

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NSW

Viewpoints **A**nnual

JAN - DEC

2022

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Hi to members and friends of the Humanist Society of NSW. Please enjoy this annual issue which is for the whole of 2022. I know there are a few of you who eagerly enjoy the *Viewpoints*, but it is harder for just one person to keep this going on a quarterly basis. I apologise it has taken so long to get this one issue out in 2022. I began the year in enthusiasm, but the new uncertainties of covid omicron, climate disasters, and the start of WW3 dislodged my concentration. I lose track of time reading and researching to get to the truths of these issues, rather than the simplistic fairy tales we see in the media.

Deciphering the news is a lot of work, and I doubt any of us can do better than assessing a 'balance of probabilities' of what's really happening. The key certainty is that the human suffering is real. The key uncertainty is, as usual, how to have a sense of the future - even the simple personal future - what with rain invading homes, viruses stalking the streets, global supply lines cut, worldwide financial chaos, and travel become a distant, dangerous, even guilty pleasure!

A big step forward for the Humanist Society has been the new roof for Humanist House - which is still a 'work in progress'. The extraordinary weather we've seen has given it a serious stress test and there is still some fine tuning needed. Our building experts on the committee are working closely with the roofer to address things, but we need a deep well of patience in the face of constant rain, viral illness, and an overstretched building industry recovering from the delays of the past two years. Nevertheless, we all look forward to sunny days ahead (maybe even before this journal arrives). Many thanks to Dave, Fred, Ian and Steve for looking after the place and to all those who helped with donations to the roof fund.

In the pages following you'll find brief reviews of the events we've continued to present in the difficult years of covid. We've learned to use the online Zoom platform and it's been great to meet some of our regional members there. I think we might continue to have some Zoom meetings even as we get used to going out again. It's been a time of disruption and this occasions more reflection - both dark and light. It's difficult to offer more events without more volunteers, but we can certainly look at different patterns - different weekdays, different times of day, different topics and approaches.

During the disruption of the pandemic, our annual membership cycle has somewhat broken down. Quite a number of members used to catch up in hard cash when they attended our Annual General Meeting at Humanist House. But our last two AGMs have been held online on Zoom during periods of lockdown. We hoped we could reconnect with more of you at our 2021 end-of-year party, or our first live event in 2022 with Lyndon Storey on Humanism in Chinese philosophy. These were each well-enough attended events, but largely by those who had managed to renew online.

Then there's the problem that we've often lost our sense of the passing years over the long months of lockdown and uncertainty. The memory plays tricks, and we think we're more up-to-the-minute than we really are. I hope this journal will prompt you to reconnect with the Humanist world. We'd love to keep you. Please let me know if you have difficulties renewing with us. I hope the reviews of the many events we've kept going will make it clear we're not giving up, and we hope you won't give up on us. Renewal details are always on the back page of our journal. It really helps to know that the work of the volunteers is appreciated, even as things gets harder and scarcer - when appreciation is needed the most.

For those of you who take an interest in national Humanist affairs there have been changes. The Victorian Humanists have left CAHS (Council of Australian Humanists) and there is a new corporate entity now using the name Humanists Australia and having mainly personal members. With startup funds from Humanists Victoria, the new organisation has hired a paid executive who is working to create a truly professional approach to presenting Humanism in Australia.

Humanists Australia has taken over the journal *Australian Humanist* and the Australian Humanist of the Year (AHYO). This new professional approach has great potential but is expensive and membership fees are steep - although well affordable by the urban elites they hope to recruit. We wish them well. Just google "humanistsaustralia.org" to find out more.

This leaves our NSW society as the last institutional member in CAHS, although the way is left for other organisations to sign up again. After setting up a new constitution the acronym CAHS has gained a new second name and function as the College of Alternative Humanism Studies. This follows from a vision shared by Murray Love and Victor Bien for a kind of Humanism Think Tank able to cover research and reporting on the fullest range of what Humanism is about.

The new name matches the acronym CAHS but has real purpose. The focus is on Humanism rather than the over-extended adjective 'Humanist' which too often is limited to what interests members of Humanist associations. This was all well and good when these had richly varied memberships in the prime of life but becomes less helpful when things decline.

To renew on a wider scale we need to project a richer image of Humanism than just a fancy name for secularist activism. For the moment we have a website, and the funds to keep it going and we hope to gradually build an online resource of articles demonstrating the full potential of Humanism as a lifescape for the 21st century and examining the various fields of knowledge that help construct that outlook. And the important word 'Alternative' gives the flexibility to break new ground and to rediscover lost ideas. Please get in touch with me if you have an interest in working with us.

Murray Love, President & Editor, Humanist Society of NSW



REVIEW OF HSNSW ACTIVITIES FOR 2020-2022

It's been a long time since we reported on our monthly activities. There was a bit of a gap in 2020, but one way or another we have kept the work of the Humanist Society of NSW going. Here's a short review on each of the events since 2020 began.

HUMANICITY - New Humanists Sunday Open House *Sunday, 26 January 2020*

Each January we begin the year exploring Humanism itself. I tried to keep things fresh with a made-up 'edgy' word Humanicity. We did get what was described as a 'bright-eyed and bushy-tailed' bunch of intelligent young people wanting to talk about their sense of what Humanism meant. It was a great start to the year but, as we know, 2020 had a different agenda for us. I found the word 'humanicity' did have an obscure academic usage right here in Sydney. I approached the academic concerned for a talk on it, but she declined - sadly implying she didn't feel Humanists would treat her seriously.

DARWIN DAY AFTERNOON TALK *Sunday, 9 February 2020*

Each February we have our annual Darwin Day lecture in which we explore Darwinian ideas across disciplines. In 2020 we had Gavin Gatenby, a former chief guide at the Australian Museum. He had also worked in national park services. Gavin discussed the gradual discrediting of 'Natural Theology' over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For those who missed him, you can Google "The Shipwreck of Natural Theology" and follow the links to YouTube. The second speaker was Prof. Darrell Kemp, a biologist from Macquarie University pursuing interdisciplinary fundamental research across different animal groups - primarily in the evolutionary significance of bright iridescent signals in butterflies and guppies

RESPECT - ABILITY (New Humanists Sunday Open House) *Sunday, 23 February 2020*

This was a discussion event looking at so-called respectfulness in dealing with authority figures. I turned what I learned into an article in the previous issue of Viewpoints. This was a response to another Humanist movement figure effectively saying that "Humanists speak truth to power *respectfully*." For me, a 'power' in need of truth is no basis for respect. Yes it is wise to fear retaliation, but to confuse that with bowing to the narcissistic pretensions of the powerful is repugnant. No doubt 'diplomacy' can sometimes get 'what you want', but lasting positive change isn't a simple matter of 'asking nicely'. It is the truth of things that calls for respect, and a power which falls short of truth needs to be confronted with the power of truth.

