

Department of English Osmania University Hyderabad 500 007 91-040-393753	Institute of English Kerala University Trivandrum 695 034 91-471-321455	University of Delhi S. Bhagat Singh College Triveni, New Delhi 110 017 91-011-5737849	Department of English JNU New Delhi 110 067 91-011-662238
---	--	--	--

**Interactions: The Eighth Biennial Symposium on Literatures and Cultures of the Asia Pacific Region
Perth, W. Australia, 8-12 December 1997**

A Brief Report by Professor Subhas Chandra Saha (Assam University, India)

The symposium was organized by the Centre for Studies in Australian Literature, Department of English, University of Western Australia, Perth. It was a unique symposium as it focussed on the literatures and cultures of the Asia Pacific Region. It was attended by academics and creative writers from Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Samoa, Japan, India and Thailand, and also from European countries like Austria and Italy. One full day of the programme consisted of readings of poems, stories and plays by creative writers. It was held along with wine-tasting in the famous Houston vineyard.

Many distinguished academics and creative writers presented papers on poetry, fiction, drama and film in the countries of the Asia-Pacific regions and participated in the lively and illuminating discussions that followed all the paper-reading sessions. There were two book launches—Dennis Haskell's book of poems *The Ghost Names Sing* (Freemantle, Australia) and Subhas Saha's book of criticism *Indian Renaissance and Indian English Poetry* (New Delhi: Prestige).

Delegates from India included Dr. G. Jayashree, Dr. M. Dasan and Dr. Valsa Koshi from Kerala and Dr. K. Sunitha from Mysore. The symposium provided the participants not only with the unique opportunity of interacting with specialists on the literatures and cultures of the Asia Pacific region but also the rare privilege of basking in the warm mateship of the Australian academics and creative writers in bracing climate of neat, clean, green Perth.

**Twentieth Century World Drama, with an Australian Focus
24-25 October 1997**

A two-day national seminar on Twentieth Century World Drama was organized by Shaw's Corner, in collaboration with Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies, at Academy of Fine Arts and Literature, New Delhi, on 24-25 October 1997.

One of the special features of the Seminar was a full session devoted to Australian drama. It was chaired by Dr. R.K. Dhawan (University of Delhi). Mr. Roger Virtue, an Australian scholar of drama, at present working at New Delhi, discussed the background to the development of drama in Australia. He said that the Australians had till relatively recently refused to encourage local works until they won a reputation overseas. He also spoke about the establishment of Repertory Theatre and some of the principal theatre chains in Australia. He spoke of the contribution that writers like Alan Seymour, Douglas Stewart and David Williamson have made to the Australian drama. Mr. Tom Calma, Education Counsellor at the Australian High Commission (New Delhi), spoke on the early Australian drama with its background of the spectacle of outlaws and bushrangers. Dr. Vinod Bala Sharma (University of Delhi) presented a brilliant paper on Alan Seymour's *One Day of the Year*. The play has Anzac day as the focal point from which springs the conflict of the father and the son. Dr. Suman Bala (Univer-

sity of Delhi) spoke on Australia's most sought-after playwright David Williamson, focussing on his play *The Club*. The paper evoked a good response from the audience and a lively discussion followed.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Dhawan, the chairperson, said that there was much scope for research in the field of Australian drama and mentioned some of the theatres he had visited during his visit to Australia. He spoke at length about the quality and wide range of the contemporary Australian drama and its growing popularity.

A-AASA NEWSLETTER

ASIA-AUSTRALASIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AUSTRALASIA

Patrons

Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah
(Mysore)
Ms. Alison Broinowski
(Canberra)

President (Asia)

Dr. Suman Bala
University of Delhi
Ph. 91-011-5584304

Co-President (Australia)

Dr. Cynthia vanden Driesen
Edith Cowan University, Perth
Ph. 61-09-3867654

Vice-President (Asia)

Prof. K. Radha
Kerala University
Ph. 91-471-321455

Co-Vice-President (Australia)

Dr. Satendra Nandan
Canberra University, ANC
Ph. 61-02-62012007

Secretary

Prof. S.K. Sareen
J.N.U., New Delhi
Ph. 91-011-6652238

Treasurer & Editor Newsletter

Dr. R.K. Dhawan
University of Delhi
Ph. 91-011-5737849

AASA: New Developments

The ACLALS Conference in Kuala Lumpur was attended by several members of AASA. Since AASA was launched at the time of the last ACLALS Conference, Colombo 1995, the opportunity was taken to renew/reappoint and extend the membership of the Committee and make some adjustments to the existing set up. Since the membership of the Association has now expanded to include New Zealand and since this has involved an expansion of objectives to include also the study of the literature and culture of New Zealand, a change in nomenclature was necessary. It was also felt that the importance of the Australian participation needed to be reflected. The acronym of the Association will not change substantially; the new title will now be "Asia-Australasia Association for the Study of Australasia." Unless a committee member had indicated he/she did not wish to continue serving in their current positions, office-bearers were reappointed to their positions till the next meeting. It was accepted that the committee should include an European, American and a British representative.

