



2023



af  
Alliance Française  
Sunshine Coast

**Annual General Meeting  
18 November 2023 - 10am  
La Maison du Pâtissier**

**PRESIDENT REPORT**

**Introduction**

2023, the year during which AFSC celebrated its 15th birthday, has been quite a year! You've somehow survived a second year of my Presidency and I'm relishing the thought of moving forward together for a 3rd year when we will celebrate being "Sweet 16"!

**Committee**

Without a strong committee, no organisation can survive and I want to thank each and every one for your individual and collective contributions to the success of the past year.

Our Administrative and teaching staff form the backbone of AFSC and the excellence of your Alliance is reflected in everything they do. To the indefatigable Cécile, to Verity, Émilie, Marine and most recently Morgane, the ex-officio members of our committee, I express my deepest, most sincere thanks.

Which leads us neatly into

**Teaching**

Some of you may be aware that, as well as being your President, I have also been a student of Alliance Française since 2020. During tough economic times, with so many lower grade and cheaper online options for language learning, it is can be tempting to take the easy way out, but the retention rate of both our adult and child students is a testament to the worldwide quality of AF teachers and in particular to Cécile, Verity, Émilie, Marine and Morgane.

It is important that Alliance Française is front of mind whenever anyone decides to study French - be that as a young student learning for the first time, or a more mature adult picking up the threads of language learned long ago, possibly long forgotten, but which suddenly become more appealing as the desire to travel and experience culture more profoundly becomes irresistible. Nobody does that better than AFSC.

We continue to hold classes both face to face and online via Skype or Zoom and follow the Queensland academic calendar. Our students' results are impressive and those of you who were here in March to celebrate the worldwide «Semaine de la Francophonie» will never forget the joy and smiles on the faces of some of our younger students as they, and their teacher Émilie, entertained us with songs complete with some very French hand movements. The rapturous applause at the end from the nearly 50 members who were here that day said it all and we can't wait to have the children back again next year!

For our mature age students, this year saw the introduction of an Immersion Week in New Caledonia led by the one and only Cécile. This saw a group of around 20 students from Regional Alliances all up and down the East Coast of Australia combine to spend a week of study and cultural learning, immersed in the French language (and the beauty of Nouméa) from morning to night. Lasting friendships were formed, so much was gained and applications are already flooding in for this year's Immersion Week - if you are interested, you will find all the details of this, and of all our other teaching and cultural activities, on our website and in our Newsletters.

### **Membership**

Our membership numbers remain very strong and we currently have 265 paid up members, an increase of over 30 from the same time last year. I believe that this is an indication of the perceived value that AFSC offers through family memberships as well as reductions for student and concession members. Word is spreading amongst the Francophone and Francophile community and I anticipate that this upward trend will continue throughout the coming year.

### **Cultural Activities**

Our traditional celebrations were very well attended yet again this year (Galette, Bastille Day, we even added a very popular rendez-vous with our Veterans on the theme of la Légion étrangère). The increase in attendances at our Café Conversations at La Maison du Pâtissier and the Loose Goose, as well as the introduction this year of Club Conversations at the Coolum Surf Club has been extremely encouraging and I thank the committee members who regularly give their time and expertise to attend. We now offer 3 meetings each month on Saturdays and in the coming year we are planning to introduce some French themed pique-niques and games of Pétanque, a canal cruise from Mooloolaba as well as some get-togethers at local French cafés and businesses throughout the Sunshine Coast.

The renowned French Film Festival, of which Alliance Française Sunshine Coast continues to be a major sponsor, was this year the largest regional Film Festival in Australia and repeatedly saw sell-out sessions at cinemas in Caloundra, Noosa, Maroochydore and Nambour. This was an incredible achievement and demonstrates the interest local residents have in quality French films. Members receive discounts on their tickets and the organisation of the Festival continues to be expertly undertaken by Murray Power, relieving us of film selection, ticket selling and promotional tasks for which we have neither the time nor the expertise.

