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COVER: Wylie's Baths, Coogee. Photo: Christopher Shain

## from the president



I am very privileged and deeply honoured to be elected the new president of the National Trust. Although new to the job I am certainly not new to the Trust, having been involved with this wonderful organisation for most of my life here in Australia, since arriving from the Philippines 33 years ago. The National Trust was the first organisation I joined because I wanted to learn as much as I could about this country which I have chosen to adopt as my own.

My active involvement with the National Trust was as a volunteer, which culminated in my chairing the Historic Buildings Committee – one of my most rewarding tasks. The Historic Buildings Committee is but one of the many technical committees of the Trust which act as the hub of the Trust's advocacy; they serve without fee. I commend the Trust technical committees and record my deep appreciation and gratitude for their continuing support.

Here and now, I am still a volunteer, albeit elevated to the highest position in the National Trust. The presidency is a job I am more than happy to take and one that I took with my eyes wide open. Such is the nature of volunteering it seems. It is never a burden although very much hard work and a constant challenge. But we do it because of a desire to work for a higher good. That higher good for me is to ensure that the National Trust is enabled to perform its role to the best of its ability. Volunteers are individuals who possess a unique kind of selflessness. The National Trust is very lucky to have nearly 3,000 volunteers – they are the lifeblood that nourishes this organisation. I can never thank you enough and reinforce the fact that the National Trust cannot exist without its volunteers.

This coming year poses an enormous challenge for the Board. We need to take further steps to reduce overall costs to cover budgeted operating expenses. The Board must seek to determine whether it has got the mix right between administering the organisation and implementing the services and projects members expect. We need to analyse how efficiently the organisation is functioning at present and whether it is necessary to introduce more collaborative tools to make it easier for staff, committees, volunteers, members and other service providers to work together in a more judicious and cost effective manner without sacrificing morale and enthusiasm. A happy organisation makes a successful organisation.

My goal is to continue to fulfill our core mission of care and advocacy for natural, built and cultural heritage, with an eye always to fiscal responsibility and balancing the budget, and hopefully in the not too distant future to achieve a surplus. An annual surplus would build reserves to offset unexpected cash flow problems, and would finance crucial projects and initiatives when opportunities present themselves. I will be actively involved in innovative sponsorship proposals, appeals, fundraising events and a reinvigorated bequest program, and will personally engage with our benefactors more closely.

I inherit a National Trust ably led by Tina Jackson, who over the last year has met the considerable challenge of successfully reining in a structural deficit, with her team of committed and expert staff. The belt tightening has resulted in inevitable additional burdens on staff which I and the Board will try very hard to alleviate and tackle as a priority. I look forward to sharing the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of Tina and her staff, the Board and the executive, during the year ahead. I would also like to welcome Alan Terrell as the new regional director to the Board. All the incumbents who renominated were elected.

Last but not least, I would like to thank John Niland for his presidency of the National Trust. We achieved significant goals under his leadership, have benefited from his professional wisdom and have been helped greatly by his experience in corporate governance. We wish him well.

'Kinship, community, shared goals and dreams unite all Australians', said Sir Henry Parkes. No truer statement than this encapsulates what the National Trust is all about. This is my New Year wish to each and every one of you and that you continue to help the National Trust to ensure that our past has a future.

*Dr Zeny Edwards*  
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