Thank you for the opportunity to be your Chairperson for the last twelve months and it is in this capacity that I present my report for the 2017 AGM of the Australian Standing Stones Management Board (ASSMB).

Building on a number of significant accomplishments in the previous year, the ASSMB has continued to achieve milestones during our 2016 – 17 year. I would like to highlight some particular events during the past twelve months that are worthy of special mention.

Firstly, is the very significant project of the installation of permanent flag poles along the roadside near the new information sign. These flagpoles have created a magnificent welcoming avenue to the Stones and are a fitting way to celebrate and acknowledge the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of the Standing Stones. These 11 poles fly our national and state flags alongside the flags of the Celtic nations acknowledged here in Glen Innes. It was a great pleasure to be able to welcome the Honourable Adam Marshall, Minister for Tourism and Member for Northern Tablelands to be a part of this event and I note that the Minister for Tourism in 1992, Michael Yablsey was at the inauguration ceremony.

Special events were held to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the raising of the first stone in 1991 and the inauguration of the complete array in 1992. The first stone to be erected was named the Alexander Stone, in honour of Peter Alexander from the Celtic Council of Australia and was the centre piece for our function. On 7th September, 2016, an evening event was held, with Guardians renewing their vows to the Stones and placing their Celtic nation’s badge on the Glen Innes scarf on the Alexander Stone. Chief Guardian, Mayor Colin Price and Deputy Chief Guardian, Mrs Margaret Sharpe, Convenor of the Celtic Council of Australia also re-anointed the Stone with whisky in a symbolic gesture of a full bottle of whisky being poured into the hole before this stone was raised. The Glen Innes Pipe Band, the Glenmore Highland Dancers and a dance item from Bill and Margaret Winnett added to the spectacle before dinner was enjoyed at Crofter’s Cottage.

A celebratory morning tea was held at Crofter’s on February 1st, 2017 to acknowledge the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of the full array. It was special to hear from some of the attendees who were involved in the original planning and who were present at the inauguration. The Governor at the time, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair officiated at the inauguration and despite being a coincidence in timing; it was a great pleasure to welcome our current governor His Excellency, Governor David Hurley and Mrs Hurley to the Stones in February this year two weeks after the Stones 25th birthday. The Governor and Mrs Hurley are friends of the Sinclair’s and were interested in this connection and excited to
be able to pass this on to Peter Sinclair.

Further achievements during the last twelve months include:

• painting of all infrastructure on site, in line with the previously developed colour palette,
• new directional signage to the Australian Standing Stones on all major entrances to town and into Centennial Parklands,
• the repositioning of the Celtic festival sign,
• completion of the granite numbering of the Stones,
• the installation of 5 new plaques – the Hill of Tara, sponsored by the Irish Association, the Celtic Family Wall, 2 plaques and accompanying stones in the Celtic Family Wall and a plaque on the Rock of Remembrance.
• completing the ASSMB Constitution and Charter for the College of Guardians,
• completing the ASSMB procedures policy – a document that is stored on Council’s data storage system and contains interactive links to the relevant supporting documentation. This document is a vital part of succession planning that clearly communicates the work the Board undertakes on behalf of Council. This Policy and Procedures document, by its very nature, is a fluid document that reflects change and should continue to do so.
• hosting, for the second year, the Australian fan club of the highly popular television series ‘Outlander’. This year, they utilised the site more extensively to include morning tea, activities during the day including lunch and dinner at Crofter’s Cottage, a twilight gathering and meeting again on the Sunday. The group totalled around 35 and, once again, they thoroughly enjoyed their weekend in Glen Innes. The 2018 “Outlandish” event was launched at their lunch and the group is very excited about this event. They will include it in all their advertising.
• finalising our 2017 – 2018 budget estimate. The sale of ‘The History of the Australian Standing Stones’ books continues to bring a steady income from sales through Crofter’s Cottage. In itself, this income will not cover our estimated budget but will assist to offset some costs. Provision has been made in the budget for the Solar noon shadow project, building a stock of new flags, the new brochure, winter and summer solstice activities and flag lowering events.
• participating in branding workshops that have resulted in the new branding of the Glen Innes Highlands. These workshops, led by a branding consultant, brought people from all facets of the community together and provided a forum to openly discuss what it is that makes our area unique. The new brand of the Glen Innes Highlands is a term that embraces all facets of the Local Government Area and sits very comfortably with Celtic Country.
• in conjunction with Council and the Australian Celtic Festival committee, accomplishing underground power at the Centennial Parklands site.

