



alumni news

Sydney University International House Alumni Association

May 2026

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from the executive

Welcome to the May 2026 SUIHAA Newsletter.

As usual, there is an abundance of news to convey. In this edition we are trialling a new layout which we hope you will enjoy. If you have any comments or feedback on it, please let us know by email; we'd love to hear from you!

No matter where you start in the Newsletter, you won't want to miss:

- ✳ Recap of the March IH alumni reunion, plus plans for the November reunion
- ✳ How to view the recording of this year's Walter Westman Lecture if you missed it
- ✳ Report from the latest meeting of the SUIHAA Book Club
- ✳ Photos of distinction from the 2025 Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition plus the deadline for the 2026 competition

Enjoy the various articles in this issue of the SUIHAA Newsletter.

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committee

We acknowledge and thank the members of the SUIHAA Committee who keep the IH vision and mission alive, and organise the different SUIHAA supported events:

President

Dennis Schatz

Secretary

Louise Trott

Treasurer

Joshua Lee

General Committee

Anne Gotsis

Sen Ganbaatar

Michael Hirschhorn

Margaret Lemoh

Ros Madden

Taz Rahman

Liz Wong

contributions

We welcome comments and inquiries regarding items in the SUIHAA Newsletter, plus encourage suggestions for content.

Please send your correspondence to the SUIHAA Newsletter editor, Dennis Schatz, at schatz@pasci.org.

March SUIHAA Alumni Reunion recap

from Taz Rahman

After enjoying the last three reunions, I looked forward to my fourth with much excitement. I had such a lovely time at my first reunion that I contributed by organising each reunion event since.

The 2026 Sydney University International House reunion was a success with twelve attendees. We shared with the other alumni our efforts to get the ball rolling faster on the new IH getting built and our discussions with some of USyd's leadership. It was also good to catch up with Mike Hirschhorn and Roger Wescombe, and to share with fellow alumni the progress organising resources for the Bo Children's Hospital, and of SUIHAA potentially becoming a member of International Houses Worldwide.



From left to right: Mike Hirschhorn, Peter Phillips, David Rowed and wife, Richard Ng, Gwen Ng, Roger Wescombe, Taz Rahman.

I have seen many new faces of fellow ex-residents each year. It's motivating to hear their interest in joining the committee and to have galvanizing discussions on how to extend the reach of SUIHAA.

The friends I made at International House are like a family to me, and I look forward to making more memories at reunions, learning from their activities, and staying engaged with SUIHAA.



From left to right: Greg Houseman, Mike Hirschhorn, David Rowed and wife.

SAVE THE DATE:

SUIHAA Alumni Reunion

Saturday 7 November 2026

from Taz Rahman

After the success of our Pilot Spring Reunion last year during the USYD Community Festival, we welcome all IH alumni to attend our 2026 Spring Reunion this year at the Duck Inn while enjoying this year's festival.

When: 7th November 2026, 12pm-2pm

Where: The Duck Inn, 74 Rose St. Chippendale NSW

Please email RSVPs with the subject "2026 Spring SUIHAA Reunion RSVP" to tasnim.rah@gmail.com.

And don't forget, the University of Sydney is opening its doors to welcome back all alumni for The Community Festival on Saturday 7th November from 11am-4pm. It's free, so register your early bird interest today at <https://www.sydney.edu.au/engage/alumni/reunions-and-events/community-festival.html>.

Looking forward to seeing you all there!



YOU ARE INVITED:

International Houses Worldwide (IHHW)

Alumni Evening in London, UK



IHHW, the peak body for International Houses across the world, will be holding its biennial meeting this June at International Students House (ISH) in London, UK. As part of this they are hosting a reunion for IH alumni from I-Houses worldwide. If you happen to be in London on 10 June, please consider attending. If you plan to attend, be sure to complete the alumni event form by scanning the QR code or clicking the link below:

[IHHW event registration link](#)

They look forward to welcoming as many alumni as possible and hope to fill ISH with alumni from all the I-Houses around the world.



Walter Westman Lecture 2026

How to view this year's recording

from Ian Gutierrez



Photo above: Diego Gloria at work.

The 2026 Walter Westman Lecture on Science, Humanity and the Environment was held on Saturday, 14 March 2026. Diego Gloria, a young and brilliant marine scientist from Griffith University's Global Wetlands Project, spoke about the application of AI and automation in marine science and environment conservation.