The volume of papers presented at the inaugural conference at Trivandrum is under active preparation. It will be ready for launching in April 1999.

The 2nd A-AASA Conference will be held at Mysore in the year 2000. A/Prof. Kirpal Singh has offered to host the 3rd in Singapore.

February 2000

A-AASA NEWSLETTER

ASIA-AUSTRALASIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AUSTRALASIA

Announcement

A-AASA (INDIA) CONFERENCE Mysore • July 2000

The next A-AASA Conference will be organized by the Indian membership of A-AASA at Mysore (South India) 12-15 July 2000. The theme of the Conference will be

India-Australia Connections

This could be explored over a range of disciplines—literature, culture, women's studies, social sciences, business, economics etc. The conference should highlight areas of burgeoning strength as well potential developments for the future. Scholars are invited to submit papers on India/New Zealand connections as well as comparative studies of India, Australia and New Zealand. Abstracts should be sent by 15 April 2000 to either of the conveners: Dr. Suman Bala, Department of English, S. Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, New Delhi 110 017. e-mail: balasuman@yahoo.com or Dr. Cynthia vanden Driesen, School of Languages and Literature, Edith Cowan University, Bradford St., Mt. Lawley, Perth, WA 6050. Fax 61-09-3867654. e-mail: c.vandendriesen@cowan.edu.au

A conference website will be set up shortly to keep you informed of developments. Acceptance of the papers will be conveyed by 15 May 2000. Kindly note that it will not be possible to pay delegation fee or travelling expenses to the participants. They may approach their institutes/universities for sponsorship.

A-AASA NEWSLETTER

ASIAN AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AUSTRALASIA

President (Asia)

Dr. Suman Bala

University of Delhi

Ph: 91-011-5264304

balasuman@yahoo.com

Vice-President (Asia)

Prof. K. Radha

Kerala University

Ph: 91-471-321455

RADHA@kelnet.xlweb.com

Treasurer & Editor Newsletter

Dr. R.K. Dhawan

University of Delhi

Ph: 91-011-5850849

rkdhawan@vsnl.net

President (Australia)

Dr. Cynthia vanden Driesen

Edith Cowan University, Perth

Ph: 61-89-3867654

c.vanden_driesen@cowan.edu.au

Vice-President (Australia)

