

From the President

The Workers' Educational Association was established in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century, the fruit of a movement that had been growing over previous decades to promote and facilitate the intellectual emancipation of the working class.

When Albert Mansbridge came to Australia a hundred years ago, to plant the seed of this fruit in the Antipodes, we were a new and optimistic country. The foundation stone of the national capital was being laid. Not just Australia, but the world, was going through an unprecedented time of change. Motor cars were beginning to become widely available, and the first aeroplane had been flown in Australia just four years previously (by Houdini, not Hargraves). New communication technologies, such as the telephone, and the typewriter, were making their presence felt. Political revolutions were taking place in Russia, Mexico, and China. In science, the comprehensible processes of Newtonian physics were being overturned by the Theory of Relativity, and our understanding of the very nature of matter itself by the Rutherford Atom.



WEA Sydney President Adam Marchant

In the century since 1913, the WEA has persisted in its mission of providing education and encouraging understanding and critical examination of the world. We have prepared a booklet which lists many of the major or interesting events in the Association's history, and the contemporary cultural and political context.

WEA 100 Years chronicles the ups and downs; times of war and economic depression, changing relationships with governments, universities, the unions ... On occasion, the WEA has stood up for its principles, "...insisting on protecting its right to objective study of public affairs"⁽¹⁾.

As it was in 1913, and indeed almost continually since then, we are in a time of change. And, now, and then, and always, awareness, knowledge, and critical thinking are vital assets to our participants "... both in their personal life and in their role as citizens in a democratic society"⁽²⁾.

I am privileged to have been associated with WEA Sydney for the last dozen years of its first century. I hope that you will share my wish and confidence that the WEA continues to be "... a central part of Sydney's intellectual and cultural life ..."⁽³⁾ in the century to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Adam Marchant'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Adam Marchant
WEA Sydney President

(1) - *WEA 100 Years* page 11

(2) - from WEA Sydney's Mission Statement

(3) - Executive Director Michael Newton's introduction to *WEA 100 Years*, page 2