

HUMANIST viewpoints



Kirstine Kærn, John August, Murray Love, Angela, and Panda the dog at Humanist House, Chippendale on Thursday January 2, 2020

On the 2nd of January 2020 we were visited at Humanist House, Chippendale by Kirstine Kærn, a Vice-President of the Danish Humanist Society, who found us through Humanists International (HI) and Humanists Australia. She is out and about to get in touch with HI member organizations all over the world. Kirstine visited Queensland in December and passed through Sydney early in January. It was great that three of us could get there to meet up with her. Kirstine told her story:

“I am producing a podcast *Babelfish* to make non-believers more visible and make their voices heard, not just in their own country but everywhere. I’m travelling around the globe interviewing humanists, freethinkers and atheists - listening to their life stories, how they became non-believers and how it is to be a non-believer in a predominantly religious world. I ask them about how they promote their lifestance, what they are struggling with, what challenges they face, and what risks they take.”


We had a long chat after which Kirstine interviewed Murray and John for her podcast. John then interviewed her in turn for his radio show. None of these interviews has been played yet.

Find out more about Kirstine’s work at:

<https://www.facebook.com/babelfishthepodcast/>

MEMBER PAGES

WE NEED YOU! - PLEASE VOLUNTEER TO HELP US BUILD A FUTURE FOR HUMANISM IN AUSTRALIA

The Humanist Society of NSW has depended for too long on elder members who have made outstanding contributions, but cannot reasonably be expected to carry the load forever. Merely focusing on day-to-day survival won't take us on to long-term survival. Simply keeping things ticking over just winds down the clock. We need to rewind and to revive. We need help.  We need you!

Modern generations find many demands on their time in the 21st century, but why not volunteer to assist in smaller amounts at a time? Just a few more members getting involved can make a real difference. If you're already busy elsewhere, then you're just the very person we need! We need energetic, skilled, personable people. We do need self-starters, as we don't have a volunteer coordinator or a roster of well-defined jobs, but we welcome anyone's patient effort to get involved..

Humanism has a long tradition of thinking globally, and the Humanist Society of NSW has a long history of acting locally. This association has a heritage to be honoured, and assets to be sustained in the continuing quest for a more just society, a more meaningful lifestyle, an economy of human flourishing, growth that doesn't trash the planet, an expanding circle of care and concern, a sustained, abundant, diverse, beautiful natural world, and a living growing diverse human culture.

Please email an expression of interest to Murray Love at: love@optushome.com.au

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Another way members can help is through making donations. From \$10,000 to \$5.00, any amount can help sustain the life and work of the NSW Humanist Society. If you value the Humanist movement, please consider us when making your Will.

A big thank you to those who made a donation, large or small, along with their membership renewal: Aaron Lingwood, AE Whitaker, Ambrose Reisch, David Schama, David Jobst, David & Elva Blair, Dierk & Rosemary von Behrens, Geoff Stowell, Ian Bryce, Ian & Joy Heads, John Levack, Kenneth Cooke, Michael Peters, Murray & Fay Love, Robert Farmer, Terry Bunn, Victor & Silvana D'Iapico-Bien.

We also very much appreciate everyone who has renewed with us for 2020. Thank you for sticking with us.

New memberships went very quiet during 2018 but 2019 was fruitful, and we have welcomed Christopher Hillier, Aaron Lingwood, Ambrose Reisch, Ken Attenborough, Sajeevan Vanatheva, David Jobst, and Janet Bradwell. Our memberships is holding up with 95 members likely if a few more renewals come in. Remember a partner or family member at the same address can join for just \$10 more.

PLEASE SEND YOUR LETTERS, ARTICLES, INFORMATION AND IDEAS FOR INCLUSION IN VIEWPOINTS

Some members are not on the Internet. Some live far from Sydney. Attendance and interaction get more difficult as we age. A newsletter is one thing all members can share in. Individual members of the Society are welcome and encouraged to send in news and views for publication. These can be controversial - there's no party line. They can be on diverse topics - Humanism has a broad range. We most-of-all love to hear from members who haven't contributed before. Even a simple 'letter to the editor' is a valued inclusion. Disagree with anything you see in Viewpoints - or share why you do agree! We can't guarantee everything will be used, but with patience and flexibility we'd love to include all we can. Communication by email is preferred. Handwritten and typed contributions might get postponed. We are happy to assist to make your contribution fit well in our newsletter.

Email anything you'd like to share to Murray Love at: love@optushome.com.au

Not as much has changed since 150 years ago, as we sometimes think!

"There is not a morning's journal that reaches us that is not besmirched with tales of theft and perjury.

The very names that ought to be held up as luminaries of honor have become bywords of villainy, and the foul stench of corruption fills our public offices. See how the nation stands blackened with the crimes of her first dignitaries, and hides her head in shame before the nations! And for what have these miserable men bartered away their honor, and that of the people? For the same unhallowed and unreasoning desire of rapid gain, which has brought such heavy disaster upon the commercial world - to support the extravagance of their households.

Whatever remedies for the cure of these great evils may be devised, they all depend in the last instance upon the fidelity of those to whom their execution must be entrusted. They will all fail unless the root of the evil be attacked, unless the conscience of men be aroused, the confusion of right and wrong checked, and the loftier purposes of our being again brought powerfully home to the hearts of the people."

Felix Adler's 1876 Founding Address of the New York Society for Ethical Culture (a forerunner of the Humanist movement)

CONGRATULATIONS TO DIERK AND ROSEMARY



Dierk and Rosemary von Behrens have been members of the Humanist Society of NSW for over 25 years, and formerly members of the old Canberra society and the Humanist Society of South Australia.

