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## Life Membership for Ray Markey

### Abstract

A public notice was printed in the Illawarra Mercury in 1995 announcing the formation of an Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH). It was both the name of the guest speaker, Tom Uren, and the person proposing this formation, Ray Markey, that interested me enough to make me attend. Many others must have felt the same way as a well-attended inaugural meeting was held at the Ironworkers Club. Ray was duly elected Foundation President and remained President until 2003. Early in his tenure, a decision was made to record local labour history in a journal to be called Unity. By 1996, the first copy of this journal was posted out to all members with contributions from George Petersen, Ted Roach and Rowan Cahill. With support from the University of Wollongong, the technical expertise of Rob Hood and the editorship of Ray Markey, this was a quality publication.

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By December, 1996, under Ray's leadership, the Illawarra Branch was confident enough to form a committee to draft an application to stage the ASSLH's National Conference in Wollongong in 1999. The application was successful and the Conference, held in Wollongong in October, 1999, was considered an educational and social achievement by all who attended. Ray's expertise was invaluable to the committee that worked so hard to make this Conference an outstanding event. Moreover, Ray's partner Fran Laneyrie should not be forgotten as she made a vital contribution as Secretary of the group.

As a direct result of this National Conference success, the New South Wales Premier's History Awards for 2000 were presented at the Wollongong City Gallery.

Through Ray's contacts at the University of Wollongong, the Illawarra Branch was able to broaden its focus from local and national issues to include overseas speakers from the United States of America and Scandinavia. At the same time, we were supportive of local causes, such as the Sandon Point dispute and the Regent Theatre preservation.

## Illawarra Unity

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Other highlights of the programs initiated during Ray's term were the very moving and well-attended commemoration of the Mt Kembla mine disaster at the Mt Kembla pub, observations of the Sit-In at the Kemira pit and remembrances of the setting up of the Wollongong Women's Centre.

Congratulations to our former President on being given Life Membership as a recognition of his work in forming this branch and establishing *Unity*. Best wishes go to Ray and Fran for a happy and successful time in their new workplace at the Auckland University of Technology.