DR AMBROSE REISCH ON ART & HUMANISM *Sunday, 8 March 2020*

Ambrose is a retired Art lecturer, a practicing artist and a member of our association. His talk demonstrated the contribution of Renaissance Humanism to modern Humanism through Art. Ambrose illustrated Art's insights on human rights in war and peace, and artistic creativity's value in exploring our own humanity and discovering the humanity of others.

NSW ZOOMANISTS ONLINE: LES ALLAN ON WHY HE CALLS HIMSELF A HUMANIST *Sunday, 12 July 2020*

Our first ever online event gave us an interstate speaker. Les Allan from Humanists Victoria is a thoughtful explorer on the nature of reality, the norms of rational belief, and how to apply them to our core ideas. In his talk Les described three dimensions of humanism: reason and evidence, compassion and equality, and autonomy and dignity - illustrating this with historical and contemporary examples. Les drew out what it means to live a good life - one of meaning and purpose. Les Allan has long sought to deconstruct many of the irrationalities of our time and has his own website: rationalrealm.com

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: HUMANISM IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC *Sunday, 26 July 2020*

Humanism has always been about humanity and community, and the second meeting each July has for years been a festive celebration of community at its most fundamental - sharing food, drink and jollity together. But in 2020 we had to change this to a discussion on how anyone can build community and reach out to newcomers while avoiding food sharing, hand

shaking, mask wearing and keeping our distances. There were no glib answers and this became an opportunity to share stories of how our lives had changed in the lockdown era. These problems are still not solved.

NSW ZOOMANISTS ONLINE: MURRAY LOVE ON ALTERNATIVE HUMANISMS *Sunday, 9 August 2020*

Why might we need 'Alternative Humanisms'? In the 20th century, Humanism became Secular Humanism and focused on campaigns. Some were achieved and some became single issue campaigns. Some like LGBTQ rights now have their own powerful lobbies that dwarf the Humanists. Humanism has declined as a mass movement. Religion also declined, but found ways to leverage small voting blocs in elections and to take up hospitals, schools and social services - all to shift their main funding source to the taxpayer - this in turn generating new issues for secularists! One contemporary approach is to use up the Humanist legacy assets in new campaigns trying to get religion out of government. But contemporary campaigns can burn through a million dollars in a night and a naïve approach just makes us briefly self-satisfied - like warming ourselves on a fire made of our own furniture.

Are there alternatives? One alternative is to rebuild Humanism as a mass movement with a core community. How can this be done? The only thing clear is that it needs something different from what we've been doing. This is where exploring 'Alternative Humanisms' comes in. In order to grow in a competitive 21st century world, the Australian Humanist movement will need to appeal to a more diverse population, and learn how to place our various Humanistic ideas and ideals into the heart of contemporary debates and desires. For those up to the job it will need a willingness to learn new things and to learn from others, a preparedness to acknowledge and set aside our own prejudices, a readiness to risk experiments and failures, and a commitment to build relationships and community. On the day, we discussed what we knew about different visions of Humanism but barely scratched the surface.

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: ETHICAL ATHEISM *Sunday, 30 August 2020*

I had run an additional Meetup for some time with titles like Ex-Christian and Recovery from Religion. At one stage this had given birth to a very active little group but things move on. So I gave it one last try as Ethical Atheism and set up a joint event with the Humanist Meetup. Sadly no-one came from the second Meetup so I had to close it down. It's good to see that a new Recovery from Religion Meetup has been happening in Sydney - largely specialised to former Jehovah's Witness - but offering something of value to others getting over an extreme religious attachment. The phrase 'Ethical Atheism' was an attempt to find a stripped down version of Humanism that could be a starting point for someone wanting to carry on some of the appeal of religion while coming to terms with the absence of anything supernatural. It wasn't what was planned, but the day was a chance for those to discuss atheism and ethics as they chose.

HSNSW AGM ONLINE VIA ZOOM *Sunday, 13 September 2020*

Our first online AGM didn't attract anyone but committee members - who were thus obliged to re-elect themselves!

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: PERSECUTION & PARANOIA *Sunday, 27 September 2020*

Persecution includes claims of discrimination, harassment, disrespect, suppression, muzzling, and possibly murder and torture in certain cases. Paranoia usually make exactly the same claims, but in this case they are largely unwarranted or seriously exaggerated. There are people in every group who suffer delusions of persecution, and conversely there are certainly groups who suffer real persecution away from the public eye. This discussion was a chance to fact-check and debate which of the various identities might fit into which scenario.

VICKI POTEPA FAREWELL PARTY *Sunday, 11 October 2020*

This was a very special event for those who came and shared, and has been extensively reported in previous issues.

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: END-OF-LIFE CHOICE & NON-CHOICE *Sunday, 25 October 2020*

Rather than a political campaign about a right to die, this was an attempt to get people talking about their own personal expectations about their own death. Discussion was allowed to range over personal tragedies, fear of death, suicide, euthanasia, pain and suffering, grief, the process of dying, and beliefs about death. It's difficult at the best of times to get participants talking about themselves rather than abstract ideas, but there was a level of sharing achieved. Recent history has become too focused on doctors and the terminally ill, ignoring a broader need for each of us to be in charge of managing our own life and death choices - in a transformed society that understands and accepts such choices.

