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NAAC05 Opening Address

Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this inaugural Numismatic Association of Australia Conference (NAAC05). I am delighted to see all of you here today, not only local numismatists but many from interstate and some from overseas. Over the next two and a half days you will hear speakers from the United States and India as well as from around Australia. All speakers are recognised authorities in their areas of expertise; you will hear talks on Australian coins, tokens, notes and medals; on Ancient, Mediaeval, Indian and Ethnographic currency; and on Museum approaches to numismatics.

Over twelve months ago we approached Paul Donnelly, curator of the Powerhouse Museum numismatic collection, about the possibility of viewing some of the numismatic items in his care. Without hesitation he gave his assent, subject to the security procedures normal to all public institutions. Sydney, and indeed Australia, should consider themselves extremely fortunate to have such a helpful numismatic curator. When it was housed in the Old Mint building this collection was well cared for by Pat Boland and Ken Sheedy. Paul, Pat and Ken are here today in this room and we thank them for their contributions to preserving an important part of our heritage.

By now some of you have taken the opportunity to see an area of the Powerhouse Museum numismatic collection that interests you most. This is the first time such a large number of collectors

have gone into this 'Aladdin's cave' and discovered the wealth of the Powerhouse Museum collection. Museum collections have a two-fold purpose; specimens can be put on public display for the general public and items can be used for research purposes, the latter often leading to papers being published in learned journals such as that of the NAA (JNAA).

The NAA was founded by the late Ray Jewell and other numismatists in the mid-1980s. The concept of a national body had been discussed years before by earlier numismatists, but had become bogged down due to State rivalry and the wording of a proposed constitution. Ray had the happy knack of getting the leading numismatists in each State together, and he put to them that a national organisation could publish a learned journal and circulate it amongst all State bodies at an affordable price. Up to that time local societies had been spending up to 90% of their income on their own journals. In 1985 the JNAA was born in the form of a sixty page publication and was made available to all members of the representative numismatic organisations in Australia. John Sharples was its editor.

After a number of years producing successful journals and acting as a united voice for collectors, State representatives of the NAA decided that a national body was proving to be a worthwhile organisation and a constitution was eventually drafted and accepted.

This year we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the first volume of our

Journal. Some authors have since passed on: Stan Wilson from the WA Maritime Museum, and Alan Nicholson, an avid bank note collector. Ron Byatt and Bill Mira wrote an article, 'Amor's Centenary of Education Medalets', recording medals struck at Byatt's factory, Amor-Sanders. Byatt donated many items from his factory to the Powerhouse Museum and today we will hear from its numismatic curator, Paul Donnelly, on the importance and relevance of this donation. Regrettably Ron Byatt is not well enough to attend this conference, but he passes on to us his regards. One of our plenary speakers this weekend, John Sharples, not only wrote two articles for our JNAA but also was its editor for eight volumes. I was fortunate to have an article accepted for the inaugural volume and have had the privilege of being associated with the journal over the ensuing years.

At a recent Australian Numismatic Society conference it was suggested that the NAA itself hold a conference. I took this idea to the NAA last year and a subsequent Council resolution resulted in this weekend's conference. The ANS and other associations and societies have supported this conference financially and in other ways. The NAA is grateful for their contributions.

The NAA has always strived for numismatic excellence, and the brief given to the organisers for this conference was to attract leading numismatists from our region and from around the world and present a numismatic conference of a truly inter-national standard. We will let you decide if our goals have been achieved. We have been successful in attracting Dr Richard Doty, the head of the numismatic department of the Smithsonian Institution,

which has the largest numismatic collection in the United States, and Dr Paul Holland, a Californian based world authority on Australian bronze coins. From India we have Professor SK Bhatt of the Academy of Indian Numismatics and Sigillography, one of the leading authorities on Indian coinage. We had organised a New Zealand speaker but due to personal circumstances he had to withdraw.

We have attempted to have a balance of ancient, Australian and other topics—hopefully something for everyone. As we have many recognised authorities in their chosen fields, I am confident that we will not only enjoy their talks but learn from them, and in the process broaden our numismatic knowledge. One thing the organizers regret is that we could not invite other experts, due to speaker slot limitations.

It is hoped that the papers presented here will eventually be published either in our JNAA or a special NAA publication.

We have allocated regular breaks, not only time to have a drink and nibbles but also to mix with other registrants. These informal chats can be very helpful in either chasing that elusive specimen or simply making contact with collectors and specialists in your chosen fields. Many of the registrants have given us permission to list their email addresses at the back of the abstracts booklet to enable others to contact them after the conference, should they wish.

I dedicate this conference to the founder of the NAA, the late Ray Jewell, to the late Tom Hanley who for many years held the position of secretary of the Australian Numismatic Society, to the late Ron Greig, Honorary Curator of the SA

Numismatic Collection and Patron of the Numismatic Society of South Australia, and to the late Stan Wilson, former Curator of the WA Maritime Museum Numismatic Collection and a Patron of the Perth Numismatic Society. These four men had a great impact on numismatics in Australia in the last half of the twentieth century and all lived to see the beginnings of the NAA.

I am grateful to all our NAA sponsors: Jim Noble, Ken Downie, Rob Jackman, Peter August and Del Parker. Their support of our association means we can expand our activities in promoting the hobby and study of numismatics. To date, some of this money has been spent on indexing the first of John Melville-Jones' book on ancient Greek coins and towards the SNG (Australia) project whereby all the ancient Greek coins in Australian institutions will be photographed and recorded for the purposes of research. The results of this project will be published in book form as well as on-line. The NAA Council is now formulating a policy regarding future projects and their funding.

We thank the Powerhouse Museum for allowing us to use this room and Dr Ken Sheedy, Director of the Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies

(ACANS), for making available the necessary facilities at Macquarie University for our program for tomorrow and Sunday. We thank Paul Donnelly and Pat Boland for allowing a number of registrants to view the Powerhouse Museum collection. We also thank Roger McNeice OAM for producing the conference medal free of charge, Rod Sell for managing our webpage and Peter Fleig for his involvement in the conference brochure and abstracts book. We thank John Wade of the Australiana Society, who will be joining us on Sunday, and John Mulhall of the Coin and Banknote Magazine, for promoting this event in their respective magazines. We also thank all speakers and registrants and members of the NAA Council for promoting the conference in their regions. And finally I thank my co-organiser, Professor Walter Bloom, for his support throughout the planning stages and his involvement in arranging this conference, something that has proven to be a major activity, and our secretary / treasurer, Janis Lane, who has handled all correspondence and banking.

Peter Lane,
President,
Numismatic Association of Australia,