The talk generated a lot of interest as participants from all over Australia and overseas asked questions covering different facets of the topic. The lecture was recorded and uploaded in SUIHAA's YouTube channel and generated close to 130 views within a few weeks. This was helped by the social media posts of both SUIHAA and Griffith University.

[Marine science and conservation using automation - click or scan code above to watch](#)

SUIHAA thanks Diego for sharing his time and knowledge.

SPEAKERS REQUIRED:

Seeking an IH alumnus to facilitate the 2027 Walter Westman Lecture

Ian Gutierrez who did an excellent job of facilitating the last two Walter Westman Lectures is retiring from the SUIHAA Committee as he focuses on his personal retirement.

We are now seeking someone from among SUIHAA's members who might be interested in facilitating the 2027 lecture.

If this is something that interests you, please contact Dennis Schatz, SUIHAA President, at schatz@pacsci.org.



Photo: Alumni and IH residents gather in the Wool Room ten years ago to watch the 2016 Walter Westman Lecture.



Bloom with Grace - Thushara Gamage
Finalist, Rosemary Berrick Photo Competition 2025

Photographs of Distinction

Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition 2025

from Dennis Schatz

The top four winners of the 2025 Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition were announced in the last two newsletters. As mentioned previously, the three judges were sorry they had to choose just four from the many outstanding submissions. Below are two more photos also deserving of recognition. We hope you enjoy these beautiful worldwide images from your fellow IH alumni.



Bloom with Grace (featured opposite)

Thushara Gamage (IH 1999)

Canberra, Australia - 29 September 2022

Thushara Gamage lived in IH in 1999 while she studied for a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English. She currently lives in Canberra where she is an applied linguist currently working in the online education publishing sector, and also in the final stages of publishing her first book.

“The photograph was taken at the Floriade Festival in Canberra in 2022. I chose to take it because it reminded me that although we are all different, we share the same beauty. Like flowers, we bloom at different times.”

She is happy for you to contact her at thusharagamage@gmail.com.



Bundilla (featured on cover)

Joshua Lee (IH 2007-11)

Darwin, Australia - August 2025

Joshua Lee lived in IH from 2007 to 2011 while studying a Bachelor of Commerce and Laws. A former data science manager and business law lecturer, he continues to teach casually at the USYD Business School on occasion while dabbling as a freelance photographer.

“Bundilla means 'little girl' in the language of the saltwater Larrakia people - the traditional owners of the greater Darwin region where I grew up - and also lends its name to the beach where this shot was taken.

This was a serendipitous photo - I had just bought a new camera only a few days prior and went down to the beach with a friend to take some test shots. I thought this one nicely captured the spirit of both the Top End sunset, the beach, and its namesake.”

You can contact Josh and see more of his work at <https://www.joshl.ee>.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition 2026

It's that time of year again - time for you to look through your photos and submit them to the 2026 Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition. Last year's competition was a great success, with many outstanding photos. We look forward to your submissions this year.

See information below for the 2026 competition rules and prizes. The best of the photos will be featured in future SUIHAA Newsletters. The submission deadline is 24 August 2026 with the winners to be announced by October.

We look forward to seeing your photos!

Win \$\$\$\$ for Your Photos

**Enter the 2026 Rosemary Berrick
Photography Competition for
Sydney International House Alumni
(organised by SUIHAA)**

\$100 for each of 2 winning entries

\$50 for each of 2 runners up

**Winning photographs
will be used in next year's
SUIHAA newsletters**

Competition Rules

1. Each photograph must have a title and the location (including country) where the photograph was taken
2. There is a limit of three entries per person
3. Photos must include name, nationality and email address of entrant
4. Photographs must be between **1 and 5 MB** submitted in jpg format via email to dschatz@pacsci.org.

Competition Deadline is 24 August 2026
Results Announced by late October



2025 Award Winner
Migration



2025 Award Winner
Gentleman in Jaipur

IH Redevelopment Update

from Dennis Schatz and Taz Rahman

The International House Council - the official University of Sydney board that provides advice to the University regarding the redevelopment of IH - met in late March. While the IH redevelopment process moves slowly, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council assured Council members that the University is committed to the redevelopment. SUIHAA leadership had hoped that IH would reopen for the 2027 academic year. It now appears it will be during the following year.

