

## ANZALS: THE SCHOLARLY LEISURE ASSOCIATION IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

John Tower<sup>1</sup>

Victoria University, College of Sport and Exercise Science and Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living

**RESUMO:** A The Australia and New Zealand Association of Leisure Studies (ANZALS) foi fundada em 1991 com o objetivo geral de desenvolver a pesquisa em lazer e oportunidades de fomento. Por mais de 25 anos a ANZALS organizou de forma regular e bienalmente sua própria conferência, bem como produziu seu periódico científico oportunizando assim o compartilhamento de informações entre seus associados e associações similares. O presente artigo fornece informação a respeito da história e dos objetivos da ANZALS. Uma característica chave do sucesso da ANZALS é o compromisso e contribuição de seu corpo diretivo bem como de seus membros. Os desafios que a ANZALS deve enfrentar no futuro incluem uma administração mais efetiva, um melhor engajamento nos debates de políticas públicas de lazer e o estabelecimento de grupos de interesses especiais. Apesar destes desafios a ANZALS vem, de forma bem sucedida, desenvolvendo seus objetivos no intuito do desenvolvimento dos estudos do lazer na Austrália e Nova Zelândia.

**Palavras-chave:** Estudos do lazer. Associação profissional de lazer. Pesquisa em lazer. Oportunidades de fomento.

**ABSTRACT:** The Australia and New Zealand Association of Leisure Studies (ANZALS) was established in 1991 with the overall aim to develop leisure research and scholarship. Over the last 25 years ANZALS has regularly delivered a biennial conference, produced a refereed journal and shared information with its members and kindred associations. This article provides information about ANZALS history and explains how it is addressing its objectives. A key feature of ANZALS's success is the commitment and contributions of its voluntary Board and general membership. Challenges that ANZALS needs to address in the future include more effective administration, better engagement in public policy debates and establishment of special interest groups. Despite these challenges ANZALS is successfully addressing its aim and is in a good position to continue to develop leisure studies in Australia and New Zealand.

**Keywords:** Leisure studies. Professional leisure association. Leisure research. Scholarship.

### History

The establishment of ANZALS is due to the commitment of a team of leisure academics at University of Technology Sydney (UTS) including Paul Jonson, Tony Veal, Bruce Hayllar and Rob Lynch. In 1990 the UTS team wrote to Australian and New Zealand universities involved with leisure studies seeking the establishment of an association. A preliminary meeting was held at Phillip Institute of Technology (to become

---

<sup>1</sup> 2014 / 2015 President of ANZALS.

part of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) in early 1991 with 12 academics from six universities. The association was established at the Sydney World Leisure Congress in July 1991 by adopting its constitution (drafted by Paul Jonson) and holding its first Annual General Meeting (LYNCH & VEAL, 2015).

Initially, the association's main activities were the production of a refereed journal and to hold a biennial conference. The first journal, *ANZALS Research Series*, edited by Tony Veal and Betty Weiller was first published in 1993. These early publications were the conference proceedings in the conference years and a refereed publication was produced in the non-conference years. In 1998 the publication was replaced by the refereed journal, *Annals of Leisure Research*, with co-editors of Rob Lynch, Clare Simpson and Bob Gidlow. It was at this time that an International Advisory Board was established. Volumes one to five were single-issue volumes and from volume six in 2003 *Annals* was published quarterly (LYNCH & VEAL, 2015).

The first ANZALS conference was held at Griffith University in 1993 (VEAL & LYNCH, 2015). Biennial conferences have been held regularly since then. In recent years the conference has been held in early December of the odd years. There have been four conferences held in New Zealand and seven conferences in Australia. Most of the key universities with a focus on leisure studies have hosted the conference at least once. The twelfth ANZALS Conference, organised by staff at the University of South Australia, was held in Adelaide, South Australia in December 2015. Each conference has had a particular theme ranging from The State of Leisure in the inaugural 1993 Conference to Leisure as a Human Right at the 2015 Conference (ANZALS, 2015).

### The people

ANZALS is a unique professional association in Australia because it is totally dependent on volunteers to accomplish all its aims except the editorial responsibilities of producing *Annals of Leisure Research*. Kindred associations in Australia such the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ) and the Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) have part-time administrative staff. Although ANZALS is in a healthy financial position it has decided that it does not have the resources to have a paid person to help manage the administrative and other activities of its operations.

The arrangement with Taylor and Francis, the publisher of *Annals of Leisure Research*, means that we are able to make a financial contribution to the editorial team to help them meet the costs of producing the journal. The editorial team for the journal includes the editor, a deputy editor, three associate editors and an International Advisory Board of 24 people.