NSW ZOOMANISTS ONLINE - LYNDON STOREY ON TRANSFORMATIVE HUMANISM *Sunday, 8 November 2020*

Lyndon believes a Humanist approach to the world can transform ourselves, and then inspire us to transform the world. Lyndon has had his own transformations - Barrister, Lecturer, Philosopher, Chaplain, Counsellor, working in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and China. In his 2006 book *Humanity or Sovereignty* he diagnosed international relations, warning of rising political nationalism, and proposing a global political system based on humanity. Even Lyndon is shocked at how accurate his diagnosis has been. Now, he is transforming his ideas once again. The talk was a road test for Lyndon, and an inspiration for the rest of us.

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: 2020 REVIEW: 2021 REBOOT *Sunday, 22 November 2020*

This was an open discussion on the events of 2020 - and our hopes that 2021 would be different.

NSW ZOOMANISTS ONLINE - MURRAY LOVE ON 'HUMANISM IN A NUTSHELL' *Sunday, 10 January 2021*

We rarely offer an event in early January but Zoom online talks are more manageable. Murray presented and commentated a slide show of the many efforts to put the essence of Humanism into a few words including excerpts from various manifestos, declarations and statements, lines of poetry, and slogans from various Humanist websites.

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: HUMANISM 101 *Sunday, 24 January 2021*

Each January we begin the year with a focus on Humanism itself. This was an open discussion following on from the 'nutshell' talk, and a chance for friends found in 2020 to get back together.

ANNUAL DARWIN DAY TALKS - LIVE AT HUMANIST HOUSE *Sunday, 14 February 2021*

The speaker was Dr Matthew McCurry, Curator in Palaeontology at Sydney's Australian Museum, on the fossil record of reptiles and mammals, and what it tells us about their evolution. Our Vice-President John August organised the event, and also spoke on geological cycles and how the biosphere brings about its own geological changes, beyond just leaving fossils.



HAPPINESS & ITS DISCONTENTS: FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE *Sunday, 28 February 2021*

We had a brief introductory talk but this was intended as a discussion event so the participants were free to range over their concerns about unhappiness and depression as well as what can and should make us happy.

THE BUTTERFLY CONNECTION - NSW ZOOMANISTS ONLINE *Sunday, 14 March 2021*

Here was another opportunity to use Zoom to bring in an interstate speaker. Queensland Humanists' Treasurer Frank Jordan came to show us how butterfly gardening can grow community and bring wild nature into our human cities. Frank also gave us tips on butterfly-friendly garden plants suitable for Sydney and NSW conditions. Frank's ideas are well presented in his book available at:

<https://earthling.com.au/create-more-butterflies/>

It was a pleasant afternoon and a chance to learn. Information on Brisbane's butterfly gardening community is at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Paradise-Street-Butterfly-Garden-1034516246598060/>

JUSTIFICATION BY REASON ALONE: FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE *Sunday, 28 March 2021*

The catchy title was a twist on the Protestant theology of "Justification by Faith alone." I wanted to see us critique the notion of justifying actions by reference to potent emotive matters rather than demonstrating costs and benefits through honest reasoning. However the topic seemed to become the philosophical examination of reason itself. This nevertheless excited a well-attended and dynamic discussion at Humanist House.

HUMANISM AND THE HEROES OF THE 18TH CENTURY ENLIGHTENMENT *Sunday, 11 April 2021*

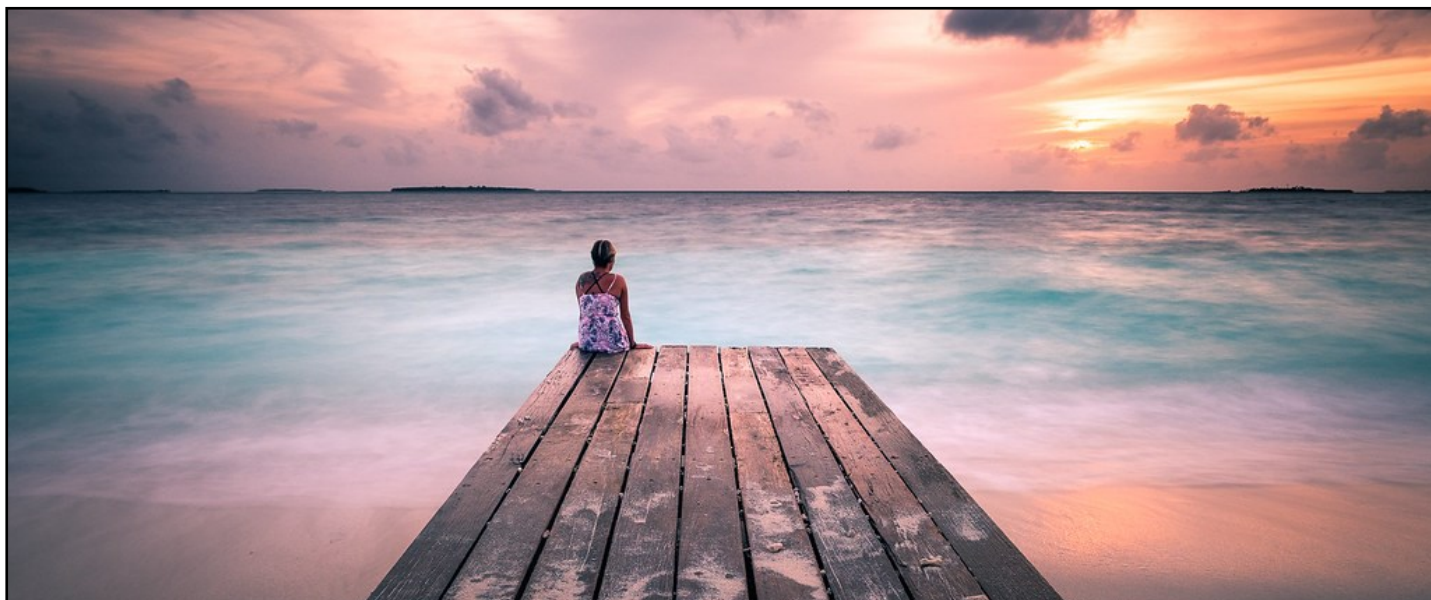
So important is the defence and promotion of the values of the Enlightenment to the progress of Humanism, that the NSW Humanist Society purchased the right to show two films in public. These are focused on presenting the heroic herculean efforts of those brave men and women of the 18th century who took on an ancient regime of exploitative rulers, allied with an oppressive priesthood, and forever broke their grip on the human mind. At least for some. We managed to fit showing the films within the two hours available at Humanist House. The discussion of them was then scheduled for May on Zoom.