In April, IH Council members toured the international house at the University of New South Wales (IHNSW). We expect to hear about their visit at the next IH Council meeting, likely to occur in the next couple months. The Council members also had access to the SUIHAA Newsletter article regarding IH UNSW. You can find this article in the August 2025 Newsletter which is available online at <https://www.sydney.edu.au/international-house/alumni-association.html>.

The main event at the Council meeting was a discussion with Jessica Carroll, who was the Director of IH from 2002 until the time of its closure. She provided her insights regarding what is required for a successful redeveloped IH:

- ✳ A common dining space where residents can mingle informally and learn about each other
- ✳ A program space that allows for the traditional type of IH events – food festivals, the candlelight ceremony, music performances
- ✳ Smaller meeting spaces for groups to study together or gather for discussion around a topic of common interest
- ✳ Food preparation areas where residents can prepare and share food associated with their different cultures
- ✳ A resident leadership group that takes responsibility for many of programs offered by residents
- ✳ Sufficient staffing to support the emotional and academic needs of the residents

Jessica suggested that it was important to have the director hired at least six months before IH opens, so that the House is ready for residents when it opens, and can review resident applications to ensure that the students who chose to live at IH are interested in its mission to promote the understanding and friendship between people of different nationalities and cultures.

Her input should be valuable as the University continues to plan for the opening of the redeveloped IH.



Photo: Jessica Carroll, IH Director from 2002-2021 (via LinkedIn)

SUIHAA Book Club update

from Ros Madden

The SUIHAA Book Club continues to meet every two months and has a strong group of regular participants. We still have space for a few more people. If you would like to join the group, please contact Liz Wong at wongoonoo@hotmail.com.

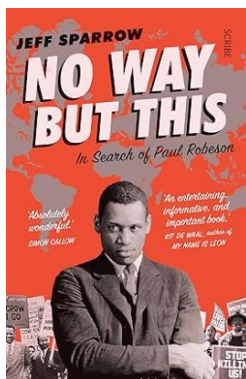
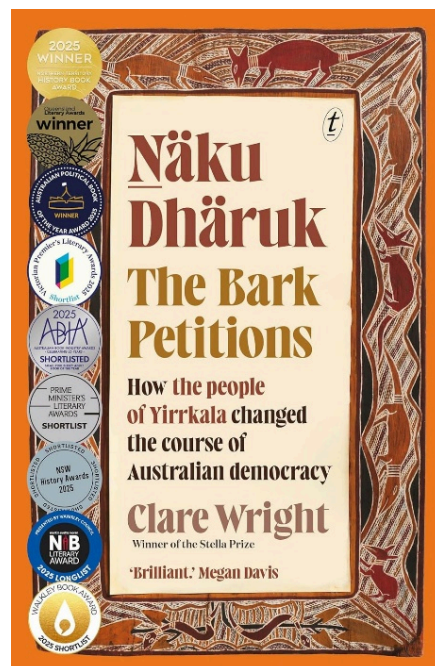
At our most recent Book Club (March 2026), we read *Näku Dhäruk The Bark Petitions: How the people of Yirrkala change the course of Australian Democracy* by Clare Wright.

Ten brave souls sat before our computer screens on 21 March, to discuss an Australian history book of almost 600 pages. Fortunately for me (who recommended it to the group) they seemed to love it as much as I did.

Clare Wright has woven together the fascinating and disturbing story of the arrival of bauxite mining into the Northern Territory in 1963, how it impacted the Yirrkala community, and how it accelerated national understanding about land rights and the rights of First Nations to be heard. She has drawn on extensive research materials from government records, letters between all the players including politicians, welfare workers, and mission workers. The detailed records of people at the Methodist mission, and the letters they kept, were rich sources. Most memorably, we hear the voices of the Yirrkala people, in their letters, paintings and from interviews with members of the different clans living through this turbulent period – people adapting to a shifting world and attempting to communicate with ill-informed and narrow-minded 'visitors' as well as those with more open hearts and minds.

The result is a vivid, vigorous account – a page turner – of messy history, power inequalities, lack of mutual understanding – and real, complex and courageous people (and others).

It's a great story, beautifully told and meticulously researched. Part of Wright's art is to describe and educate the reader about the people's culture, environment and their spiritual and existential relationship to land. It's also a poignant story, with a thread of seemingly inevitable tragedy running through it. Why, we asked, is change so slow? However, Clare Wright's brilliant concluding chapter looks beyond 1963, to the changes since then, in thinking about sovereignty and land rights, building on the Yolŋu battles and the advocacy embedded in the Bark Petitions.



