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## President's report to members, 2009

Dear CLA Members,

The 2009 year was generally successful, and CLA continued to grow despite a severe economic downturn causing some members to pare back on the organisations they supported, including us. Nevertheless, CLA grew numerically in 2009, as the annual report highlights.

However, any major fundraising activities were put on hold because of the economic conditions which prevailed for much of the year. Using this 'downtime' to advantage, we sought and received a range of opinions from people experienced in fund raising. The key advice is to target particular people for particular purposes, and to seek only the funds to operate for one-to-two years with an inaugural paid staff member, rather than trying to raise a major sum and using the interest earnings. Any staff member should be responsible, at least in part, for securing the funds to ensure their continued employment, the advice ran.

In extension activities, the cartoon exhibition was displayed at the National Europe Centre at ANU and at the University of Western Sydney. The exhibition is currently being updated, basically replacing Howard-centric cartoons of the past with Rudd-centric cartoons of the present.

We are in the early stages of developing a 'songbook', or potential audio CD. Lyrics are written for an Australian *Freedom Song*, and music for the lyrics has been written by a professional composer who is a CLA member. Next step might be to record it: does anyone have any suggestions for how? We're also interested to hear from any members who like writing songs or poems with a freedom theme, based on Australian issues and concerns.

One of our major ongoing disappointments during 2009 was being unable to motivate the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to ensure Australians are free to protest outside Australia's Parliament House without the Australian Federal Police interfering unnecessarily to request people's name, contact details, car licence number and other information. Many backbenchers from both sides of parliament support CLA's contention that people who are obviously not terrorism threats should be left alone if they are in the designated protest area, but so far the powers-that-be (the President and Speaker) refuse to issue appropriate instructions to the AFP to leave democracy alone.

I am keen to further expand our outreach programs by talking to other groups. With civil liberties, it's easy to preach to the converted, but harder to motivate the 'average' Australian who is apathetic towards these issues until they bite personally. That is the challenge we all face if we're committed to making civil liberties a constant reference point in public conversation: in parliament, at workplaces, and in clubs and pubs. There are emerging signs that 'civil liberties' – the words – are appearing much more frequently in print and in the electronic media. We and you can take some of the credit for that development. If you think you could speak to a group you belong to, or know about, in your local area, the CLA Secretariat can provide you with suitable materials by email, information flyers to hand out and PowerPoint presentations if you feel they would help.

We have taken part in consultation meetings with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade about Australia's position on human rights, internally and in the Asia-Pacific, and we continue to help shape legislation by making submissions to parliamentary committees considering draft laws.

The strength of CLA continues to lie in the outstanding quality of our membership. I am delighted when we can meet members annually at social gatherings or barbecues, but even more pleased when members from far-flung places respond by phone or email to information exchange or requests for ideas. I enjoy hearing from members and imbibing their enthusiasm for the cause of civil liberties. To those whom I haven't met who have helped with submissions and other work during the year, thank you. To those with whom I haven't communicated yet, please let's get in personal touch during 2010.

(Dr) Kristine Klugman OAM  
President

20 February 2010