



# **THE HERALDRY & GENEALOGY SOCIETY OF CANBERRA INC**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025**





# Preface

The Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra (HAGSOC) was formed in 1964 with 20 foundation members. Over the last 55 years the HAGSOC Library has grown from holdings that would fit in the boot of a car to several rooms full of resources. During that time the membership peaked at over 1200 with members from all over Australia, but now sits at around 700.

We have recently been recognised as a Charity which will assist our financial circumstances but this status also requires us to be more rigorous in the governance of the Society.

HAGSOC has established itself as an effective and credible heraldry and family history society and forged links with many other societies around the world. But at the same time, the nature of family history has changed enormously as information technology, the internet and commercial companies offering family history resources have grown rapidly.

The complexity of family history these days, the wide range of services offered by HAGSOC and community expectations of a charity make it essential that we adopt a more structured approach to how we plan and prioritise the activities and management of the Society.

The 2018-19 Council has reviewed the operations of HAGSOC, including our financial position, and has considered future directions in consultation with key stakeholders. Together, we have identified six critical areas that underpin the Society's operations where we believe that continued action is needed to secure HAGSOC's future viability. This will enhance services for members as we continue to evolve as a vibrant heraldry and family history society.

This Plan will give direction to Council and all HAGSOC members in the coming years. It will provide guidance in the allocation of resources (including financial and volunteer resources) to the activities as we continue to achieve the objectives of the society.

*Nick Reddan*

*President*

## ***Introduction***

For 55 years the Heraldry and Genealogy Society of Canberra (HAGSOC) has been proudly supporting family history across the Canberra Region and beyond.

Our objectives are as relevant today as they always have been as we continue to:

- promote, develop, foster and support the study and preservation of family history, genealogy, heraldry and allied subjects;
- assist members and the general public in research into family history, genealogy, heraldry and allied subjects;
- encourage and assist members in the production and publishing of literary works; and
- promote, develop, foster and support the establishment of advisory and other services for the benefit of members and the general public,

But we must also acknowledge that the way that people carry out family history research has changed dramatically since HAGSOC was first formed. The rapid growth of computing and the Internet and the emergence of government and commercial organisations providing family history resources, many on a fee-for-service basis, now means that much family history research can be done without ever needing to visit a society like HAGSOC.

Over the years HAGSOC has adapted to meet these changes by updating our resources and services to members and by bringing information technology into the library. But if we are to remain the first choice in support for family historians in the Canberra Region and beyond, we must continue to adapt and innovate so that we ensure that we can remain relevant and useful.

## ***Challenges***

HAGSOC currently faces challenges that could reduce our ability to provide services for members and which could possibly mean that our society becomes less viable if these are not addressed. The key challenges are:

- Competition from commercial family history companies means that researchers can now do much of their research without feeling the need to join or visit an organisation like HAGSOC.
- The explosion in DNA testing has further aligned researchers with the commercial and family history companies.

- Government entities are continually making more public records available online further reducing the perceived need for services provided by HAGSOC and other family history libraries.

These challenges have resulted in:

- HAGSOC membership falling steadily in the last decade.
- HAGSOC revenue decreasing.

Conversely:

- HAGSOC costs have been increasing steadily putting increased pressure on our budget.
- Into the future, the costs of running HAGSOC, and especially housing our library collection, are expected to continue to rise.

## ***Opportunities***

The changing environment for family history research also presents opportunities for our society to offer innovative and new services and guidance to members that prove it is still relevant and useful to them.

- With the growing reach of commercial family history companies HAGSOC needs to help its members get the most from the use of these organisations.
- HAGSOC can provide ways for members to better understand the complexities of DNA.
- There are limited opportunities to lower costs but many opportunities to increase revenue and broaden the appeal of the services we offer.
- If we provide relevant and useful services, we should be able to encourage growth in income and in the membership numbers of our society.

## ***People and Culture***

We want to inspire all members and volunteers to proudly share the goals of HAGSOC.

Each elected Council of the Society manages the business of HAGSOC, and as such, has an integral role to play in the operations of HAGSOC and in planning for the future of the Society.

A positive leadership and management style is required to improve the Society's performance by meeting the goals outlined in this Strategic Plan. A commitment

to the management of risks, role clarity, consultation and communication, support to volunteers and compliance with the Constitution and By-Laws is necessary.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Society and without their dedication, the Society would not function—without the assistance of these critical people the Society would cease to operate.

