

# Looking to the Future for the Past

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## Report on Meeting with Council

Dr Neville Buch

8 August 2018



**Dr Neville Buch**  
Professional Historian

*Understanding history is philosophy in practice*

The Looking to the Future for the Past Project is a history consultancy business of a project team consisting of three professional historians (at any one sub-project phase) and a web technician (four sole traders in partnership). The Project Goal is to meet Brisbane residents' need for historical information on fragmented aspects of Brisbane in a manner which is economically efficient and has comprehensive capacity by adopting a social science approach. In this business case the problem of Council's own delivery services, on Brisbane's history is piecemeal and directionless, is overcome in the research, education and informative capacity that the Project offers. The business case should demonstrate that any limitations and present potential risk failure falls to the Council of not taking up the opportunity of the project. A list of clear benefits has been presented.

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## **Brisbane Local History 2018**

There lie the seafaring charts across the river hills, valleys, and plains of old.

From Peak to Creek, the mountains and waterways hid a greater truth.

Done as blind as those who cannot see the sky!

Beckon I to the horizon,

a lonely beacon.

What's the problem! What's the value!

...like the snow globe slipping from Kane's hand and smashing on the floor:

an insular and closed world of nostalgia and provincial paranoid,

casting yellow-journalistic theories upon the inside glass reflection,

until the interpretive globe breaks upon the ground of facts and logic.

The answer lies in regaining our lines of the globe's surface,

intersecting the connections on local landscapes.

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## Report on Meeting with Council

8 August 2018

Brisbane City Council Offices  
Level 11, Brisbane Square, George Street, City

Chrissie Nowland, Creatives Communities,  
Craig Ball, Social History Unit,  
Dr Neville Buch, Project Manager, Looking to the Future for the Past Project

The Looking to the Future for the Past original proposal (22 June) was commended as quality work of concept but the marketing on detail proposals for Council required further work. The Looking to Further for the Past Business Case (8 August) was acknowledged in taking the proposal further, particularly in scoping different module sub-project offerings. There is now flexibility for various parts of Council to modify the Project idea to where they see the need.

What has been delivered in the negotiation is a clear demonstration and acknowledgement that the Project is the Quality Assurance on content for Brisbane's social and cultural histories. No one has outpaced our project team in the delivery of product, and none come close. What therefore is needed is to sell the Project to Council and other public institutions through particular marketing requirements. To be able to work out those requirements and to match it to a further development of the business case and marketing, a strategic plan is required, to be rolled out from August 2018 to February 2019.

It was then possible in the discussions with Craig Ball and Chrissi Nowland to come up with the following strategic plan.

## Looking to the Future for the Past Strategic Plan

### 1. Details of Market Demand

#### The Requirement

The quantifiable evidence that the types of histories produced by the Project are in demand and that in this evidence the synergies between the audiences of print paper and digital histories makes good market sense.

#### The Action

On traditional print paper platforms, statistical data gathered from Boolarong Press, and in Sydney and Melbourne. Key questions:

- What is the sale performance in publications of local and state histories?
- What are analytic breakdown on the sale performance in publications of local and state histories?
- Who buys?
- What do they buy?
- Where do they buy? Including a comparison with online sales.

On digital platforms, statistical data gathered from Brisbane [sources?], and in Sydney and Melbourne. Key questions:

- What is the number and size of website production in local and state histories?
- What are analytic breakdown on the online performance for websites of local and state histories?
- Who are the new and returned users?
- What are they looking for? Search terms and webpage visitation
- Where do they buy? Including a comparison with online sales.

#### Market Research Funding

Dr Neville Buch will commit a budget of \$300 to obtain data beyond what can be provided within the project team.

## 2. Showcasing the Looking for the Past Approach

### The Requirement

The benefits and quality of the Project has to be marketed in a cutting edge-format. Chrissi Nowland gave the following example from the earlier (MBH) Project as a model:

- Historical Geography Relives -- The MBH Project. Video Presentation. 'Working History' PHA Conference, University of Melbourne, 19-20 August 2016

### The Action

The means to produce a showcase would be in a digital case study funded by a community history grant of a collaboration of the Project in an arts-cultural event: For example:

- Chrome Street Festival – This would be a good assignment for Beryl Roberts who has been doing the work in previous years;
- Peaks to Points Festival – Phil Gunasekara who has been one of the MBH team members in Stage 2, has also been an organiser for the festival.