The ANZALS Board, elected by its members, carries out all the activities to meet its aims. Since its inception in 1991 there have been seven ANZALS Presidents (called

ANZALS Chair until 2002). More importantly, there have been 36 individuals who have served on the Board (Lynch & Veal, 2015). Other ANZALS members have participated in organising ANZALS activities by contributing information for news items, serving on awards committees, and being part of the ANZALS conference organising committees.

ANZALS is not a large organisation. The current membership, including all types of membership is 103 members. This number probably reflects the actual number of academics and scholars working in leisure studies across Australia and New Zealand. However, it is likely that the current membership does not include as many leisure research students that we would like to have. It is likely that efforts will be made in 2016 and beyond to nurture a relationship with current leisure research students to provide them with relevant services and networks so they will gain value from their membership with ANZALS. It is the commitment of the ANZALS Board and its membership that enables ANZALS to achieve its objectives.

### **ANZALS objectives and activities**

In order to provide an overview of the ANZALS activities, the following summary will focus on the objectives as listed in the ANZALS Constitution (ANZALS, 2010). ANZALS's capacity to meet these objectives has varied over the years so this summary will mostly provide its achievements in recent times.

#### ***Foster scholarly debate, exchange of ideas and dissemination of Leisure knowledge***

This very broad objective captures most of what ANZALS works to achieve. Debate, exchange of ideas and dissemination of leisure knowledge feature in articles in the *ANZALS Magazine*, via the website, social media, within sessions of the biennial conference and through the articles in the *Annals of Leisure Research*. A recent survey of ANZALS members identified this objective as being the highest priority.

#### ***Promote the publication of scholarly work***

The most obvious achievement of this objective is the production of the *Annals of Leisure Research*. The journal team are working to raise the standard of the journal by increasing the frequency of article citations. The value of the journal is its recent history of having special editions being adopted by the publisher to be released as edited books. The most recent edition to achieve this is *Annal's* special edition about children, families and leisure that was edited by Dr Heike Schanzel and Professor Neil Carr.

ANZALS through its social media, website, the conferences and news items also provides regular updates of relevant scholarly work. Leisurenent, an international email list

group, also provides a forum for leisure scholars to share information, request contributions and raise issues about leisure scholarship.

### ***Foster liaison, communication and cooperation between members and other interested parties***

The range of media mentioned previously play an integral role in connecting ANZALS members and other interested parties. Several years ago there was an interesting debate regarding the distribution of the *ANZALS Newsletter* that evolved to become the *ANZALS Magazine*. The publication was originally designed to be a service that was only provided to ANZALS members but it was distributed to colleagues in kindred groups such as the World Leisure Organisation (WLO), UK's Leisure Studies Association (LSA) and Leisure and Recreation of South Africa (LARASA). The response from these kindred groups was so positive that the ANZALS Board decided to distribute the *ANZALS Magazine* around the world and to encourage its international contacts to share the information that was deemed to be relevant to an international audience.

ANZALS also addresses this objective by having formal memorandums of understanding with kindred group such as WLO, LSA, CAUTHE, Parks and Leisure Australia (PLA) and New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA). These relationships foster the sharing of information and resources as well as lead to joint symposia and cooperation in special interest groups (SIGs).

A good example of the type of cooperation is the production of *Research Connections*, a joint publication from ANZALS, PLA and NZRA. This quarterly publication provides a summary of mostly scholarly research in Australia and New Zealand that will be of interest to parks, recreation and leisure professionals (WOOD, 2015). The most recent edition of *Research Connections* shares some research that identified that 65% of respondents of a recent industry survey "found research information to be very / extremely important in their current work environment." (WOOD, 2015, p. 1). The cooperation among ANZALS, PLA and NZRA provides a great opportunity for leisure academics and the breadth of leisure service deliverers to share information and collaborate. A key to this shared information is the local relevance and the fact that the information is in the public domain. It is very common for leisure services to employ consultants to provide information and to solve problems. Unfortunately, many consultants do not share their expertise without sending an invoice and they rarely publish any public research results for sharing among the industry. ANZALS through its work with kindred organisations strives to share information and cross promote different activities.

### ***Facilitate liaison with Leisure studies and other related associations***

The discussion about the previous objective relates to this objective. ANZALS also has a mechanism through its membership structure and the *ANZALS Magazine* for leisure studies and related associations to collaborate. The Patron Membership provides the leisure departments, faculties and colleges to be associated with ANZALS. There are currently eleven ANZALS Patrons. The cost of becoming a patron is relatively small at \$A350. Patrons are able to share information via the ANZALS network eNews and they are guaranteed space in each *ANZALS Magazine* to share information about their current teaching and learning activities, and their current research. ANZALS Patrons also receive specific information that is shared with ANZALS from its network of kindred associations.