Rosemary and Dierk now live in Canberra, but achieved the early distinction of "Adelaide's first humanist wedding" fifty years ago on Sunday 21 December 1969, at a hall in Windsor Gardens, Adelaide. The hall seems to have been replaced, but we see in the photograph below that Windsor Gardens still flourishes.

I remember my brother's wedding that same year, and even though that was in a church, there were still a number of novel features in the spirit of the 1960s.

However such were the revolutionary aspects of the von Behrens wedding (held at a time before Lionel Murphy introduced civil celebrants), that they inspired a substantial newspaper article (*right*), which Dierk and Rosemary have preserved as a very special reminder of the day they brought together their commitments both to one another, and to the philosophy of Humanism.

If you're reading the colour PDF version you will see that I colourised the newspaper photo, but the trees didn't come out green. I think we can be confident that the trees in the photograph below will have the same colours as in 1969.

Murray Love



Windsor Gardens, Adelaide

No clergy, no hymns, no prayers, no crosses . . . that was Adelaide's first humanist wedding on Sunday.

Humanists have been married here before but either in registry offices or, under protest, in churches.

On Sunday, for the first time, the Registrar of Marriages, Mr. E. D. Byerlee celebrated a humanist wedding away from the Registry Office.

Setting for the unique occasion was the Beef-acres Memorial Hall at Windsor Gardens.

A special form of ceremony was devised by the 'groom, Dierk von Behrens, and his bride, Rosemary Scott.

Though the couple preserved many of the traditional elements of church weddings—flower girls, bridesmaids and groomsmen—proceedings soon took a different turn.

Schoolteacher Peter Wilkins opened with a reading of a statement "Love in a humanist frame."

After a further short reading on the nature of love, Mr. Wilkins read Shakespeare's famous sonnet on the marriage of true minds.

Mr. Byerlee's few official words followed and the newlyweds completed what they called the official endorsement" of their decision to wed with a reading of several poems by Theodor Storm—in German by the 'groom and in English by the bride.

Ironically the man whom the SA Humanist Society proposed, unsuccessfully, as their own marriage celebrant, is the 'groom's father, Mr. George von Behrens, of Klemzig.

At present, the only persons authorised to conduct marriages in South Australia are about 1,000 ministers of religion, registry officers and the police constable at Oodnadatta.

CALENDAR MARCH – APRIL 2020

The NSW Humanists Meetup 3-6pm at Humanist House on Sunday 22 March will be titled: Ethical Atheism

Ethical Atheism is Humanism stripped to the basics, although Humanism gets complicated pretty quickly. This event is intended for people hesitant - or confused - about the label Humanist, yet comfortable in thinking of themselves as atheists, while still wanting to be part of an ethical community. Theists claim trees, tides, planets and galactic clusters are all evidence for a god, but this isn't in essence different from thinking thunderclaps are the hammer of Thor. Atheism and Theism are based on exactly the same evidence! So we won't be discussing Atheism much. There's plenty to discuss in the word 'Ethical'. We're talking about being "Ethical But Not Theistic" or EBNT. There are many ways to be ethical, and the last thing we need is to be arguing or finger-pointing over who is more ethically correct than who. If you're interested in us becoming an ethical community, come along and make a start. But remember it's BYO ethics, don't come along to judge everyone else, and decide they're not good enough for you. Come to join in an important discussion.

The NSW Humanists Meetup 3-6pm at Humanist House on Sunday 26 April will be titled: Persecution & Paranoia

Persecution includes claims of discrimination, harassment, disrespect, suppression, muzzling, and possibly murder and torture in certain cases. Paranoia has similar claims, but these are largely unwarranted or seriously exaggerated. There are people in every group who suffer delusions of persecution, and there are certainly groups who suffer the whole gamut of real persecution - right up to torture and murder. It's a mixed, messy tangled can of worms - claim, counter-claim, passion and unreason. We won't name names here, but names can be named in the discussion on 26 April. It's not just about religion but includes ideology and identity politics on all sides of the fence. What about the privileged older white male who is a disabled gay Buddhist being rejected by his Mormon family? There's lots to talk about. We'll have a short talk to start things off, but we expect to have participants with a lot to say themselves.

HuVAT 3.15 - 5.00 pm Sunday 12 April will possibly be replaced by a special event

Open Forum continues each Wednesday evening at 8.00 pm

Penrith pub night continues at Red Cow Hotel 5.30 pm each third Wednesday of the month

PLEASE NOTE THE HUMANIST JOURNALS WILL BE ISSUED THREE TIMES THIS YEAR WITH THE NEXT ISSUES OUT IN MAY

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NSW INC.

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE EACH JULY 1st

Prompt renewal keep down costs, worries and workloads, but we appreciate circumstances can mean delays and we're grateful to receive your renewal at a later time during the year. Posted reminders are expensive. Please place a reminder in your calendar or diary for each July 1. Please consider including a donation. There are several ways to renew:

Direct credit to Society's Bank Account: (*Annotate deposit with name and purpose*)
BSB: **062-003** Account No. **0091-0957** Account Name: **Humanist Society of NSW Inc.**

PayPal to accounts@hsnsw.asn.au (*send name & purpose to same email address*)

Cheque to **Humanist Society of NSW**, c/o P.O. BOX **784** EDGECLIFF NSW 2027

Single \$35 - Double (any 2 members at same address) \$45 - Pension/Concession \$20

The views expressed in *Humanist Viewpoints* are not necessarily those of the Humanist Society of NSW Inc.