The sub-project would require two persons,

- i. a professional historian to co-design the history management plan with the event co-partner and implement the sub-project; and
- ii. a technician responsible for video capture and production.

## 3. Matching 'Change Consultancy' to a Funded Partnership

### The Requirement

The Business Case demonstrates a great misunderstanding between the sub-genres and industries of history on what is being delivered and the value in each type of history outcome. Craig Ball has also come to the same conclusion in his own Council work. There needs to be a better matching of high performing professional historians and funded projects of public institutions.

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## The Action

Craig Ball in his Council role is in discussions with the Brisbane Living Heritage Network and the Museum of Brisbane on potential synergies and collaborations between the sub-genres and industries of history.

Dr Neville Buch will provide Craig Ball with analytic document identifying the skills-sets and knowledge-base of the Looking to the Future for the Past team members. For example, Chris Dawson has a rare versatile and distinctive combination as a social anthropology trained urban historian, which would mean a very good synergy for partnership with the Brisbane Living Heritage Network and the Museum of Brisbane. Equally, Ray has already provide the worth of these collaborations with his skills-sets and knowledge of local Aboriginal culture and their use of landscape.

## 4. Developing Educative Outcomes in the Product

### The Requirement

The biggest challenge for the Project is communication in the marketplace where there is a demand for better educative standards in that communication, but past products have not delivered such educative outcomes. The business case states that local history organisations of Brisbane are *largely* in the control of amateur historians whose formal education in history did not go beyond junior secondary level and in an outdated Australian history curriculum. The notable amateur who performs at a professional level without formal training and education supports the argument here because of its noteworthiness in its exceptionality. Most young Brisbane residents will not join a local history organisation because of the perception that the historiography of squatters, explorers, surveyors, and district pioneers keeps going-on in the aging imagination. The local histories are not translated to the questions of the present times. My own reading of Craig Ball's and Chrissi Nowland's comments matches this educative analysis. It is not only that *most* local history organisations are not able to master the local histories content, but they are unable to master the format and historiography; the local histories in this direction lack the capacity to keep up with digital histories in the country, and the thinking is outmoded and uncreative in its vision of the past.

### The Action

The requirement here underscores the need for funded workshops, run by professional historians for local history enthusiasts and amateurs. This is one of the drafted sub-project modules in the business case:

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- A **“Looking to the Future for the Past” local history story writer’s workshop program** to be run from the beginning of 2019 (planning in August-December 2018). The workshops would be opened to all anticipated or experienced writers of both historical fiction and history, free to workshop participants at local Brisbane City Council Library meeting rooms, and funded within the proposal package.

What is needed is to take this basic proposal and draft it into a detailed module plan. One possible modification is to widen the workshop program to include history readers. There are several possible sub-project activities:

- a writer’s workshop program as per described;
- a readers tutorial program (how to read history, i.e. explaining the language, themes, and structures of histories);
- a history book club (a monthly community discussion of a particular, quality, Brisbane local history publication).

All three sub-project activities could be on offer as part of the module.

### 5. Community Application for Mapping Brisbane History Website

#### The Requirement

There are two purposes for the MBH website as a vehicle for the Project. The website has the dual purpose of informing Brisbane residents of the wider and comprehensive history of the City, and to act as a tool for both amateur and professional historians to write new histories. The only chance for the former purpose to succeed is if further community applications can be identified and implemented.

#### The Action

One idea, which came not from the meeting with Council, but from a professor of social marketing at Griffith University is to produce an online map program for heritage and history tours for different parts of Brisbane (I was told that there is an online map program for Singapore, but I have not been able to locate it).

Before planning a module, the key question is whether Brisbane Marketing or Brisbane Living Heritage Network would be prepared to fund or be a sponsor of funding for such a sub-project.