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY *Sunday, 25 April 2021*

By late April 2021 we had all been getting cautiously relaxed about the pandemic, and it seemed time to think about becoming a full-on face-to-face Humanist community again. After all, Humanist House has been a home for a Humanist community for over 50 years, before lockdowns and social distancing changed things in a big way. We had another go at discussing what community has meant in 2020 and what we hoped for in 2021. Had we had enough of community via technology? Has our sense of a community shrunk? Have we become more choosy and less open? What do we miss about community? As we know, the delta variant soon had us back in lockdown, but these questions still warrant discussion.

HUMANISM AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT - A ZOOM ONLINE PANEL DISCUSSION *Sunday, 9 May 2021*

This was a follow-up to our April two-part film presentation on the historical Enlightenment. Victor Bien gave a comprehensive introduction on how the Enlightenment gradually entrenched key humanistic values such as freedom of speech, choice regarding religion, a tolerant cosmopolitan outlook, transparency and accountability in government, and extension of citizenship to all. Alongside this came a demand for universal access to the growth and sharing of knowledge as a basis for prosperity and equity and progress. Realising these values is still a work in progress, and there have been stumbles, struggles and re-examinations - and no end of hypocrisy and abuse. A lively Q&A followed.



FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: TRAVEL AS EXPERIENCE *Sunday, 23 May 2021*

We tried to get some personal sharing going by asking people to open up on peak experiences in their travels - to explore what moves us, and why - our disappointments and our unexpected delights. Peak experiences didn't need to be expensive, or far away or involve long stays - a single afternoon could change a life. We aimed high, hoping to get participants to share stories of how they felt, what it meant, and what they'd learnt. And they could talk about places they haven't got to and what it would mean to them to get there one day. I think the afternoon was productive of a reasonable amount of sharing.

TIBOR MOLNAR ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF JUSTICE - NOW ON ZOOM *Sunday, 11 July 2021*

Tibor is an Honorary Associate of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Sydney - where he teaches adult education classes. Tibor has been described as "on a mission to make sense of things - with rigor, logic and enthusiasm." All this makes him an excellent popular speaker. He discussed fairness and justice - with a blindfold to prevent bias. He talked about the relevance of the 'free will debate' to the issue of punishment for crimes. Then we quickly moved to the Q&A which was the liveliest one of the year, and seemed very widely enjoyed. A highlight of the 2021 programme.

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION IN NSW UNDER THREAT - ZOOMANISTS ONLINE *Sunday, 8 August 2021*

It was important that we discussed the so-called 'Religious Discrimination' legislation proposed in both the NSW and the Australian parliaments. Which we did. Some of this thrust from the Morrison government has played out rather messily since, and looks less likely to return. But there remains a state version by Mark Latham. Hopefully Premier Perrottet's remark that the federal legislation "created more problems than it solved" might indicate the state bill isn't coming anytime soon.

ZOOMANISTS ONLINE DISCUSSION: CORPORATE HEGEMONY *Sunday, 22 August 2021*

This was an online discussion and we had a good range of views including people who ran their own businesses. There was also plenty of discussion about the power of large corporations dodging taxation, pushing down wages, and polluting the countryside - exercising their power through monopoly practices, litigation and lobbying. Smaller businesses are often as vulnerable as employees. As always we had to acknowledge we often value the products these corporation deliver.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NSW *Sunday, 12 September 2021*

It was another Zoom AGM, but there were more attendees and more enjoyment with the vote to make Charles Foley a Life Member of the association. We had introductions and tributes and responses, discovering a fascinating life in Humanism.

ETHICS & MORALITY & YOU - SHARING IDEAS IN CYBERSPACE ON ZOOM *Sunday, 26 September 2021*

Participants were challenged to think and to share about their own sources for moral assessment of themselves and others. The discussion was allowed to range freely. This was another topic designed to let people share ideas while still in lockdown.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: A NEW RATIONALE - NSW ZOOMANISTS AFTERNOON TALK *Sunday, 10 October 2021*

Vice-President Ian Bryce presented a personal view on the often vexed issue of freedom of speech. Ian is concerned that rules on speech around the world often either permit harmful forms of expression, or persecute speech not demonstrably harmful. He examined cases like holocaust deniers, Donald Trump, Chinese courts, Israel Folau, Julian Assange, and Witness K. Ian argues that the only speech which should be suppressed is that which is at the same time untrue and harmful. Rules need to be universal - applicable to all humanity, and not dependent on a specific culture. Disputes can be better resolved when there is a common understanding of moral principles. There was a lively back and forth on Ian's arguments.

MASK-TO-MASK RE-ENACTIVISM INTER-EXCHANGE *Sunday, 14 November 2021*

There was still some Delta variant around at the time and we enforced a mask mandate for our first live public event since May. We were attempting to give local activism a reboot, but there wasn't a lot of energy for it. We had a pleasant discussion about various issues. No-one can say we didn't give activism a chance.

FACE-TO-FACE@HUMANIST HOUSE: HUMANISTS IN DANGER - *Sunday, 28 November 2021*

The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban needed to be discussed, as well as the reminder how those who speak up against theocracy, or even rumoured to have blasphemed, are subjected to lynching and assassination in some countries, and to arbitrary imprisonment in others. Happily no-one came to grandstand on how we should 'do something' about all this. But we did feel our powerlessness sharply as we talked about various cases around the globe.

NSW HUMANIST SOCIETY'S END-OF-YEAR CELEBRATION *Sunday, 12 December 2021*

Another live event in the brief period between the Delta and Omicron outbreaks. See report on pages 12-13.

NSW ZOOMANISTS AFTERNOON TALK - HUMANISM IN A NUTSHELL *Sunday, 9 January 2022*

This was an updated version of the talk given in Jan 2021. The talk tends to attract new people so is eminently repeatable.

2022 REBOOT - THE PAST AND THE FUTURE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES (Zoom) *Sunday, 23 January 2022*

We were back on Zoom for all of January and February in 2022 as the uncertainties of the Omicron wave engulfed us. The important thing has been to keep the momentum alive. Participants were free to range over a number of topics of concern.