Dr. Satendra Nandan

Canberra University, ANC

Ph: 61-82-62012001

Satendra.Nandan@canberra.edu.au

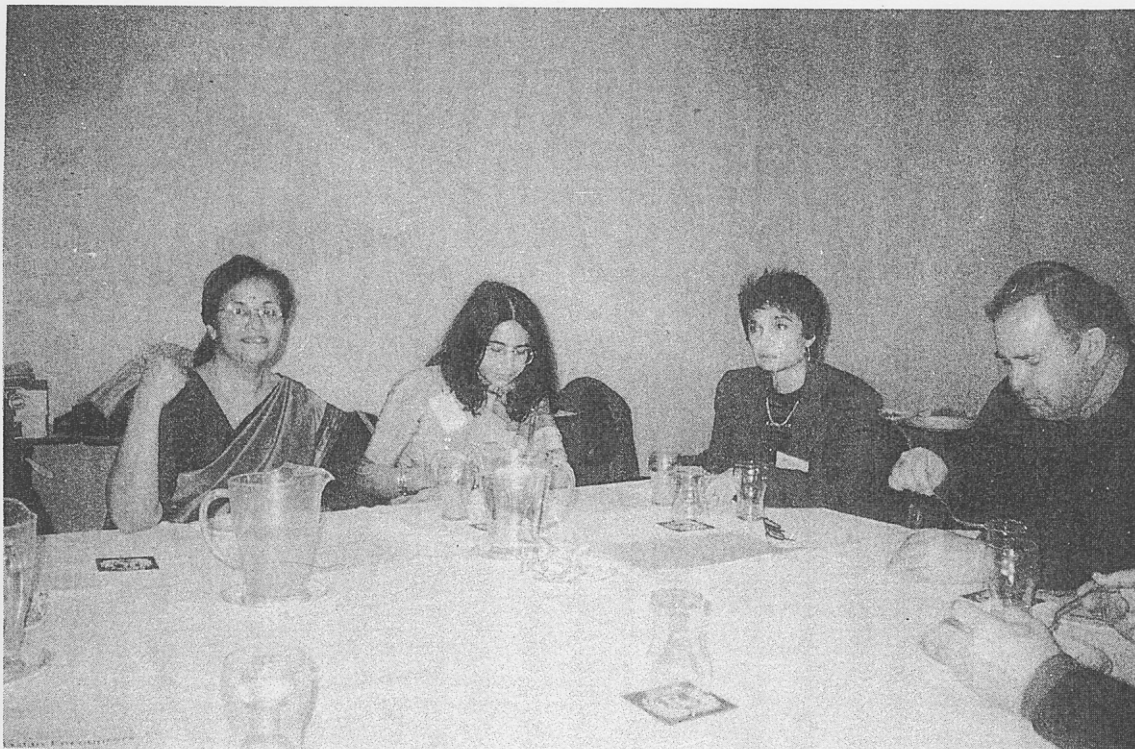
Patrons

Dr. C.D. Narasimhaiah

Ms. Alison Broinowski

A-AASA PROJECT

“Consolidating Australian Studies in India through A-AASA”



Eugenie Pinto, Anjali Roy and Cynthia vanden Driesen at lunch with John Powys, Director, Australia-India Council (ACLALS Conference, Canberra, July 2001)

The Australia India Council sponsored a project entitled "Consolidating Australian Studies in India through AASA". Five Indian academics, working in the field of Australian literature, were sponsored to visit Australia, to develop a range of joint initiatives to promote cooperation between institutions and individuals engaged in developing Australian studies in the region. The five academics were: Dr. Suman Bala and Dr. R.K. Dhawan (University of Delhi), Professor K. Radha (University of Kerala), Dr. Anjali Roy (I.I.T, Kharagpur) and Prof. Eugenie Pinto (University of Madras). All five participated in the ASAL conference "Thinking Beyond Australia/ Beyond Australian Literature", organized by the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University, at Trades Hall, Melbourne, from 5 to 8 July 2001 and the ACLALS conference held at Canberra. Dr. Suman Bala and Dr. R.K. Dhawan also attended a three-day conference "Nation and Narration" at the Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, Brisbane. Dr. Anjali Roy attended a conference in Melbourne from 16-19 July 2001. Ms. Eugenie Pinto travelled to the Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, Brisbane to research the Australian studies collection at the Centre.

At the ACLALS Conference, Canberra

Dr. Suman Bala presented a paper on "Resistance and Reconciliation: A Study of Indian Canadian Short Fiction; Professor Radha on "Writing the Subaltern: The Marginalized in Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*"; Dr. R.K. Dhawan on "Reconciliation with a New Environment: The Writings of Uma Parameswaran and Shauna Singh Baldwin" and Anjali Gera Roy on "Only Connect: Holding Postcolonial Ground in the Global Village".



Paul Sharrad, Suman Bala, R.K. Dhawan, S.K. Sareen and K. Radha at the Canberra meeting

Members of the group and the coordinator of the project Cynthia vanden Driesen were delighted that Mr. John Powys, Director of Australia-India Council was able to meet them at a convivial lunch, organized by the indefatigable ACLALS Secretary Jacqueline Lo. They were able to express their personal appreciation of the assistance of the Australia-India Council in all A-AASA projects. Mr. Ian Black's kind assistance and co-operation was warmly acknowledged. Later, some members of the group also met Mr. Richard Woolcott (Founding Director, Asia Society, AustralAsia Centre) and thanked him for his assistance with the project.

Some of the important outcomes of the project were:

- the establishment of a website for the organisation. It is intended that a database be developed to collate information on Australasian studies in the region. Discussions took place and some decisions taken on the possibility of publishing Australian literary texts in India and a Committee was set up to follow through with these decisions.
- Detailed discussions on the current constitution of A-AASA have resulted in amendments (to be formally ratified by the membership) which it is hoped will help to further the objectives of the Association and facilitate its growth.

