



THE RATIONALIST SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

| Annual Report 2017

2017

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been a productive year for the RSA, with campaigns across a range of areas, including voluntary assisted dying, genital autonomy, and drug law reform. In an exciting development, this year has also seen a first for the RSA in its one hundred and ten year history: the employment of its first Executive Officer, Tosca Lloyd. Tosca joined the RSA in June 2017, fresh from five years in London, where she was among the first cohort of students at AC Grayling's New College of the Humanities. Having graduated from the College with a first class honours degree in philosophy, Tosca went on to complete a Master of Human Rights at University College London before returning to Australia. Tosca has already made a major difference to the RSA's campaigns and behind-the-scenes administration and we look forward to her raising the RSA's public profile to become the go-to voice for secularism in Australia.



Dr Meredith Doig
President



Tosca Lloyd
Executive Officer

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CAMPAIGNS

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

In the final months of 2017, the Victorian Parliament enacted [legislation](#) to allow voluntary assisted dying, making Victoria the first Australian state to do so (the Northern Territory legalised assisted dying in 1995, which was repealed by the Commonwealth Government in 1997). Voluntary assisted dying gives individuals control over their end of life, giving them the choice to avoid untreatable pain, and die in a way that preserves their dignity and autonomy. This major reform is the result of decades of campaigning by many individuals, organisations and politicians. The RSA proudly joins their ranks as a long-time advocate for choice and compassion, and a key player in the final months prior to the parliamentary conscience vote.

The introduction of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017 (the Bill) was preceded by a parliamentary Inquiry into End of Life Choices, to which the RSA made a [submission](#). The Inquiry recommended Victoria legalise voluntary assisted dying. A Ministerial Advisory Panel was then tasked with researching how such reform would work in practice; it looked to other jurisdictions abroad, engaged with key stakeholders in the medical community, and heard from individuals who shared stories of suffering and called for greater autonomy. This resulted in a [final report](#), the recommendations of which became the basis for the Bill finally presented to the Victorian Parliament in 2017.

“[My grandparents] were no strangers to threats to [...] freedom, but for them the final threat came with the prospect of a suffering death, forced on them by law. [...] For them, to die in a way that would allow them to avoid unnecessary suffering, and to save their loved ones from having to witness that suffering, was completely in line with their fight for autonomy throughout their lives.”

- Tosca Lloyd
[The Age](#)

In the lead up to the Upper House vote on the Bill, the RSA played a crucial role in the campaign to get the Bill over the line. We joined forces with Dying With Dignity Victoria, Andrew Denton’s advocacy organisation Go Gentle, as well as key ministers and political staffers; we mobilised our members to tell their stories and contact their local representatives; we engaged with the media, and we informed and lobbied undecided politicians.

And together we won.

The voluntary assisted dying scheme will come into effect in June 2019; time enough for the government to set up the necessary structures and protocols. The RSA will be closely following the upcoming Victorian election to ensure this historic and compassionate law will be upheld, and will be looking to other states and territories to realise an Australia where everyone can die with dignity.

For more information, visit the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services [website](#).

CAMPAIGNS

GENITAL AUTONOMY

When the RSA first started campaigning on genital autonomy, it is fair to say that many were unsure as to how it is a rationalist issue. However, the non-consensual, medically unnecessary genital cutting of minors is a rationalist issue, because when done for religious reasons it violates the religious freedom of the child, and represents nothing less than child abuse performed in the name of God.

While most instances of genital cutting in Australia are not done for religious reasons, the vast majority are done for conformist reasons that appeal to arguments from tradition or popularity, which rationalists know to be fallacies. Many also appeal to male circumcision's medical benefits, which depending on the specific claim in question are negligible if not non-existent, and which are supported by poor science at best and pseudoscience at worst. At its heart this is also a human rights issue, and one whose time many believe has finally come.

