CATHS RESEARCH WORKING GROUP

Annual Report 2024 - 25

BACKGROUND

Regular attendees are Peter Benn, Ross Campbell, Geoff Gunst, Cameron Hall, Royce Harris, David Kilderry, Ross King, Keith Stevens, and Ian Smith. Alan Winn attends when possible. Corresponding members are Tony Tibballs, Richard Twentyman, Mike Trickett, Les Tod, Eric White, and Phil O'Kane.

This report covers the period September 2024 – 31 July 2025. Four in-person meetings were supplemented by e-mail correspondence.

PURPOSE

- (1) Develop a library of Oral Histories
- (2) Workshop stories for CinemaRecord
- (3) Assist CATHS' members or the public with their queries and
- (4) Share our passion by talking about theatres and theatre history to community groups.

OUTCOMES

Objective 1: Oral Histories

The only completed transcription and story delivered to CinemaRecord in 2024/25 has been an interview with John Parsons which was completed by Peter Wolfenden in 2012! Entitled *Lyall's Plasterers Hoytsand CinemaScope*, thefinal versionwasworked on by the Research Group. (See Objective 2)

Objective 2:

Workshop Stories

1.Lyall's Plasterers Hoyts and CinemaScope was one of two stories which needed the knowledge of the Research Group. After nearly 60 years John Parson' memory was not good enough to recall exactly which theatres had needed a wider stage. The task of the Research Group was to complete the story with a table of dates for CinemaScope installations in each theatre, and whether this involved major changes. The story has been set and awaits publication.

2. Film Distribution in Australia

This is a work in progress, and will include 35mm and 16mm distributors (Large and small), children's films, film distribution from embassies, and some of the characters (famous and infamous) of the industry. Exactly how to present this information will take a lot of working out.

Objective 3:

Assist with Member's Queries.

There were no requests from members. Author Vicki Shuttleworthasked Ross King and Ian Smith to review two chapters of her pending biography of Louise Lovely. The book was subsequently rejected by her preferred publisher, so Vicki is revising it.

Objective 4:

Talks and Presentations

David Kilderry's topic at PMI on Tuesday 12 August was *Changes in Film Exhibition from 1980 to the Present*. Showing many images from his collection, David revived fond memories of dozens of suburban cinemas which closed from the 1950s to the present. The event was booked out.

OTHER

A selection from many items discussed:

• Celebrating the Capitol Theatre Centenary

The Group had intended to make an on-stage presentation of a fence picket which had been unearthed during excavations for the theatre in 1923. After in storage for many years with a Rotary Club, the object was presented to CATHS, but then mysteriously 'disappeared.' David Kilderry learned the identity of the holder of the item, but his negotiations to return it were unsuccessful. However, President Royce made up a display of early Capitol programs for the foyer from his personal collection, which created interest.

Cinema Visits

Attendances have been small, about 12 people each time, but are considered a worthwhile addition to the CATHS year, and obviously enjoyed by the attendees. Visits 1 and 2 were arranged by Ross King, while 3 was the initiative of Lisa Croft.

The town halls were less than mainstream for cinema. Hoyts ran the Coburg Town Hall as an 'overflow cinema' for 13 years, but its new attraction is the installation of a Christie organ. Originally in the *Cinema North*, it was relocated to the town hall by TOSA in 2000. A TOSA organist played it for the CATHS visitors. The 1937 Brunswick Town Hall has never been a cinema, but earlier versions of the hall did show silent films. Lisa showed members parts of this handsome hall usually out of bounds, and topped off the visit by providing a morning tea!

- 1. FOMO East Brunswick Sunday 29 September 2024
- 2. Palace Pentridge-Saturday 31 May 2025
- 3. Coburg and Brunswick Town Halls-Sunday 13 July
- Confessions of a Certified Cinephile Ross Campbell

Ross spoke at a Sun meeting about his reasons for wanting to publish a book about his life with film, which included directing, projecting, and organising appropriate music for the Melbourne International Film Festival. The contents of the book stimulated discussion at Research Group meetings.

A Possible New Cinema Venture: The Eclipse Collingwood.

There was expectation that this site in a former factory would now be open, but the current website is promoting a crowd-funding exercise to get the project over the line. It's the brain child of Mark Walker, one half of the duo who started the *Pivotonian* Geelong.

Ian Smith

Convenor 18/08/2025