~~REPLATE~~



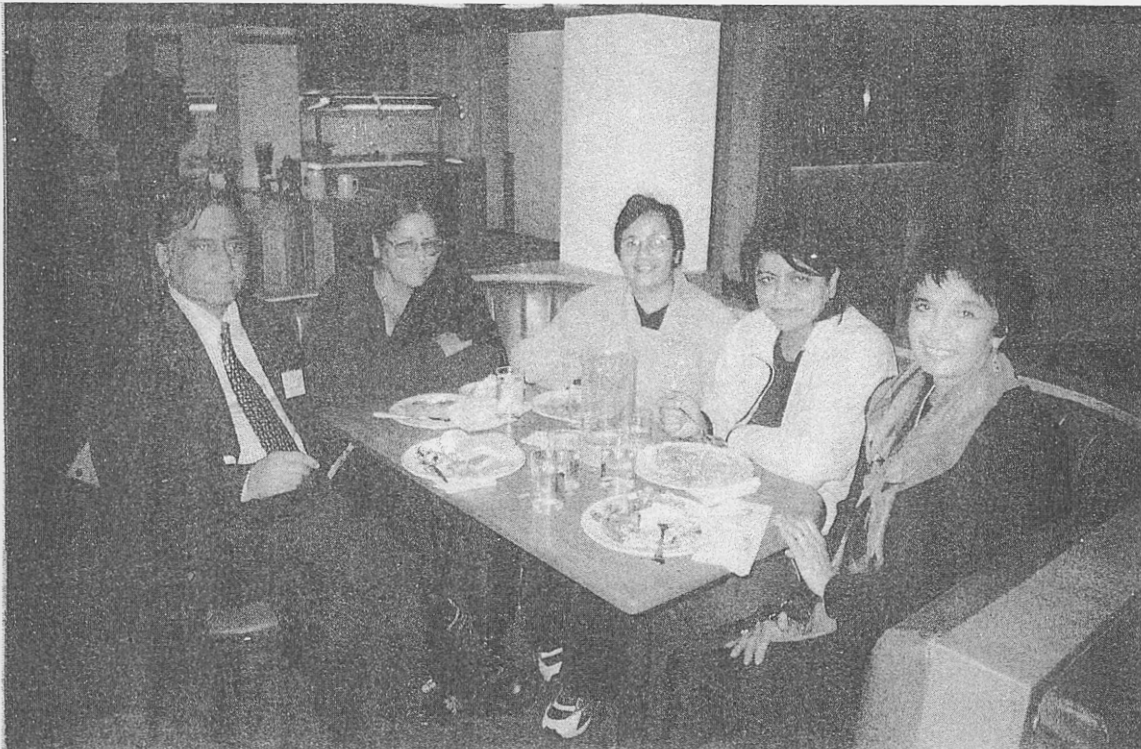
K. Radha, Cynthia vanden Driesen, Bruce Bennett, Paul Sharrad with John Powys (Centre)

- Discussion and preliminary planning on a new initiative: *The Indian Journal of Australian Studies*. It is hoped that it will be ready for launching in January.
- Members of the group agreed to share resources and keep each other informed of all programmes and activities each of them might devise in their own institutions. They would also be making a concerted drive to attract academics from other disciplines than Literature to participate in A-AASA activities.

NAME CHANGE

A name-change for the Association was considered appropriate. After sponsors and all interested parties are informed it was suggested that the new name of the Association will be: "The Association for Australasian Studies in Asia" (AASA).

Note: New office bearers and details of the re-structured A-AASA will be published in the next Newsletter – February 2002.



R.K. Dhawan, Suman Bala, Eugenie Pinto and Usha Dhawan with Cynthia vanden Driesen

Excerpts from Reports

“Coming to Australia and being able to attend the conferences at Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra was a fruitful and enriching experience. It provided me an opportunity to come in direct contact with Australian life, literature and culture. The ASAL Conference, Melbourne, provided me with an opportunity to meet several academics, research scholars and creative writers in the field of Australian literature. . . . At the ACLALS Conference, the plenary address given by Fred Chaney, Chancellor of Murdoch University, was memorable. He emphasized that while Australians could not escape their past, at the same time the past was not the whole story and while the indigenes are still to be fully reconciled, there was a massive determination to deal with these issues. . . . The conference provided an opportunity to revive contact with many scholars and writers whom I had met at earlier ACLALS conferences in Colombo and Kuala Lumpur and in various other conferences in India. John McLaren, Dennis Haskell, Paul Sharrad, Gerry Turcotte, Ken Goodwin, Syd Harrex. . . . I interacted with many academics, research scholars and creative writers at the three conferences. There were book exhibitions at all the conference venues and I came to know about many new books on Australian writing and creative works.”