The Guardians’ Luncheon, held annually as part of the Celtic Festival in May, continues to re-connect the Guardians both with the Stones and with each other. It is always a joy to see new Guardians invested as the acknowledgement means a great deal to them. This year a number of local identities were inducted namely Peter Bruce, Joanne Cause, Howard Eastwood and Col Price. Peter Bruce was further acknowledged with a Celtic Honour for his work with the late Lex Ritchie on the design and official registration of the Glen Innes tartan. It was also timely to bestow Guardianship on Chris Dunkerley C y C. Chris is a current member of the Celtic Council of Australia (CCA) and is one of the original Standing Stones Steering sub-committee set up by the CCA to make the Stones a reality.

On behalf of the ASSMB, I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Mrs Margaret Sharpe C Tu C for her commitment, passion and service to the Celtic Council of Australia. At the CCA AGM in October, 2016, Margaret completed her term as Convenor. Dr Suzanne Jamieson C y C, took on this role and it was a pleasure to welcome Suzanne to Glen Innes for the Celtic Festival and induct her as the new Deputy Chief Guardian.

Congratulations to Board members Raelene Watson and John Mathew for being added to the Celtic Roll of Honour at the Glen Innes Services Club in 2017.

The Caledonian Society continues to provide positive support with our Flag Lowering ceremonies. The food fests are an avenue to mix and mingle and allows those present to be further educated in the culinary delights of our Celtic nations. The Stones were also the venue for their very successful rehearsed reading of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ in November, 2016 to mark St. Andrew’s Day. This St. Andrew’s Day event is set to become an eagerly awaited annual celebration. It showcases the majesty of the Stones as an outdoor dinner venue under the stars and serves to further enhance our community’s major attraction, the Australian Standing Stones.

Another major event for October, 2018 will be ‘OUTLANDISH’. This flows from the incredibly successful Outlander series and will be based around our iconic Stones. It already has a significant number of bookings from around Australia and overseas.
The Future

This year, Council has begun the process of the Centennial Parklands Master Plan. This plan will facilitate the future development of the site and as the Committee of Council tasked with oversight of the Stones, I have been involved in the initial meeting to begin this process. The Master Plan will ensure orderly, considered development.

Further work for the Board to undertake will be:

- ensuring the information on the website is relevant and up to date,
- complete the new information brochure,
- consolidate the re-location of the Aubrey library collection from Newcastle to the Glen Innes Library Learning Centre,
- installation of solar noon seasonal shadows markers and
- introducing a special class in the cooking section of the annual Glen Innes Show. This will be a ‘Celtic’ class, with the Board providing a traditional recipe from the country being honoured at that year’s Celtic Festival.

The wonderful condition that the site is now in reflects the consistent strategic direction the Board has taken in fulfilling a number of its ‘Terms of Reference’.

It would be difficult to quantify the PR value of the Stones but needless to say, it’s all fantastic, no-cost advertising not only for the Stones but also for the Glen Innes Highlands.

Our committee is small in number but we have certainly achieved a lot this year. Thank you all for your time, commitment and passion for the Stones. I appreciate your support and value your friendship.

I also sincerely acknowledge the support from Council and its representatives on this committee – Mayor, Cr Steve Toms, General Manager, Hein Basson, Director of Development, Regulatory and Sustainability Services, Graham Price and Cr Col Price.

Judi Toms D Urr
Chairperson
ASSMB
19 August, 2017