Our group had a lively discussion of the book, tried in vain to see how it could be shortened to make it appealing to school students. We concluded with memories of participants' own stories and encounters, our growing knowledge of Australian colonial history, and (we hope) our growing understanding of Australia's First Nations.

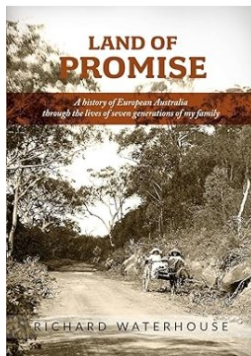
Our next Zoom meeting will take place on Saturday, 23 May 2026, when we'll discuss *No Way But This: In search of Paul Robeson* by Jeff Sparrow.

Future Book Club titles and meeting dates

- ❖ **25 July 2026:** *Land Power, Who has it, Who doesn't and How that Determines the Fate of Societies*
by Michael Alburtus
- ❖ **26 September 2026:** *Truganini: Journey Through the Apocalypse*
by Cassandra Pybus; Allen & Unwin 2021. Winner of the National Biography Award 2021
- ❖ **28 November 2026:** *Patriot*
by Alexei Navalny

Have you published a book? Let us know!

from Liz Wong



We want to celebrate the achievements of IH alumni authors. A number of ex-International House residents have published books over the years, and we'd very much like to hear from you, if you are one of them!

If you know of any IH alumni who have published a book or if you are an alumni author yourself, please let us know! You can get in touch by emailing Liz Wong (SUIHAA Committee Member) at elisabeth.n.wong@gmail.com.

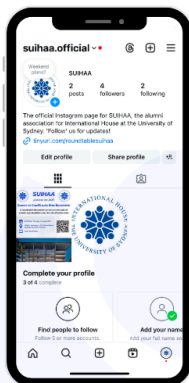
From left to right: Books published by Craig Collie and Richard Waterhouse (respectively); both IH alumni

REMINDER: Connect with SUIHAA via Social Media

from Sen Ganbaatar



SUIHAA
is now on IG!



**Follow our new
Instagram page!**



@suihaa.official

We're making it easier than ever for you to stay connected with the International House community. SUIHAA has launched an official Instagram account and would love for you to join us!

Follow us on [@suihaa.official](https://www.instagram.com/suihaa.official) on Instagram and [@suihaa](https://www.facebook.com/suihaa) on Facebook to catch up on alumni news, find out about upcoming events, and relive some of your favourite IH moments. Additionally, we are seeking stories from our community. If you would like to share your updates or memories from your time at IH, please send them to suihaasocial@gmail.com.

Alumni Highlight: Dennis Schatz (1969-70)

from Dennis Schatz

I recently realized that for the last four plus years, I have solicited Alumni Highlights from a variety of IH alumni, but have been remiss in providing one about myself. It seems only appropriate that I deliver in the same way I have asked others to do.

True confession. I did not attend Sydney University when I stayed at International House from August 1969 to August 1970. My Fulbright Research Scholarship that brought me to Sydney was to study solar flares as a researcher at CSIRO Division of Physics, which was in the Madsen Building on campus.

I had a wonderful office in the tower, but spent about a third of my time at the Culgoora Solar Observatory near Narrabri, NSW.



Dennis in 1970

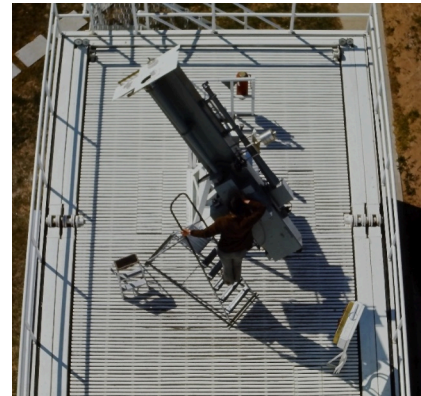


Madsen Building, USYD



Above: Culgoora Solar Observatory (my observatory is left of center)

Right: Solar telescope in action



While I enjoyed studying how the changes in magnetic fields could predict massive solar explosions (solar flares), I enjoyed most my interaction with other residents at International House. My fondest memories are of sitting with Val Hazelwood and Martin Williams on a Saturday afternoon discussing the issues and challenges of the day while enjoying a glass of port. Then there was the Sunday night breaks in the dining room where you got to know other residents while enjoying toast with butter and marmalade - and a cup of tea. Coffee was of the freeze-dried type, so not very appetizing. Excursions to the countryside to see more than urban Sydney were especially memorable.

