

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Peer Review Process

### What is peer review?

*Macquarie Dictionary* defines peer review as the **assessment of one's work by one's peer group**, or by others of similar standing and qualifications, especially with reference to scientists, doctors, academics, etc.

Peer review is important for university academics and postgraduate students. Publication in 'refereed journals' is an essential element of how an academic's scholarly reputation is judged. While we welcome papers from all those engaging with oral histories, we particularly encourage researchers and PhD students to submit papers for peer review. The editorial board of the *Oral History Australia Journal* offers feedback in a supportive manner designed to facilitate communication of scholarship in the field of oral history.

### I am not at university. Can my work be peer reviewed?

Yes. Just as membership of the Oral History Australia is open to everyone with an interest in oral history, any contributor to the *Oral History Australia Journal* can request peer review and benefit from objective feedback and advice.

### Is my work suitable for peer review?

Your work may be suitable for peer review in the *Oral History Australia Journal* if it is:

- **relevant** to the membership of State Oral History Associations;
- **original** in subject matter and approach;
- **accessible and readable**;
- **conforming** to the Oral History Australia Journal Style Guide for Contributors i.e. your work contains **substantial consideration of theoretical, and/or ethical and/or methodological issues**, and is no more than 5,500 words, including notes.

In more general terms, this means that:

- The paper has an introduction that clearly outlines the main thrust of your argument.
- You have conducted thorough research into, and evaluated, the current literature relevant to your area of writing.
- You have understood the current literature and been able to apply it to your own work.
- Your paper makes a contribution to knowledge about oral history, for example, you have identified a gap in the literature and are addressing it.
- You acknowledge and accurately reference the sources you have used to develop your paper.
- You use an appropriate style, i.e. your language is clear and concise; you avoid verbosity, cliché and meaningless phrases; you use active rather than passive voice; and you explain jargon or terms that are specific to your research method or topic.

To help prepare for peer review, you should browse issues of the *Oral History Australia Journal* to see examples of peer-reviewed papers. If you are a university student your supervisors, tutors, and library staff will also be able to assist you in developing your work for peer review.

### **What does the peer review process entail?**

During the peer review process, the *Oral History Australia Journal* board, which consists of four editors, will first decide if your paper is suitable for peer review and, if they agree it is, forward the paper to two experts in the field.

These experts then give feedback as to the content and approach; the validity of the argument presented in the paper; how well the author has read, used and understood other academic resources; whether the paper makes a contribution to knowledge; innovation or originality of material; presentation; and relevance for an oral history audience. Peer reviewers may refuse to pass the paper for peer review and/or suggest many changes.

This process is referred to as 'blind' peer review because the experts and the board don't know the name of the author, and the author doesn't know the identity of the peer reviewers. This eliminates bias in that regard.

The peer review process can be time consuming, taking up to six months from submission to final publication. The editorial board recommends that authors undertaking the peer review process allow ample time to meet all deadlines.

After reading a paper, the board may agree that the paper is not suitable for peer review, but is of interest to the *Oral History Australia Journal's* readers. In this case, there will be an opportunity for the paper to be published in the non-peer reviewed section of the journal. Please be aware that the board may ask for revision of papers.

### **Why peer review?**

The peer review process is a way to ensure that papers are of a high standard, and that other researchers can rely on the work they contain.

If you want your article to have credibility in the field of oral history and you are building your academic profile, it is important to have your article peer reviewed. You should also find the process instructive as the emphasis is on providing constructive feedback on your work.

### **Can I still publish papers in the *Oral History Australia Journal* even if I don't want them peer reviewed?**

Yes. The *Oral History Australia Journal* accepts project reports, descriptions of projects, and even poems and other creative writing based on oral histories, in the non-peer reviewed section of the journal. The editors look forward to reading your work.