### ***Comment and advocate more effective Leisure policies and programs to government, community and commercial agencies***

Back in the 1990s, Lynch and Brown (1995) conducted a study of the leisure industry's research needs. This research was funded by a grant from the Commonwealth government, it was one of the few grants that ANZALS has received. The research findings were used to support a range of future scholarly research applications because Lynch and Brown (1995) established a need for a range of research that had industry application.

More recently there has been limited public comment and advocacy beyond the standard ANZALS publications. Since 2010 when I joined the ANZALS Board the only instances that ANZALS has generated public comment and media coverage has been related to particular research or issues that were presented at the ANZALS conferences. There is potential for ANZALS to become more involved in public debate to influence leisure policies. Unfortunately, the capacity for ANZALS to establish a position on a particular issue to be able to make public comment in a timely manner is limited. Nonetheless, individuals, who are ANZALS members, do raise issues that comment and advocate for particular leisure policies and programs.

### ***Promote higher standards in curriculum development and Leisure studies education; and promote the development of post-graduate courses in leisure studies***

The main mechanism that ANZALS uses to promote leisure studies curriculum development and education is via the regular exchange of information in the *ANZALS Magazine*. Each edition of the *Magazine* has ANZALS patrons sharing information about their various activities. This provides information about their latest course developments and leisure education initiatives.

Over the years the state of leisure studies has been an issue that has been explored at ANZALS conferences. At the 2010 ANZALS Conference Stebbins highlighted

the rough road that leisure studies was following (STEBBINS, 2011). And, in 2013 Rowe (2015) reflected on the complexity of leisure as we strive to prove ourselves by attracting students and research funds and “exhibit high impact through academic citation, policy influence and public visibility” (p. 2). Both speakers provided guidance regarding how we should overcome the rough road and address the complexities, but ANZALS as an organization has done little to pursue the objective beyond the sharing of information from ANZALS patrons.

A recent ANZALS Board planning session’s review of ANZALS Purposes acknowledged that we don’t really know the state of leisure studies in Australia and New Zealand, nor is there a clear strategy for how ANZALS should go about promoting the development of leisure studies in the tertiary sector. This issue is scheduled to be addressed at the 2015 ANZALS Conference in a workshop about the state of leisure studies. Statements have been gathered from ANZALS Patrons about the role of leisure in their current curriculum and research. The workshop will explore the issues to assess the state of leisure studies. The key outcome of the workshop will be the identification of strategies that ANZALS should take to address this objective.

### ***Raise funds, receive contributions, enter into contracts and to do things to further the objects of the association***

The last three objectives relate to the efficient and effective administration of ANZALS. ANZALS raises most of its funds from membership fees, the ANZALS conferences, publication of the journal and interest on bank deposits. There is a two-year cycle for ANZALS’s finances because of the timing of the biennial conference. For example, in the 2014 financial year the conference accounted for 64% of the total income of \$A54,698 while in the 2015 financial year there was no conference income and the total income was \$A16,404 (WILSON USNIK & ASSOCIATES, 2015). The expenditure during this two-year cycle reflects the impact of the conference on the financial and administrative operations of ANZALS. This two-year cycle requires the ANZALS Board to make sure the financial surplus from the conference years provides enough funds for the association to function in the non-conference years. At the end of the 2015 financial year ANZALS had enough funds to be able to function for a few years with minimum income.

The day to day administration is a responsibility of the ANZALS Board. The ANZALS Constitution (2010) documents four dedicated positions of President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer with four general officer positions. The four general officer positions are currently responsible for i) Australian membership, ii) New Zealand membership, iii) online engagement, and iv) news.

The current ANZALS Board members are based in both New Zealand and Australia with their locations stretching over 5000km. It is impossible for the Board to have regular face to face meetings. Over recent years the ANZALS Board meets three times per year

via a phone / electronic meeting and have one face-to-face meeting per year. The ANZALS Constitution's (2010) objectives provide the focus for the association's operations and provide the framework for a strategic plan. The strategic plan is reviewed annually and the individual board members work towards their particular tasks and then report their progress on a quarterly basis.

### Challenges

Tower (2014) listed a number of challenges that ANZALS needs to address. These challenges have not been resolved and still need attention in the future. They include a need for more effective organisational administration, to become involved in public policy debates, and to develop special interest groups (SIGs) to support ANZALS members to take initiative and further develop leisure scholarship.