Before my stay at IH, I lived most of my life in an internationally isolated part of the United States. My time at IH opened my eyes, my mind and my heart to other cultures' traditions, lifestyles and living conditions. I'll never forget spending time talking with residents from Cambodia, who had many relatives murdered during the ethnic cleaning in the country. The enlightened understanding of the world that IH provided has influenced my morale compass and intellectual endeavors ever since.



An IH resident day trip to the bush



A recent photo in front of the Pacific Science Center

When I left IH, I earned a graduate degree in astrophysics at the University of California in Berkeley. But I found that analyzing solar data was not my passion. I needed something more people-connected, which led me to a career inspiring a lifelong interest in science by public audiences, both in-school and out-of-school. This led to a career working in science centers, mainly the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, Washington (similar to the Powerhouse in Sydney or Questacon in Canberra).

Working with teachers to improve science education in schools is a major focus of my work, not only in the United States, but in other countries.

Engaging with public audiences at Pacific Science Center was some of the fondest memories, especially when I could use astronomical phenomena as a hook to inspire an interest in science.



Top left: "Making" a comet for public audiences during the return of Halley's Comet (1986)



Top right: Students getting ready to go inside the Inflatable Planetarium in India.



Far right: A group of Indian teachers inside the inflatable planetarium, learning how to use it

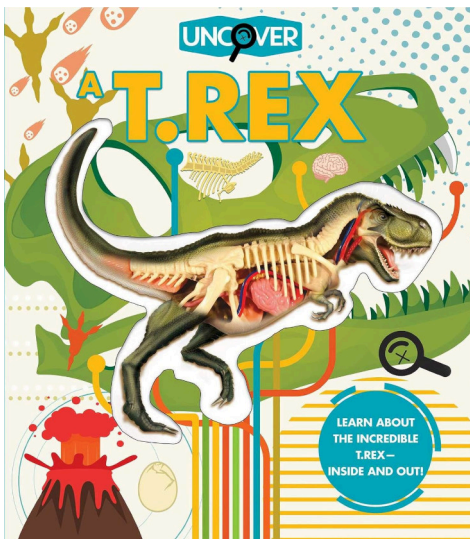
The Pacific Science Center also provided a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with IH friends when we toured our Whales: Giants of the Deep exhibit to 10 cities in Australia over three years in the 1990's. I returned to Sydney for the first time in 22 years to negotiate the tour of the exhibit in collaboration with the Australian National Maritime Museum.



Left: Full-sized robotic Grey Whale at the *Whales: Giants of the Deep* exhibition. **Right:** On board Graeme and Lauris' sailboat in 1992



Left: Sharing a reunion meal in 1992 with Gwen and Richard Ng, plus Ros Madden. **Right:** Children Observing the 2017 Total Solar Eclipse



My passion for encouraging a lifelong interest in science resulted in my writing 26 children's books with scientific themes. My favorite, and most successful book is Uncover A.T.rex, which has been in print for 15 years and sold more than a million copies.

More recently, my interest in astronomy resulted in the children's book, When the Sun Goes Dark, published to coincide with the three solar eclipses to pass across the United States in 2013, 2014 and 2017.

My interest in science learning also allowed me to be a Program Director at the United States' National Science Foundation (NSF) for four years, which funds major science education efforts across the country. I was also President of the United States' National Science Teaching Association (NSTA), the world's largest association of science teachers.

Connecting my career activities to my IH experience: My stay at IH instilled in me the understanding that any human endeavor needs to give a high priority to understanding and appreciating community dynamics and cultural norms where one lives and works.

I received many honors throughout my career, but two stand out among them – being elected a Sydney University International House Fellow and having asteroid 25232 Schatz being designated by the International Astronomical Union in recognition of my efforts in astronomy and science education.

More about me is available on my website at www.dennisschatz.org.

It is a pleasure to now serve as SUIHAA's President, plus the SUIHAA Newsletter Editor, and to facilitate the Rosemary Berrick Photography competition.