Suman Bala

“Attending the Melbourne Conference gave me an opportunity to meet many Australian scholars and learn about current issues in Australian Studies. It created in me an interest in reading some authors I had not read so far like Lionel Fogarty and Frank Hardy The ACLALS Conference



Cynthia vanden Driesen, Anjali Roy, R.K. Dhawan and other delegates
with Satendra Nandan, Chair, ACLALS conference and Vice-President (Aus) A-AASA

venue was the meeting place of a large number of professors and writers from all over the world and I could meet and speak to many of these. I had discussions with them on current trends in literature in many of the commonwealth countries (and) have a clearer picture of Australian society and landscape as well as of other commonwealth countries.”

K. Radha

“My visit to Australia has indeed been a rewarding and enriching experience. I participated in the three-day conference ‘Nation and Narration’, held at the Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, Brisbane, from 23 to 25 June 2001. . . . The ASAL conference at Melbourne covered a wide range of subjects viz. Literature, History, Women’s Studies and Asian Diasporic Writing. Perhaps the most interesting area of discussion was Migrant Writing. Participation in the ACLALS Conference at Canberra offered me an opportunity to share discussion with hundreds of scholars from the wider Commonwealth. It was great to listen to J.M. Coetzee, the only writer to have won the Booker Prize twice (and) interact with scholars and creative writers of various nations.”

R.K. Dhawan

“It was an invigorating and stimulating experience interacting with people (academics/writers/professionals) from 60 different countries. In fact it was an unstoppable force as we Indians had a wonderful experience of the mind. Critical theorists such as Stephen Slemon, Bill Ashcroft, Harish Trivedi and a score of others gave us new frameworks for literary and other texts. On the whole, the conference helped me to negotiate my way through a plethora of texts, increased my contacts and gave me an idea of how international conferences ought to be organised and sustained.”

Eugenie Pinto

“The ASAL conference gave me an insider perspective on Australia underlining the need to frame post-colonial literatures in a multiple framework—ethnic, national and post-colonial. . . . Meaghan Morris’s view of colonialism as consumerism in her keynote address placed Australian narrative in the twin contexts of nation building ethos in travel writing and the new wave cinema responding to the globalizing aspect of Hollywood. . . . We had a taste of multicultural bonding between women writers and critics of all complexions at a private dinner hosted by Jennifer Strauss over diasporic Thai cuisine.”

Anjali Roy

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited from scholars, researchers and students for publication in the Journal for Australian Studies, an international refereed publication. The journal will focus on major areas of Australian studies viz. literature, culture, women’s studies, social sciences, aboriginal literature, multiculturalism, national identity. Comparative studies are welcome. A section of the journal will be devoted to creative writing. For book reviews, publishers/authors are requested to send two copies of their publications. Submissions, books for review and inquiries may be sent to:
Dr. Suman Bala, A4/8, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi 110 063. e-mail: balasuman@yahoo.com
Dr. R.K. Dhawan, J 391, New Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi 110 060. e-mail: rkdhawan@vsnl.net

Recent Conferences

InASA Conference, Brisbane

The three-day conference "Nation and Narration" was held at the Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, from 23 to 25 June 2001. It was a conference in the series of public events occurring throughout 2001, under the title "Australia: The Common Culture". It was also the 2001 annual conference of the International Australian Studies Association (InASA). With this conference, the Centre celebrated a new phase in its development. The Conference was convened by Dr. David Carter, Director of the Australian Studies Centre at Brisbane. Various scholars of Australian Studies from other disciplines, especially history and political science, participated. Lectures were delivered on Australia's art and culture by eminent speakers including Tim Bonyhady (ANU), Ian Galloway (Director, Old Museum) and Margo Neale (Director, Aboriginal Program, National Museum of Australia). The conference explored the stories Australians have told about themselves and their country. From the conflictual narratives of history to the power of individual testimony and collective memories, the stories of nation have the power to transform social structures and to shape what it means to be Australasian. Some of the highlights of the conference included a book exhibition, book launches and conference dinner. Dr. Suman Bala (President, A-AASA) and Dr. R.K. Dhawan (Treasurer, A-AASA) of the University of Delhi were vibrant participants in the conference.