### Effective administration

Although ANZALS is effectively addressing its objectives, there are administrative tasks that could be refined and undertaken more effectively. It does not take senior academics to organise and administer events like the conference and the annual general meeting or to desktop publish the *ANZALS Magazine*. It does take senior academic leadership to guide these activities but more effective processes need to be established to support the administration of ANZALS activities. More effective administration will free up the ANZALS Board members to focus on more strategic initiatives and potentially be involved in public policy debates.

### Public policy contributions

There have been a range of public policy issues over recent years in which ANZALS has not contributed to public debate. There are issues related to quality of life, physical activity, work – life harmony, etc. that are regularly raised by politicians that get reported in the media. ANZALS has remained silent and has not publicly presented scholarly commentary on these contemporary issues yet, our insights and knowledge do provide us with the expertise to engage in the public debate. It is likely that ANZALS social media, especially twitter, provide the best opportunity to engage with the wider community to advocate for a better appreciation of the role of leisure in communities' quality of life.

The scene for the important role of leisure in Australia was set in 1972 when the soon to be Prime Minister, The Hon. Gough Whitlam said,

There is no greater social problem facing Australia than the good use of leisure. It is the problem of all modern and wealthy

communities. It is, above all, the problem of urban societies and thus, in Australia, the most urbanised nation on earth, a problem more pressing for us than for any other nation on earth (WHITLAM, 1972).

Over the years the leisure industry has evolved with increasing professionalization, more opportunities and pursuits and increasingly diminished appreciation of the role of leisure. We see the impact of a more leisure oriented lifestyle via the development of more resorts, local cafes, parks, leisure facilities and open spaces. But at the same time there is an increase in work hours, family pressure, a decline in the number of volunteers and decreasing levels of physical activity. ANZALS is strategically situated to take initiative to become a vocal advocate for the positive contributions that leisure can make to quality of life. Whitlam's vision for how leisure can address the challenges of modern and wealthy communities has not been achieved. ANZALS has a crucial role to play in Australia and New Zealand. Additionally, ANZALS and its kindred groups around the world, including LSA, CALS, LARASA, WLO, etc. could be taking initiative locally that have impact internationally.

### *Special interest groups*

The establishment of SIGs as part of the ANZALS suite of activities is part of the plan for 2016 and beyond. The last few conferences have introduced the capacity for interested colleagues to have particular streams with a special focus as part of the conference. Some of the special streams in the 2015 Conference include Health & Leisure, Animals & Leisure, Facility Management and Sport & Development. The convenor and participants in these themed sessions may establish SIGs to further build on the presentations to develop research projects, produce publications and encourage wider debate about the issues. The ANZALS SIGs provide an opportunity for another level of commitment and initiative to further develop specific elements of scholarly leisure initiatives. It will be interesting to see how the ANZALS SIGs develop.

### *The future*

ANZALS is well positioned to move forward in the coming years. It will remain focused on its key activities of the biennial conference, sharing information via different news outlets and producing a scholarly journal. The future of ANZALS is strong because of the commitment of the range of people and the willingness of the ANZALS Patrons to support the organisation. For the first time in nearly ten years there are more people who have nominated to join the 2016 / 2017 ANZALS Board than there are positions. People's willingness to become involved demonstrates that there is interest and enthusiasm for ANZALS activities.



ANZALS has a secure financial base but limited capacity to move to more efficient paid administration. Its dependence on volunteer academics to manage all aspects of its operations, except for the journal, limits its capacity to address higher order leisure studies initiatives. There is a level of satisfaction among ANZALS members about its achievements so there is no pressure to do more. It will be up to the 2016 / 2017 ANZALS membership and Board to decide how the association moves forward in the future. Regardless of the specific future initiatives ANZALS will continue to further the development of research and scholarship in leisure studies.

## REFERENCES

ANZALS. **Constitution of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies Incorporated** (ANZALS). NSW: ANZALS, 2010.

ANZALS. Past Conferences. 2015. ANZALS Website. Retrieved 19 November, 2015 from <http://anzals.org.au/conferences/past-conferences>.

LYNCH, R & BROWN, P. **An Australian Leisure Research Agenda**. Canberra, Department of Environment, Sport and Territories, 1995.

LYNCH, R. & VEAL, A. **ANZALS History**. 2015. ANZALS Website. Retrieved 19 November, 2015 from <http://anzals.org.au/about/anzals-history>.

ROWE, D. Complexity and the leisure complex. **Annals of Leisure Research** DOI: [10.1080/11745398.2015.1028949](https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2015.1028949). 2015.

STEBBINS, R. A. Leisure studies: the road ahead. **World Leisure Journal**, v.53, n.1, p.3-10, 2011.