Numbers of members volunteering have declined in recent years, perhaps because members, have incorrectly, thought that they cannot help. There are always tasks that need attention and HAGSOC needs to find ways to encourage and assist members to help out, no matter how big or small their contributions.

It is paramount that HAGSOC promote a culture of workgroup collaboration, cohesion and respect, where all volunteers can participate, learn and enjoy being a part of our family history community.

## ***Strategic Goals***

1. **HAGSOC Library:** To continue to maintain the library and to furnish and equip the reading rooms for the benefit of members and the general public.
2. **Member Services:** To provide members with the resources, support and skills they need to successfully undertake their family history research.
3. **Outreach and Community Engagement:** To publicise HAGSOC and the work that the society and our members do, and to contribute to and participate in the wider family history and local community.
4. **Education and Events:** To provide opportunities for members and the public to enhance their knowledge and skills in family history and to generate additional income for HAGSOC.
5. **Information Technology:** To support HAGSOC initiatives and ensure that both the internal technology infrastructure and resources and the external face of HAGSOC are enhancing our reputation and our support of members.
6. **Governance:** To ensure that HAGSOC makes the best use of resources and transparently reports to its members and the relevant reporting organisations.

# **1 HAGSOC Library: To provide members with easy access to high quality, relevant material to further their family history research.**

## **Context**

The Library is the core of HAGSOC's activities with members able to make use of a wide range of resources and attend family history events.

The Library collection contains books, journals, microform, manuscripts and computer-based indexes and records including many hard-to-find resources.

While the Library is one of HAGSOC's major assets, it is also one of our biggest expenses. One of HAGSOC's primary strategic goals is to ensure it continues to provide members with easy access to high quality, relevant materials to further their research.

The biggest challenges facing the Library are ensuring services remain relevant to members and maintaining a strong pool of volunteers.

## **Measures of Success**

- Increased usage of library facilities for family history research purposes.
- The library is fully staffed by volunteers for the planned opening hours.

## **Responsibility**

- Library Teams
- Council

## **Strategies and Tasks**

- Provide a high-quality family history library with a broad range of resources and up to date and accessible technologies.
- Maintain an online catalogue of the Society's collection.
- Investigate and implement strategies to improve online access to the collection.
- Regular communication with members to promote library holdings and activities.
- Development of a co-ordinated Library management plan to manage library assets.
- Provision of a welcoming, supportive, open environment to facilitate member's research.
- Provide support and training for Library volunteers.
- Provide fee-for-service Research and Translation Services to members and the public.

## **2 Member services: To provide members with the resources, support and skills they need to successfully undertake their family history research.**

### **Context**

To support and assist members with their family history research is the reason that HAGSOC was formed and the reason we continue. Members expect value for their membership fee.

Our popular Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Software User Groups (SUGs) provide valuable opportunities for members to share and learn from each other in smaller groups focused on particular topics.

### **Measures of Success**

- High standard of *The Ancestral Searcher (TAS)* publication with excellent responses and feedback.
- Regular monthly email newsletters with informative and useful information.
- SIGs and SUGs are well attended and feedback is positive.

### **Responsibility**

- Council
- TAS Editor
- SIG/SUG Convenors

### **Strategies and Tasks**

- Provide regular information to members to keep them up to date with both Society and broader family history community activities.
- Produce the quarterly journal, *The Ancestral Searcher*, and provide members with a monthly newsletter to keep them up to date on activities within the Society and beyond.
- Encourage, support and advertise the Society's Special Interest Groups (SIGs).
- Encourage, support and advertise the Society's Software User Groups (SUGs).
- Investigate community projects.



### **3 Outreach and Community Engagement: To publicise HAGSOC and the work that the society and our members do and to contribute to and participate in the wider family history and local community.**

#### **Context**

Outreach and marketing of HAGSOC are essential to raise community awareness of our services and to attract new members.

Developing community partnerships complements the services provided by HAGSOC and builds new avenues for members to expand their research interests.

The HAGSOC Bookshop is our key commercial outlet promoting HAGSOC publications.

#### **Measures of Success**

- Increase in HAGSOC Membership.
- Increase in bookshop sales.
- Increase HAGSOC participation in community events.
- Attendance at Open Days.

