



AUSTRALIAN
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

ANSA
Australian Network of
Student Anthropologists

ANSA 2013 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The past fourteen months have been busy and productive ones for the ANSA Executive Team. Immediately after being elected at the 2012 ANSA annual general meeting, ANSA Secretary Lara McKenzie, Web Officer Crystal Abidin, and I began working in consultation with the ANSA committee members (i.e., the University Representatives) on identifying tasks and goals for the coming year and exploring how we could best achieve these. I am pleased to report that the team made the most of the opportunity to establish and implement a number of structures, processes, and initiatives that place ANSA in a very good position to represent and support Australia's postgraduate anthropology community throughout the coming year.

I provide below a brief summary of the key tasks the ANSA Executive has worked on and key goals it has achieved since September 2012.

1. Created a centralised working system

- 1.1. One of the first initiatives undertaken by Crystal was to create a shared email account for the ANSA Executive Team. The details of this account will be given to the incoming Executive and will assist in providing continuity between present and future committees. Having a central account has helped provide unity and strength to the ANSA Executive Team, a central point of contact for ANSA, and is beneficial from a risk management perspective: as more than one person can access the account, the chances of new enquiries, requests, and the like being overlooked are slim. All of this helps solidify the management of ANSA, which results in more positive outcomes for members, such as transparency, accountability, and reliability.
- 1.2. Crystal created a Dropbox account. By using this application, potential issues stemming from the varied geographic and time locations of the ANSA Executive members were mitigated, task management has been made transparent, and vital information for future Executives is easily passed on.
- 1.3. Crystal revamped the Facebook and ANSA web pages and in a new initiative, she created a Twitter hashtag.

2. Increased membership

- 2.1. One of the 2012–2013 ANSA Executive's initial achievements was to

establish a membership database. Having such a database allows ANSA to better communicate with, and therefore represent, its members. ANSA currently has around 140 members.

- 2.2. Another initiative was to increase ANSA's reach. This has been done by expanding the number of institutions represented by ANSA. At the time of writing, ANSA is represented in the Australian Capital Territory at the Australian National University, in New South Wales at the University of Sydney and at Macquarie University, in Queensland at Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology, James Cook University, and the University of Queensland. In Victoria, ANSA has representatives at Deakin University, La Trobe University, the University of Melbourne, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and in Western Australia, the organisation is represented at the University of Western Australia.
- 2.3. ANSA's reach has also been increased by altering the network's membership criteria to include those students who may not yet be members of the AAS. The main difference between these two categories of members is that non-AAS members are ineligible for AAS funded grants and competitions, such as the travel grants and the photography competition.

3. **Improved communication, networking, and peer support**

- 3.1. This past year, information has been distributed throughout the ANSA network via monthly (and occasionally additional) emails to members and posts on the ANSA Facebook page. Important notices were also disseminated through AASNet, the Twitter hashtag, and were sent to University Representatives to be forwarded to those at their universities. Additionally, quarterly reports of ANSA's activities were published in the AAS Newsletter. Monthly emails included information about PhD and post-doc opportunities, grants, jobs, and events. The Facebook page provides information on a more basic and less detailed level. The page regularly received over 400 "hits" per week, and sometimes well over 600 hits per week. Facebook appears to be a popular communication medium and though non-members can "like" the page they are not deemed to be members of ANSA unless the online membership form has been completed.
- 3.2. A new initiative implemented shortly after the Executive took office was 'Profile of the Month'. Each month an anthropology student or early career researcher is profiled on the ANSA website. The aim is to facilitate networking, collaboration, and to foster a supportive national community of postgrads and ECRs.
- 3.3. An ANSA Forum was established on the ANSA website to provide another outlet for postgrad and ECR voices, however this would appear to be less popular than the Facebook page.

3.4. Towards the end of our term, an online feedback survey was disseminated. The majority of the feedback gathered from the survey was very positive and the data collected will be a valuable source of information for future executive teams.

4. **Wrote a Constitution**

4.1. Together, Lara and I wrote the ANSA Constitution, which can be accessed on the ANSA website. The document provides guidelines to members and future Executives on ANSA's structure and processes.

5. **Disseminated travel funding**

5.1. Sincere thanks to the AAS for continuing to provide financial assistance for some ANSA members to attend this year's AAS Conference in Canberra to present on their research. The awards are intended to cover the cost of a return airfare to Canberra. This year's applications were strong and the decisions difficult as we were unable to provide grants to all applicants. Congratulations to the winners of the 2013 AAS-ANSA Travel Grants:

- Jessica Bird, Queensland University of Technology – Robyn Wood Travel Grant
- Brett Dwyer, Charles Darwin University
- Crystal Abidin, University of Western Australia
- Dale Simpson, University of Queensland
- Danau Tanu, University of Western Australia
- William Skinner, University of Adelaide

6. **Provided support and new opportunities**

6.1. ANSA is pleased with the number of postgraduate students participating in the 2013 panel at the AAS Conference. This year, there will be five sessions, each one featuring an academic discussant and a student discussant. The aim is to assist presenters with constructive feedback on thesis writing or in turning their papers into journal articles and also to stimulate rigorous thought and discussion, provide a mentoring opportunity for some postgraduate students, and supply meaningful feedback for paper presenters. The sessions and discussants are:

- i. Indigenous People in Post-Traditional Worlds: Dr. Tim Pilbrow and Thomas McNamara.
- ii. Movement and Migration: Prof. Andrew Dawson and Danau Tanu.
- iii. Material Culture: Prof. Alan Rumsey and Maria Myutel.
- iv. Health, Space, and Place: Dr. Patrick Guinness and Ack Mercer.
- v. Change and Modernity: Dr. Jolynna Sinanan and Mythily Meher.

- 6.2. This year, for the very first time, ANSA organised a photography competition for which it secured the financial assistance and support of the AAS. The 2013 competition is themed ‘Anthropology: At home and in the field’ and offers prizes of \$150, \$100, and \$50. Close to one hundred photographs were submitted. An exhibition of finalists will be held at the AAS Conference. Awards will take place at the ANSA AGM on Friday 8 November at 12:30pm. AAS President Helen Lee will award the prizes.

- 6.3. Earlier this year, ANSA formed a partnership with the APERTURE Festival 2013: The Asia Pacific International Ethnographic Documentary Festival. The festival will be held at the University of Melbourne 21–23 November 2013. As part of the festival, a number of photographs taken by ANSA members that fit the theme of “Asia Pacific” will be displayed as part of the ANSA Photography Exhibition.

In conclusion, this past year has been a successful one for ANSA. Working structures and processes have been created, tested, and established. Improved communication and new initiatives have led to increased membership. None of these things could have been achieved without solid effort, dedication, and support. In that regard, I would like to express my thanks to AAS Administrator Shane Silva and the Executive of the Australian Anthropological Society, particularly Treasurer Pam McGrath, Secretary Cameo Dalley, and President Helen Lee, for their kind assistance and ongoing support for ANSA. I would also like to thank all of ANSA’s university representatives and members for their contributions to the Australian postgraduate anthropology community. Another important group of people I would like to thank are those who are serving as discussants and mentors during this year’s panel sessions: Dr. Tim Pilbrow, Prof. Andrew Dawson, Prof. Alan Rumsey, Dr. Patrick Guinness, and Dr. Jolynna Sinanan. Last, but not least, my deep gratitude goes to my colleagues Lara McKenzie and Crystal Abidin for their positive contributions, dedication, and hard work in strengthening ANSA and providing a sound platform for the future.

Michelle O’Toole
ANSA Chairperson
1 November 2013