**Chair’s Report 2019**

The year was one of consolidation for ASA, emerging in good health from a painful few years of disruption and change, including the sudden disappearance of financial support from government.

The organisation is now leaner but no less ferocious in its advocacy for authors.

We ended the financial year to the end of June with a budget surplus, working capital intact and a keen focus on services for members, including helping authors get together with publishers.

The current year budget is tracking to forecasts and membership numbers are rising after many years of stagnation. The feedback from members is excellent but we continue to look at ways to improve.

Since the last AGM we have improved governance in a number of areas, building systems and checks to ensure the ASA’s smooth running for years to come.

You will notice that this year the Barbara Jefferis Fund has been separately audited, as it should, from the ASA. You will recall that the fund was established in a bequest from ABC journalist and war correspondent John Hinde, in memory of his wife Barbara Jefferis, a founding member and executive director of the ASA, for an award: “The best novel written by an Australian author that depicts women and girls in a positive way.”

The money which funds the award is now administered by an Investment Committee, whose members include a family member, Michale Little, plus two independents and three ASA Board of Directors, on the advice of a professional investment firm, the recently appointed MinchinMoore.

This same committee, minus the Barbara Jefferis family member, also administers the ASA’s investments. I must thank the independent chair, Mark Hollands, an author and a former CEO of Australia’s newspaper industry association, for the mountain of work needed to ensure that ASA’s investments and the Barbara Jefferis Trust are properly managed. The ASA will be thanking him for many years to come. This work ensures fine tracking of investments and that any decisions on that money are done on the advice of professional advisers. Thank you also to the other independent member of the committee, Louise Pocock, an author and who by day works as a governance expert. The other three members are all Board Directors, including the Chair (myself), Treasurer Helen O’Neill and Prasad Gollakota, a Chartered Financial Analyst and an investment banker.

The Board of the ASA has recently created a Nominations Committee, made up of three Board Directors (Kirtsy Murray, Liz Anelli, Leonie Norrington), tasked with recommending candidates for ASA representatives to other organisations, such as the Copyright Agency where the ASA appoints two Board Directors. The committee also will be looking at ways to measure the effectiveness of the ASA Board of Directors and to recommend candidates for appointment to the Board. Constitutional changes for approval at this meeting of members allow the Board to appoint up to four Directors. The majority will still be elected by members but the Board will be able to seek specific skills and diversity through these appointments.

I must note the departure from the Board of two Directors who selflessly volunteered their time over many years to further the interests of authors. Sarah Mills, a former Treasurer, was a force of change to establish the Investment Committee. David Day contributed as both Chair and Treasurer. Admirably, he served the maximum allowed three terms as a director. Thank you both.

Also thank you to Treasurer Helen O’Neill, Deputy Chair Anne Maria Nicholson and Liz Anelli who gave extra time to attend meetings of the Executive Committee.

And finally, we acknowledge the staff of the ASA, led by CEO Juliet Rogers, for their commitment, professionalism and hard work. A big thank you. A special call out to Juliet who leaves us at the end of the year after four years, leaving the ASA in far better shape than when she arrived. And a big welcome to Olivia Lanchaster, our legal officer and company secretary, who is our new CEO. We look forward to her contribution.

**Chris Pash, November 14, 2019**