ANNUAL DARWIN DAY TALKS online via Zoom *Sunday, 13 February 2022*

In 2022 Sydney author Ken Saunders gave us an entertaining presentation on recently discovered hominid species - including *mo floresiensis* (aka Hobbits!), *Homo naledi* and the Denisovans. John August then gave a presentation on a number of entertaining biological oddities and curiosities found along the evolutionary trail.

NSW HUMANISTS ONLINE FORUM (ZOOM) - HEALTHY MASCULINITY *Sunday, 27 February 2022*

This was an effort to discuss whether there was a solution to the issue of 'Toxic Masculinity' - a problematic phrase which needs some elucidation. The discussion nibbled at the edges of the issue but never really got to grips with why so many obviously brutal and irrational aspects of male behaviour persist in modern civilisation - or if they're actually a reaction to contemporary progress on the rights of others. It was a compelling issue keeping us active in a difficult period.

MENCIUS, CONFUCIUS & THE ROOTS OF HUMANISM - LIVE WITH MASKS AT HUMANIST HOUSE *Sunday, 13 March 2022*

This was our first live event at Humanist House for 2022. Lyndon Storey gave us an engaging presentation on the iconic Chinese humanistic philosophers Mencius and Confucius. Lyndon holds a PhD on Mencius and international relations theory, and showed us how Mencius foreshadowed many of the aspects of modern Humanism. A well-received presentation.

Events managed and reviewed by Murray Love

2022 ALMANAC OF DAYS

A SELECTION OF 96 DAYS OF RECOGNITION LIKELY TO INTEREST HUMANISTS



Jan 01 New Years Day
Jan 10 Clean Your Desk Day
Jan 13 International Skeptics Day
Jan 17 Martin Luther King Jr Day
Jan 26 Australia Day/Invasion Day
Jan 29 Curmudgeon's Day

Feb 03 Optimist Day
Feb 04 World Cancer Day
Feb 12 Darwin Day
Feb 17 Random Kindness Day
Feb 22 World Thinking Day
Feb 27 World NGO Day

Mar 03 World Book Day
Mar 06 Clean Up Australia Day
Mar 08 International Women's Day
Mar 15 Beware Ides of March Day
Mar 20 International Happiness Day
Mar 21 Southern Autumn Equinox

Apr 01 Say There Is No God Day
Apr 16 Wear Pyjamas to Work Day
Apr 20 Volunteer Recognition Day
Apr 22 World Earth Day
Apr 25 Anzac Day
Apr 30 National Honesty Day

May 01 World Laughter Day	Sep 04 Father's Day (Australia)
May 08 Mother's Day (Australia)	Sep 05 International Day of Charity
May 12 International Nurses Day	Sep 15 World Day of Democracy
May 16 World Day of Light	Sep 21 International Peace Day
May 18 World Museum Day	Sep 26 World Contraception Day
May 28 Amnesty International Day	Sep 28 Universal Access to Info Day
Jun 03 World Bicycle Day	Oct 04 Bullying Prevention Day
Jun 14 World Blood Donor Day	Oct 12 Ada Lovelace Day
Jun 15 Magna Carta Day	Oct 19 Evaluate Your Life Day
Jun 20 World Refugee Day	Oct 22 Smart Is Cool Day
Jun 21 World Humanist Day	Oct 24 United Nations Day
Jun 22 World Rainforest Day	Oct 30 Create a Great Funeral Day
Jul 11 World Population Day	Nov 01 World Vegan Day
Jul 12 New Conversations Day	Nov 09 World Freedom Day
Jul 14 Fête Nationale Française	Nov 11 Remembrance Day
Jul 20 Land On The Moon Day	Nov 13 World Kindness Day
Jul 29 International Tiger Day	Nov 19 International Men's Day
Jul 30 International Friendship Day	Nov 20 World Children's Day
Aug 07 Aged Care Employees Day	Dec 10 Human Rights Day
Aug 11 Robert Ingersoll Day	Dec 16 Day of Reconciliation
Aug 12 International Youth Day	Dec 18 Roast Suckling Pig Day
Aug 13 World Leftlanders Day	Dec 22 Southern Summer Solstice
Aug 18 Never Give Up Day	Dec 23 Festivus
Aug 19 World Humanitarian Day	Dec 31 New Year's Eve

MOST OF THE 'DAYS' IN THIS LIST COME FROM THE SITE WWW.DAYSOFTHEYEAR.COM , LISTING BOTH GENUINE AND WHIMSICAL DAYS TO CELEBRATE ALMOST EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. THE DAYS CHOSEN HERE FOR 2022 HOPEFULLY INCLUDE SOMETHING HUMANISTIC FOR EACH OR ALL OF US.

Letter From Kabul

The correspondence here took place in the weeks before the Taliban took Kabul, but while they were effectively conquering other parts of Afghanistan. We hear about minorities and military personnel at risk in that country, but not often about the plight of those who have simply embraced modernity as we have, but now find themselves exposed to being brutally wrenched back to the past. One such person wrote to my email as President of CAHS.

20 July 2021 from Kabul

Hello dear Humanists of Australia,

I hope you are safe, and doing well. I am Amin from Afghanistan, 26 years old. I am an ex-Muslim. Being an atheist in a fully religious country like Afghanistan is hard to live. I arranged somehow to hide my ideas from the family and friends for years, but now the situation is getting worse.

Only big cities are remained still under the control of the government, and Taliban a very extreme version of Islam will control the whole country soon. Although current government constitutions also based on sharia law of Islam, which is extremely inhuman, under which ex-muslims particularly must be stoned to death, unless they accept to return back to Islam.

Since I was an active atheist on social media, Muslim extremists accessed my accounts the result of which got to know my real name and picture. I can't feel safe here any way. If Taliban or any of the Muslims who know my real name, be able to catch me within country there is no way to survive. long time while my family recognized me as a bad Muslim (not an atheist of course) rejected me.

The situation of legal immigration through UNHCR process is not a practical option, there are my atheists friends who registered 2014 in Turkey and still their cases are under process and couldn't go to a safe country.