#### **Responsibility**

- Council
- Publicity Officer
- Bookshop Manager

#### **Strategies and Tasks**

- Maintain and enhance relationships with kindred organisations and develop opportunities to work with them to deliver family history services within the community.
- Identify marketing and community participation opportunities including investigating opportunities with local print, radio and social media.
- A new edition of *Family History for Beginners and Beyond* published in 2020.
- Promote the Family History Bookshop.
- Conduct the E.M. Fletcher Writing Award annually.
- Conduct regular Open Days at the HAGSOC Library.
- Celebrate the 60th anniversary of HAGSOC in 2024.

## **4 Education and events: To provide opportunities for members and the public to enhance their knowledge and skills in family history and to generate additional income for HAGSOC.**

### **Context**

HAGSOC provides many opportunities for members and the general public to attend training courses and seminars covering a wide range of family history related topics.

Education events can generate revenue for HAGSOC.

### **Measures of Success**

- A wide range of events are held regularly.
- Events are well attended and receive positive evaluations and feedback.

### **Responsibility**

- Education and Events Team
- Publicity Officer
- Council

### **Strategies and Tasks**

- Deliver a program of education and events which meets the needs of both new and experienced researchers.
- Survey members to determine learning requirements and areas of interest.
- Conduct a beginner's course annually.
- Introduce a new course on writing family history.
- Engage highly regarded guest speakers for monthly meetings.
- Take advantage of opportunities created by visiting family history experts.
- Investigate provision of online learning courses.
- Promote learning opportunities to members and the public.

## ***5 Information technology: To support HAGSOC initiatives and ensure that both the internal technology infrastructure and resources and the external face of HAGSOC are enhancing our reputation and our support of members.***

### **Context**

Modern family historians rely heavily on information technology to support their endeavours. In order to continue to provide a well-rounded service for members HAGSOC needs to continue to invest in our IT capability and to continually update our systems.

Our website and social media presence provide opportunities for marketing and communication.

### **Measures of Success**

- Easy upload and update of information including library catalogue and information pages to the web.
- Reduction in the number of IT related problems.
- Reduction in IT downtime for researchers.
- Members and the broader community find our website interesting and useful.

### **Responsibility**

- Computer Manager/Team
- Webmaster
- Council

### **Strategies and Tasks**

- Provide and maintain appropriate IT equipment.
- Develop an IT obsolescence and replacement plan.
- Evaluate the suitability of emerging technologies.
- Develop and maintain a modern, accessible and flexible web presence.
- Introduce a 'members only' section of the website, with exclusive access to specific tools and data.
- Introduce more effective ecommerce.

## **6 Governance: To ensure that HAGSOC operates efficiently, effectively and productively.**

### **Context**

To be a vibrant and supportive society that offers a wide range of services for members, and which remains financially viable, HAGSOC must be well run.

Recent work to convert HAGSOC to a Charity has highlighted a number of policies and procedures that need to be updated.

HAGSOC Council needs to focus on ways to improve the financial position of the Society. Membership fees have remained steady since 2014 and are one of the items that will need to increase if the Society is to remain financially viable.

### **Measures of Success**

- Meeting our operational expenses from revenue.
- Satisfactory annual audit reports.
- Relevant notifications and documents are provided to registration authorities.

### **Responsibility**

- Council
- Membership Secretary

### **Strategies and Tasks**

- Review the HAGSOC Constitution, policies and procedures with a view to updating and amending these if required.
- Review membership pricing and introduce regular, small increases that are more aligned with costs.
- Identify good potential Councillors and provide clearer expectations to those elected to Council.
- Develop Succession Plans for key roles.
- Develop an annual budget and work-plan each financial year that is consistent with HAGSOC's strategic directions.
- Provide annual reports to members on the management of HAGSOC.
- Maintain the Society's archive in accordance with the retention schedule.

## **Concluding Remarks**

This Strategic Plan sets out an ambitious framework for HAGSOC to continue to build a vibrant and modern heraldry and family history society for members and others.

Provision of support and assistance for HAGSOC members is at the heart of all the activities outlined in this Strategic Plan.

As we look forward to the next decade our focus will be on modernising the services that we provide for our members and on ensuring that HAGSOC remains a strong and financially sound society for all members.



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