RSA Vice President Jonathan Meddings, and Travis Wisdom, a PhD Candidate at the University of Adelaide Law School, authored a [white paper](#) on genital autonomy for the RSA, which was printed and distributed widely to politicians and interest groups. The paper highlighted the harms caused by non-consensual, medically unnecessary genital cutting, and explained how it violates several human rights, including the right to security of person, the right to freedom from all forms of violence, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to freedom from torture or ill treatment, and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Jonathan and Travis presented their paper and discussed the issue genital autonomy and human rights at the 2017 Australian Humanist Convention.

“Protection from genital cutting should not only be granted to girls, but to all children”

- Travis Wisdom & Cornelia Koch
[The Conversation](#)



Travis Wisdom (left), Meredith Doig (middle), Jonathan Meddings (right) at the 2017 Australian Humanist Convention.

“While a number of claims are made about medical benefits of male circumcision, all of them are debateable. Not up for debate, however, is that non-consensual, medically unnecessary surgery violates medical ethics.”

- Jonathan Meddings
[The Australian Rationalist](#)

CAMPAIGNS

DRUG LAW REFORM

Since November 2015, the Victorian Parliament's Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee have been conducting an Inquiry into Drug Law Reform. The RSA made a significant [submission](#) to this inquiry, which is due to report in March 2018. Our submission focused on the failed policy of drug prohibition. The RSA has also signed joint statements [opposing prohibitionist legislation](#) and [supporting the trial](#) of a medically supervised injecting centre to help curb the alarming increase in drug-related deaths in Melbourne.



RATIONALIST CURRICULUM

Along with other organisations, the RSA successfully lobbied the Victorian Government to introduce a new F-10 curriculum called "Learning about Worldviews", which covers the five major world religions and secular humanism/rationalism. The RSA has commissioned Monash University curriculum expert Dr David Zyngier to develop rationalist lesson content for the curriculum.



Dr David Zyngier
Monash University

OUTREACH

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Monthly public meetings continue to be held in Melbourne. During 2017 a range of rationalist issues were discussed, spanning topics including human rights, abortion, voluntary assisted dying, drug law reform and democracy. Meetings have also recently begun in Perth. For information about upcoming meetings, join the [Melbourne](#) and [Perth](#) groups on Meetup. RSA members interested in organising meetups in other locations should contact: president@rationalist.com.au



THE AUSTRALIAN RATIONALIST

The RSA continues to publish The Australian Rationalist on a quarterly basis under the editorship of David James. This year featured cover stories on the modern relevance of the ancient philosophy of Stoicism; controversial advocate for Western liberal values, Ayaan Hirsi Ali; an analysis of the modern challenge to the authority of experts; and the emerging confrontation between America and China.

IN THE MEDIA

Around 20 articles written by RSA board members have been published in the mainstream media, on topics ranging from secular education and scripture to scientology.

STAYING CONNECTED

Our daily curated bulletin [RSA Daily](#) continues to attract subscribers, up 10% (from 423 to 466) with the number of views up more than 20% (from 35,000 views to 43,000).

The RSA maintains a [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) presence, with updates on a daily basis.

GOVERNANCE

OUR BOARD

Meredith Doig, President
Jonathan Meddings, Vice President
Rohan Kapitany, Treasurer
Len Buller
Tristram Chellew
Chris Fotinopoulos (resigned January 2017)
Hugh Harris
Robbie van Dijk (appointed February 2017)

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Meredith Doig
David James
Paul Monk
Hugh Harris

FINANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meredith Doig
Len Butler
Brett Davis
Kevin Quigley
Leo Santalucia

FINANCIALS

The Society's funds continue to be governed by a Financial Advisory Committee, comprising the President, the Treasurer and the RSA's pro bono Accountant, plus two professionally qualified independent experts, reporting to the main Committee. Following a prudent 'passive' investment policy, our funds have grown steadily over the past year.