TOWER, J. President's Report. **ANZALS Magazine**, n. 2, p. 2-4, December, 2014.

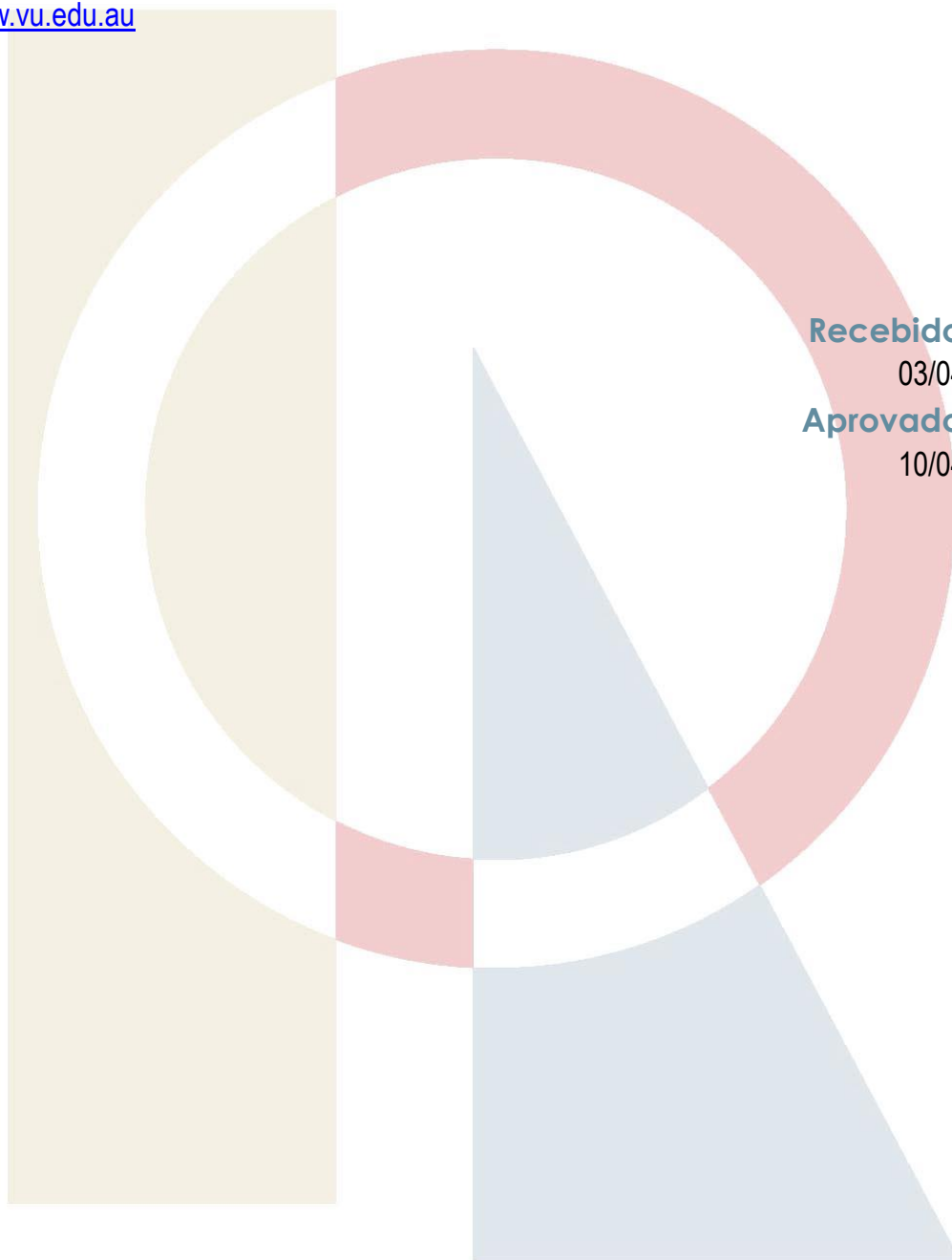
WHITLAM, E.G. **'Australian Labor Party Policy Speech'**, Blacktown Civic Centre, 13 November, p. 26. 1972.

WILSON USNIK & ASSOCIATES. **Australian and New Zealand Association of Leisure Studies Financial Statements**. 2015.

WOOD, J. (Ed.) **Research Connections**. Newsletter #11, November, 2015.

## Endereço para correspondência

Victoria University  
PO Box 14428  
Melbourne, Victoria 8001  
Australia  
[www.vu.edu.au](http://www.vu.edu.au)



**Recebido em:**  
03/04/2015  
**Aprovado em:**  
10/04/2015