I know that more focus of Australia Humanist Organization would be the humanists projects and programs within Australia, but as a humanist I need your help. I can be under view of Muslims in any day, I can't survive here, please help me if it is possible for you.

I can work as a volunteer - in any programs from 1 year to 2 years. I have completed BBA in India and worked in procurement and logistics. I can work in any position that suits me without expectations. I just need to get out of this country in order to live. This country will never be a country for atheists, humanists or seculars.

My warm regards

Amin

I'm embarrassed to say I ignored this message. I imagined it would also have gone to other organisations better able to respond. But then I was surprised to get a follow-up message that made the exchange far more real. This was a real human being in personal distress, and ready to say so.

Jul 29, 2021 from Kabul

Hey dears,

Hope you are fine, and I am terribly sorry for bothering you with the previous email which resulted in wasting 60 seconds of your precious time. By they way, I was never preparing to arrive in Australia by sending an email, but what I thought was that as humanitarian organization in a so developed country you may understand the situation of other beings so called human -- who thinks like you and are really in a very so bad situation.

I was born here without my own permission, I never really choose to grow here in this hell, or grow in an extremist family or to be an atheist. You advanced rich people may had born here, that is the main word. I may have died here.. soon. or survive and make my own destiny.

No matter what I never ever ask for help of others again . this world is so sh.. sh... world if you are from a very poor country. but human being in philosophically definition is just a meaningless word, never existed and never be and I hate such a phrase.

Believe me or not, I can't believe how this whole world works and how contradictory is everything and how this loneliness killing and how much is it to suffer when your society is differ from you. Good Luck Australian Humans Ok. by the way I deserved a reply, that describes shortly that sorry this automatic email sent to you because we can't help you , you are on your own.

Amin

Obviously some compassionate response now had to be made. But what? There was no real assistance I could offer. I chose to be as honest and helpful as my limits allowed. To some degree I presented a rational humanistic kind of sermon on the themes he had raised in his message. Others may have responded differently and more militantly.

Jul 29, 2021 <president@humanist.org.au>

Hi Amin

I can't see anywhere that I did reply and I'm sorry you felt ignored. Do please forgive me as I am just one person here. No-one else does more than occasionally organise a little committee work. No one here gets paid. I have replied to a number of these appeal emails but it is depressing to do so.

I can only try to be encouraging about telling people they need to settle down and try to live quietly in their own country. I cannot save them.

Amin it is simply true as you say that “we can't help you , you are on your own”. Do you realise there are people in Afghanistan who've actually worked alongside Australian soldiers fighting the Taliban who get left behind when the soldiers leave – people who will be the first ones the Taliban will kill if they take over the country.

It is a hard cruel world Amin. Do not hope to get to a comfortable country just because you are an atheist. I have tried to help someone here who is an atheist from Iran who came here illegally – they won't even believe he is an atheist. They think he is a Muslim pretending to be an atheist! He has to make his way without support and might yet be deported to Iran. Others are imprisoned on a desolate island way out in the Pacific Ocean.

Neither of us chose which country we were born in but I can tell you as an atheist we know science shows us that we are born only from the eggs and sperms that came from our parents, and Amin we are each of us born exactly where our parents live, and that millions of possible brothers or sisters were never born at all. We are lucky to be born at all.

If your parents had lived in Australia it would have been one of these other brothers or sisters that would have been born because every tiny little change will affect which sperm mixes with which egg. You, the human being called Amin, would be more likely to win the richest lottery in the world even only ever buying a single ticket, than to be born in Australian with Afghani parents.

Do not be unhappy about the facts of your birth. The only other possibility was not to be born at all. You must live the life you have and try to make the best of it. If you ever get to escape it will be by careful slow steps, not by hoping someone else can help you.

There are people in very big trouble that don't get helped. I am sorry things look very bad in your country. There have been many attempts to make Afghanistan like a modern country but these have failed. If all those soldiers can't fix the problem then it must be left to those who live there to fix it and that will be difficult. Other countries tried to stop the Taliban and they failed.

I can tell you that atheists and humanists do not want you to be a martyr. That is not our way. We do not shame you or criticise you for hiding your differences and trying to quietly fit into your local society. We want you to look after yourself first of all. Humanists are sensible people who want to go on living. This is the only one life we get. There is no paradise to come.

There is a good chance you can find a life for yourself even with the Taliban back in power. And the worst times don't always last as long as you fear. Afghanistan has gone through very many changes in my lifetime and has always resisted modernity, but modernity of some kind always comes to ever country eventually.

Going to another country sounds easy but people have died trying to do so. It is just a lucky few who get to another country and life is still hard there for many of them. If you accept that your real need for the next few years is to make your life in Afghanistan then you can start to focus on this difficult task and to make some progress with it. This is what

you must do. I have to stop now.

Very best regards

Murray Love

I was fortunate to receive a reply from Amin which showed good grace in his circumstances.

30 July 2021 from Kabul

Hello

I hope are fine. Thank you for your kind words, I didn't mean and I can't believe what I said, I had been so depressed please understand me I didn't mean that.

I am agree in all words you said. Actually the situation here is getting worse nowadays, but there is hope in every bad situation, let's hope everything ends well. Taliban becomes a little powerful and they just have taken over the center of two provinces, one of which is located in the border with Iran, some how important province. When Iran had taken over by an Islamic regime, the absolute majority of people were religious, which completely reversed after facing the real face of religion. I hope so everything ends well here.

wish you all the best and again I apologies.

Amin

I made one last reply

30 July 2021 <president@humanist.org.au>

Thanks for replying Amin. I'm glad you've found some hope. I hope you'll be able to rebuild your life and have kind friends. Murray

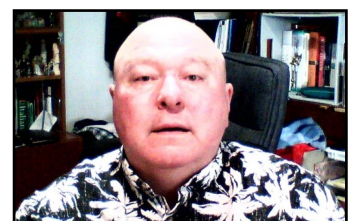
Amin is not his real name. I chose it from a list of Afghan names, and it is supposed to mean 'Honest'. I hope I gave the best of what little I could offer. What would you have done? I'd love to hear what you think at my email address: love@optushome.com.au

All this preceded the Taliban takeover of Kabul. I have heard no more from Amin. I imagine he is more likely alive than dead. I do not want to put him in danger or arouse false hopes by contacting him out of curiosity. I would love to know what became of him one day, all the same.