ASAL Conference, Melbourne

The annual ASAL Conference was held at the Trades Hall, Melbourne, on July 5-7, 2001. The theme of the Conference "Thinking Beyond Australia/Beyond Australian Literature" seemed especially attractive in its futuristic approach of going beyond national boundaries, transcending the liminal. Meaghan Morris of Lingnan University, Hong Kong, delivered the inaugural address entitled "Career Girls and Cannibal Mothers: Colonialism as Consumerism in the Work of Ernestine Hill". Morris took a new look at colonialism as an exercise in consumerism with a special focus on the work of Ernestine Hill and Daisy Bates. The panel discussion on Asian Diaspora in Australia was chaired by Bruce Bennett. The participants were Jacqueline Lo, Olivia Khoo, Tseen Khoo and Dean Chan. The enthusiastic panelists brought youthful energy to their extremely articulate presentations. Jacqueline Lo summed up the concerns of the Asian diaspora. The Asian diaspora in Australia was largely represented on the panel by Chinese and Malaysian academics with the conspicuous absence of representatives from other areas. This was in sharp contrast to the visibility of writers of Sri Lankan and Fijian origin at the readings that evening. The first Plenary the next morning had Robert Dixon offering a controversial hypothesis about the separation of colonial governance and cultural representation. The speakers' conclusions appeared to move in the direction of the inseparability rather than divergence of the two discourses. Therese Davis's paper on "Translation and Collaboration in the Autobiographical Films of Essie Coffey" gave an account of white and aboriginal behind-the-scenes collaboration during the filming of Essie Coffey's film. It offered a refreshing insight into the politics of representation. Sheena George (University of Kerala) drew interesting links between Dalit Indian and aboriginal Australian writing. Subsequent sessions and papers covered a wide variety of Australian literary studies and approaches.

ACLALS Conference, Canberra

The ACLALS conference was held at the Rydges Hotel in the heart of Canberra from 9 to 14 July. Bruce Bennett welcomed the delegates to the Conference and Satendra Nandan (Chair, ACLALS) gave a brief overview of the Association. The keynote speaker was Dawn Casey, the director of National Museum of Australia. She informed the delegates that the Museum was opened in March this year and was a prestigious one. It has special exhibitions on Land, Nation and People, with separate sections devoted to Aborigines: the First Settlers, Fifty Extraordinary Australians, Lost Generations and Focusing on the Future.

The next speaker was Fred Chaney, Chancellor of Murdoch University. He began with the comment that Australians cannot escape their past. But at the same time, the past was not the whole of Australia. Basically, Australia was a peaceful and prosperous country. People from at least sixty countries have emigrated here. Although it is no longer a totally white Australia, the indigenes have not been reconciled. There is a massive public determination to deal with these issues and they have a vision of peaceful world.

The third speaker at the inaugural session was Jennifer Strauss, literary critic and poet from Monash University, Melbourne. She acknowledged her debt to the indigenous settlers and gave readings from the works of the late Judith Wright as well as from her own work. The theme of the conference "From Resistance to Reconciliation" lent itself to an examination of indigenous and mainstream writing—creative, professional and theoretical and the opening ceremony set the tone of the proceedings. Prominent academics, politicians and professionals were key speakers. A wide range of subjects was covered in several sessions—about six per time frame. The sessions were punctuated by book launches and readings. Critical theorists such as Stephen Slemon, Bill Ashcroft, Shirley Lim, Susan Hosking, Harish Trivedi and a score of others gave new frameworks for the study of literary and other texts. The participants included John McLaren, Dennis Haskell, Paul Sharrad, Gerry Turcotte, Ken Goodwin, Syd Harrex, Vijay Mishra, Jyoti Nandan, Kavita Nandan, Ralph Crane, Kirpal Singh, Rajiv Patke, Bernth Lindfors, Amritjit Singh, Victor Ramraj, Chelva Kanaganayakam, Radhika Mohanram, Shirley Chew, Leonard Jeyam, Mohan Ambikaipaker and others. Various readings were given by eminent writers like Satendra Nandan, John Coetzee, Jean Arasanayagam, Celestine Hitiura Vaite, Dennis Haskell, Yasmine Gooneratne, Chandani Lokuge, Makarand Paranjape, Hoshang Merchant and others. The papers on the stolen generation and women's writing were very interesting. The writers' reading from their works at the Conference venue and at the National Library was another important feature of the Conference. The Conference paid befitting tributes to Anna Rutherford and R.K. Narayan. Yasmine Gooneratne was awarded the Raja Rao Award. (See publications section for some of the book publications launched at the conference.) Among the various books released was *Sharing the Commonwealth*, a collection of selected papers of the last ACLALS conference in Malaysia.

On the last morning, the tour which took in the museum, art gallery and the parliament buildings enabled the participants to learn more about the culture and history of Australia.