FINANCIALS

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report

	2017	2016
Income		
Income		
Investment Income		
Investment Income	75,438	88,263
Total Investment Income	75,438	88,263
Member Revenue		
Member Donations	4,705	700
Membership Fees	18,124	11,361
Total Member Revenue	22,829	12,061
Revenue from operating activities		
Event Revenue	-	4,205
Journal Subscriptions & Sales	5,001	4,048
Total Revenue from operating activities	5,001	8,253
Total Income	103,268	108,577
Total Income	103,268	108,577
Gross Surplus	103,268	108,577
Expenditure		
Campaign Expenses		
Campaign expenses	95	10,000
Commissioned Reports	1,100	1,600
Minor Collaborations	500	750
Reason Project	7,625	5,533
Think Inc	-	5,500
Total Campaign Expenses	9,320	23,383
Employment Costs		
Superannuation	165	-
Wages and Salaries	3,439	-
Total Employment Costs	3,604	-

	2017	2016
General Expenses		
Finance Charges	347	313
President's honorarium	11,875	7,500
Statutory Reports	-	54
Total General Expenses	12,222	7,868
Journal Production Costs		
Authors and Contributions	1,687	1,340
Editors Fees	17,925	15,125
Journal Design Fees	5,300	4,900
Journal Posting and Mailing	5,190	4,410
Printing Journal	18,499	15,185
Total Journal Production Costs	48,600	40,961
Marketing		
Marketing	12,354	2,903
Total Marketing	12,354	2,903
Office Expenses		
Admin Officer's Fee	1,250	1,998
Legal expenses	-	608
Meeting Expenses	512	476
Office Expenses	2,102	1,683
Printing & Stationery	1,845	-
Telephone & Internet	296	-
Total Office Expenses	6,005	4,765
Speaking Tours		
Boghossian Tour Expenses	-	2,571
Total Speaking Tours	-	2,571
Website Expenditure		
Domain Registrations	-	187
Web Hosting & Maintenance	220	1,064
Web Services	485	390
Total Website Expenditure	704	1,640
Total Expenditure	92,810	84,090
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	10,458	24,486

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 30 June 2017

	NOTES	30 JUN 2017	30 JUN 2016
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash & Cash Equivalents			
Cash at Bank		15,401	2,337
Distributions Receivable		44,048	52,698
DRP Residual		-	5
Franking Credits Receivable		4,563	7,429
PayPal		2,172	883
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents		66,183	63,352
Total Current Assets		66,183	63,352
Non-Current Assets			
Direct Share Investments		77,688	66,057
Managed Funds		727,266	775,510
Total Non-Current Assets		804,954	841,566
Total Assets		871,137	904,918
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Employee Entitlements		1,904	-
Total Current Liabilities		1,904	-
Total Liabilities		1,904	-
Net Assets		869,233	904,918
Member's Funds			
Capital Reserve			
Asset Revaluation Reserve		14,176	60,319
Current Year Earnings		10,458	24,486
Equity		684,505	660,019
JR Howard bequest		160,094	160,094
Total Capital Reserve		869,233	904,918
Total Member's Funds		869,233	904,918
		2017	2016
Equity			
Opening Balance		904,918	820,113
Increases			
Surplus for the Period		10,458	24,486
Other Increases		(46,143)	60,319
Total Increases		(35,685)	84,805
Total Equity		869,233	904,918

JOIN US AND SUPPORT REASON

You can support the work the RSA does to promote reason and evidence-based policy in Australia by [donating](#) and becoming a member. You can become a member online by following [this link](#), or by completing and posting the form below.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name

Address

State

Postcode

Mobile

Phone

Email

Signature

Date

Please tick

\$60 Single

\$45 Single concession

\$80 Couples

\$65 Couples concession

_____ Additional donation?

Student or healthcare number

Send this form and your cheque to The Secretary, PO Box 1312, Hawksburn 3142, Victoria, Australia.

Or send in the form and transfer funds electronically to RSA Admin, BSB 313-140 account 1200 2918, being sure to cite your name as reference so we know where the funds are coming from