Some small editing and correcting has been done.

Murray Love

**Murray is President of
CAHS and HSNSW
and edits this journal**



2021 TRIVIA NIGHT &

We kept the food simple with delicious wraps from Subway. Food, soft drinks, and wine were free to members. It was a good night and we could have managed more of you. Maybe next time.

TEAM 1 THE CHAMPS



Michael Peters
Victor Bien
Dave Jobst
Fred Flatow
Jan Bradwell
Hae-Lyun
David Fraser
Fay Love

‘The Champs’ lived up to their name, and won the night mainly on their prowess with the ‘Guess Who’ faces and being a little better organised. See how you go on the faces on the next page.

How’s your own general knowledge?

Can you recognise some of the following words ending in “...us”, and do you know what they refer to? Succubus, Sisyphus, Ornithorhynchus, Mencius, Leviticus, Diplodocus, Copernicus, Abacus, Remus, Nimbus, Hibiscus, Calculus.

Who wrote the words? Rodgers or Hammerstein; Gilbert or Sullivan; Lerner or Loewe.

Who fought these ancient wars? Punic Wars; Servile Wars; Gallic Wars; Persian Wars.

For each of the following can you name at least one language in which the following might mean Yes or No?

Non, Ja, Nai (transliterated), Nein, Nyet (transliterated), Oui, 是, Si, Aye, Da (transliterated).

What words do these acronyms consist of? ABBA, ASAP, BTW, fMRI, HSNSW, IMHO, NDIS, SCUBA, TAFE, WYSIWYG.

If you’re stumped by any of the above feel free to just look them up or phone a friend.

END-OF-YEAR PARTY

We divided into two trivia teams, but if more of you had come we had room for three. There were no prizes, it was all for the fun of the challenge - and fun did seem to be the name of the game. Not to be missed.



TEAM 2 THE GAMERS

Sajeevan Vanatheva

Brian Edwards

Ian Bryce

Annika Tults

Angela

John August

Bill Wright

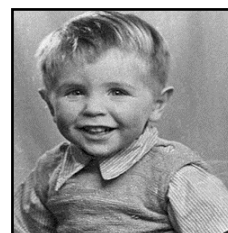
Doug Leverett



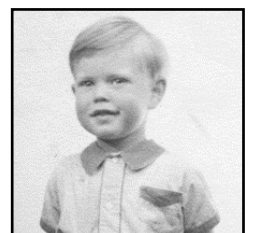
'The Gamers' were runners-up. They were playing along nicely with the word-based questions, but things went pear-shaped when it came to the 'Guess Who' pictures which were half of the available points. They had some formidable IQs on hand but needed a few more 'popular culture' mavens.



He became a famous & beloved twentieth century figure.



Both born during WW2 Steven Hawking was just as cute as Mick Jagger back then. Which is which?



You should be able to put a name to these otherwise familiar political figures in their 'full flush of youth'?





As Omicron, Ukraine and the Australian floods all came in quick succession, memories of the horror of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan were pushed to the back of our minds. Yet that horror was experienced far more acutely by those Humanists who lived in Afghanistan itself, some of whom reached out to me in the naïve hope that rescue and a new home in Canada might be the saving of their families. This article is based on an appeal I received as CAHS President, telling a story of nascent organised Humanism during those 20 years of the western-backed regime - in a country already patriarchal and theocratic even then.

All illustrations used in this article are from Afghan Humanist Facebook pages. I have no certainty of the provenance or accuracy of any of the images or stories presented here, but sometimes we've just got to work with what little information there is.

A few weeks after the debacle of the fall of Kabul I received the following email. There has been some minor editing and the removal of what could be confidential information.

Dear Sir/ Madam, Good Day to You,

With due respects, I am writing on behalf of Afghanistan Humanist Association, AHA. Afghanistan Humanists are mainly intellectuals, writers, as well as in recent years they held senior positions in the Afghan Government.

Afghanistan Humanist Association was founded in 2012 in Kabul, Afghanistan by a group of young intellectuals, writers, researchers, experts and social activists.

The main activities were holding events, debates, focus group discussions, policy research that attracted many youths but in March 2013 some religious warlords in power threatened us and the activities shuttered for some time.

To ensure security and safe access to the different groups of community, the approach changed for sustainable inputs. We planned implementation of different projects:

Afghanistan Humanist Philosophical Forum (weekly events)

Afghanistan Philosophy Centre - a social media group

Afghanistan Post a newspaper started 2013 but closed for allegations of spreading non-religious thoughts

INSAN magazine - (means Human Magazine) - still continues - dedicated to dominant disciplines: philosophy, science, psychology and sociology

AFGHANIA Digital Newspaper for current affairs

INSAN Research Organization a non-governmental, non-profit and independent NGO

Majrooh Academy of Philosophy to provide necessary literature, we translated several books in local languages about human science topics, free thought and science.

Afghanistan Humanist Association focused on building a society to reason about the phenomena and the world based on scientific method and humanistic values.

Since 2012 the Afghanistan Humanists have experienced many challenges but still survive and struggle for the humanistic end. It struggles to work for justice, freedom, reason, science and humanist values and nurturing a secular society in third world country like Afghanistan, but the efforts are full of turmoil. From one side there are/were dogmatic governing warlords and to the other side there are/were security problems and presence of the religious extremist thoughts.

The fall of Afghanistan and takeover by Taliban insurgents, situation is now even worse and horrific. It can cost lives of us and our families. Unfortunately, this situation is getting far worse every day for our humanist friends, because we are known in the society and there is no doubt when the insurgents get settled they will target each of us and eliminate us, as we are considered the ideological rivals and infidels by them.

.... (text omitted for confidentiality/security reasons)

we hereby request from Humanist Canada to support us in emergency evacuation and relocation to Canada on humanitarian basis in this critical hour.

Best Regards

Afghanistan Humanist Association (AHA)

I had learned not to just ignore such appeals (see pp 10-11), so did my best to offer some fraternal concern.

Dear Afghanistan Humanist Association,

I am writing from Australia. Please understand we Australian Humanists have no influence on the Australian government and less on the Canadian government.

