and challenge these claims. At the end of the panel discussion, we will all vote on who has had the greatest impact.
(Shakespeare excluded for tonight).
- 22 November, 4pm Annual General Meeting, followed by
Christmas Party
Place: Clovelly Estate, 210 Musgrave Rd, Red Hill

CONTINUING ACTIVITIES

In spite of all the privations of life under Covid-19, the English-Speaking Union of Queensland is staging two of its signature activities: the Public-Speaking Competition for secondary school students, and the Roly Sussex Short Story Competition.

PUBLIC-SPEAKING COMPETITION

Restrictions on public gatherings and questions of timing have meant we have regretfully had to cancel the Senior competition for 2020. However, under the leadership of Emeritus Professor Caroline Hatcher, the Intermediate and Junior competitions will be held, mostly using the facilities at the Indooroopilly Public Library. Unfortunately the limitations on numbers of attendees will mean that there will be no spaces for members of the ESU Queensland who are not directly involved in the competition. The Board is investigating ways of providing access to the finals of the competition through Zoom (see above), so that members can “attend” virtually.

We fully anticipate that the full competition will resume in 2021. In addition, planning is well advanced for a North Queensland regional competition, which will come together with the competition in South-East Queensland for the finals. The Board is excited at this opportunity to enlarge the footprint of the work of ESU Queensland, and is looking at other opportunities in this area.

THE ROLY SUSSEX SHORT STORY COMPETITION

The Roly Sussex Short Story Competition has also been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. It is currently receiving submissions, and applications will close at the end of October. We do not yet know when or whether a prize-giving ceremony might be possible in Government House, as has happened in the past, which will depend among other things on state regulations involving public gatherings.

A PHYSICAL HOME FOR ESU QUEENSLAND

One issue before the Board is our current lack of a physical home following the sale of ESU House last November. In retrospect we were fortunate to sell the House at that time. The costs of maintaining the building without significant income were already making unsustainable inroads into the ESU Queensland’s capital base.

As it is we find ourselves with a sum of money in the bank, and we are faced with the policy decision of whether we should invest that in a portfolio of investments, in real estate, or in some other income-generating source, or a combination of the above. These are matters which the Board is currently addressing, and on which we will report at the Annual General Meeting in November. During this year many factors have become uncertain, including both the stock market and the real estate market. Many social and social activities have either ceased or been put on hold. In such a climate it is necessary for the Board to proceed with caution.

THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of ESU Queensland was long overdue for revision. Since its last major revision several decades ago we have become registered as a charity, with accompanying changes to our tax status and obligations. Work on the revision of the Constitution has been underway for much of 2020, led by Vice-President Richard Macedo working in collaboration with President Roly Sussex. The revision took into account other constitutions of ESUs in Australia. The final version has been fine-tuned by the Board at several meetings, and will be presented for discussion and acceptance the Annual General Meeting in November. A copy of what I hope will become called the “Macedo Constitution” will be made available for members on the website, so that they can consider it in advance of the annual general meeting. On behalf of the Board and ESU Queensland I would like to express my special recognition for the energy, expertise, and commitment shown by Richard Macedo during this long and demanding process.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 4 PM on 22 November, 2020. It will be held at Clovelly Estate, 210 Musgrave Rd, Red Hill, Brisbane, in conformity with the prevailing rules for people assembling. The Annual General Meeting will be followed by our annual Christmas Party. ***Please enter this date in your diaries: a formal invitation will be send in due course.***

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

In accordance with the Constitution, all positions on the Board are up for election, Including the four executive positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Formal nomination papers will be distributed with the business papers for the Annual General Meeting. If any member would like to consider becoming a member of the Board, they are encouraged to contact me by email: r.sussex@uq.edu.au.

LOGO

Members may have noticed a change in the colour and presentation of the logo on documentation and our website, as well as the Facebook page. This has brought ESU Queensland into conformity with the requirements for using the logo provided by ESU in London.

COMMUNICATION

Given the shifting patterns of communication under Covid, the Board would like to know your

preferences on the way we interact and communicate with you, and your level of technical expertise. A short online survey will shortly be distributed to members.

Emeritus Professor Roland Sussex
President, ESU (Queensland Branch)
24 September, 2020