I am impressed with your efforts to promote Humanism in Afghanistan and deeply sorry for your current circumstances. You have been badly let down by the outcomes of the conflict in your country.

Unhappily I cannot see any likelihood that you will be taken to Canada or some other safe country from Afghanistan. You might be more hopeful of rescue and safety if you first escaped to some nearby country, even Islamic ones like Pakistan.

Here we support the efforts of the organisation Humanists International to assist Humanists at Risk around the world. However their capacity to assist is extremely limited. I will assume you already have contact with them. If you haven't please let me know, and I will pass your message on to them.

The worldwide Humanist movement is too small to assist in the problems you face. What little power there is lies with governments and some powerful NGOs. Try to understand that they will not see a Humanist group as more needy than hundreds of thousands of others in Afghanistan who have been involved in trying to progress Afghanistan's culture to modern 21st century standards.

You must use what ingenuity and resources you have left to help one another and those around you to survive and

succeed in the new difficult circumstances. Make whatever compromises are needed for survival – no-one will criticise you for that. Look after your families. The idea of family is the one thing you might hope that all in Afghanistan can respect.

I apologise that I can offer nothing more than discouraging advice but hope you can find ways to help yourselves.

kind regards, Murray Love,

President, Council of Australian Humanist Societies

I was humbled and heartened to get a warm reply.

Dear Murry Love,

Thank you so much for your kind response. We understand the feeling you have for us and appreciate that. We have not sent a letter to Humanists International yet, but that is a good idea if you could assist us in forwarding the message to them. Worth mentioning we have sent the same letter to the UK Humanists and Humanists of Canada. Once again on behalf of our friends I offer you warm thanks and gratitude and hope we will be in contact in the future.

Best Regards

Afghanistan Humanist Association



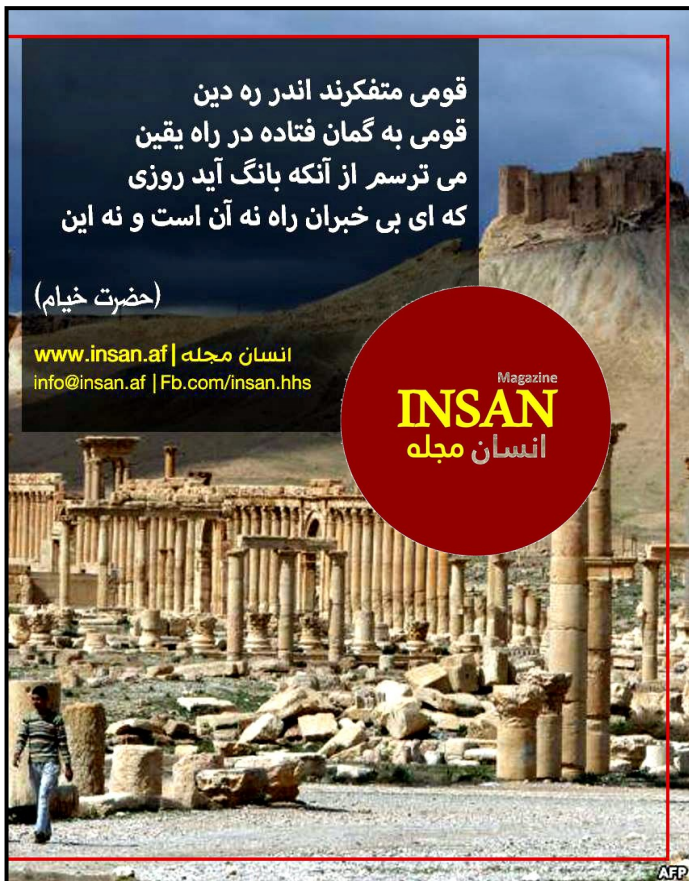
Since the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban the regime has been sanctioned and funds withheld. There is already famine there with high food prices - that can only get worse in the circumstances of global tension and conflict.

There are efforts to feed the populace by NGOs bypassing the Taliban. Sadly these kinds of approach effectively relieve the Taliban from the serious business of running a country, leaving them to focus on religious pettiness against women and girls, and lethal vindictiveness against those who opposed them.

There were hundreds of thousands who aspired to modernity in the country, and I don't think even the Taliban will be able to conduct revenge on that scale. But worse may come from starvation and disease.

Afghanistan holds the place of the unhappiest country in the world, according to a recent survey.

Murray Love



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ACTIVITIES FOR 2022

Check inside the magazine for a review of our activities since 2020. We will continue to hold activities throughout 2022 and we hope most of these will be at Humanist House in Chippendale. But there is still room for some Zoom online activities which allow for participation by those living outside Sydney and those still cautious about the pandemic. Zoom also allows us to have speakers from outside Sydney. We will work to notify members and friends of the events held each 2nd Sunday of the month at 3-5pm. These are not always planned far ahead. One other way to check event details, including Zoom URLs, is via our Meetup pages at : <https://www.meetup.com/en-AU/nswhumanists/events/>

Then we also have our Outreach events on the 4th Sunday of the month. These are not explicitly for Humanist Society members, and are intended to reach out to new people of various generations and diversities. Of course both types of event are public and open to members and non-members. Yet the outreach aspects of the 4th Sunday events can best be served if attending members take up the opportunity to give space and focus to the new people. It helps the presenter if members join in equally with new people, and try to avoid talking excessively, straying from the topic, pursuing personal agendas, defending beloved ideas, or arguing with the presenter. It's really helpful if attending members join in welcoming new people - especially those who might not always agree with us. And thanks to those members who often help out at events.

NEXT YEAR'S RENEWALS ARE DUE JULY 1 2021-22 RENEWALS ARE STILL WELCOME

Posted reminders are expensive. Prompt renewals keep down costs, worries and workloads, but we do understand that circumstances can mean delays, and we're still grateful to receive your renewal at a later time. We won't give up on you. It's a great idea to place a reminder in your calendar or diary for each July 1. Please consider including a donation.

Apart from cash at actual meetings there are several convenient ways to renew:

Direct credit to the Society's Bank Account: (Annotate deposit with name and purpose e.g. 'memb.')

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

*Views expressed are not necessarily those of the
Humanist Society of New South Wales Inc.*