So great was the success of the main French Film Festival that Murray has continued to show more French Films throughout the year, including a "Mini French Film Festival" held recently in October which yet again attracted sell out crowds to Noosa and Caloundra.

## **Diplomatic**

Following the departure of Lady Jane Edwards from her role as the Honorary Consul for France in Queensland, we were delighted to welcome the new Hon Consul, M Alain Etchegaray. Jean Pierre was able to attend this year's Round Table in Brisbane hosted by Alain, and represented AFSC with distinction, as always. Alain and his wife Isabelle have been very proactive in this new role and we enjoy welcoming them to our Café Conversations as they discover the enthusiastic French community here on the Sunshine Coast.

In November, Cécile and I were delighted to accept an invitation to a soirée at Government House in Brisbane, celebrating the 140th Anniversary of Alliance Française worldwide, where we met Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Dr Jeanette Young together with her husband Professor Nimmo who addressed us all in excellent French!

The French Ambassador, HE Jean-Pierre Thébault, will depart from Canberra at the end of this year and we look forward to meeting his successor in due course.

It is appropriate that mention of the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, should be included under the heading of Diplomacy! It was an enormous honour for me to represent you, the members of the Alliance Française de la Sunshine Coast, at the Palais de l'Élysée in Paris in July, where M. Macron made a passionate speech outlining the achievements of l'Alliance Française over the past 140 years. Despite strict security protocols, I was able to speak with the President following his speech and having shaken his hand and introduced myself, I proudly assured M. Macron that French language and culture is very much alive and valued here on the Sunshine Coast in Australia. He seemed to appreciate that, and no mention was made of submarines!

## **Alliance Française Network**

As we celebrated the 140th Anniversary of our Network, worldwide events took place, not the least of which was the Congrès Mondial over the course of a week in July which Cécile, Émilie and I were very privileged and proud to attend. There were around 700 delegates, President.e.s, Directeurs, Directrices from every continent on the planet (with the exception of Antarctica) and we became aware of the way in which the French language is developing and mutating as it adapts to the needs of its speakers as they spread across the globe in this ever-changing world. Delegates from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, the Indian sub-continent, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific - all mingled in celebration of our common connection: the language and culture of France. It was a humbling, yet at the same time uplifting experience for each of us. You will be able to follow links from our website to presentations, workshops, speeches etc and we plan to share some of our learnings, photographs and memories from the Conference with you all during upcoming Café Conversations.

The Asia-Pacific Network of Alliances Françaises, of which Australia is part, meets regularly via Zoom and earlier this month held a physical meeting in New Caledonia to which I am very proud to say Cécile was invited. Each region throughout the world experiences its own challenges and it is through regular conversations that our combined knowledge can be best utilised. We so often feel that the concerns we face apply only to us, so it is reassuring to realise that we are not alone and that others are working to find solutions - together we are stronger and our Network shines.

Our Regional network of petites Alliances within Australia continues strongly, and while individually each small Alliance contributes significantly to the area in each state in which it is active, it is encouraging to see the developing interaction and merging of ideas to achieve larger outcomes.

As previously mentioned, Cécile's initiative to combine students from several smaller Alliances (who, individually, would never have had the numbers or resources to participate) into a substantial group who pioneered the Immersion week in Nouméa in September is the perfect example of what can be achieved when small groups work together and support each other. I am so proud of her energy and she received a standing ovation at our recent National Conference in Brisbane following her presentation to the members from all around Australia who were present.

### **In conclusion**

As the year draws to a close, we can reflect on what we have learned and achieved, in the sure and certain knowledge that the coming year will throw us even more challenges! It is wonderful to work with such a dedicated group of Francophiles, who give so selflessly of their time and energy and I am proud to know you all. Our 16th year at AF here on the Sunshine Coast will see new faces and hopefully some new ideas, while we work to improve on what we already do well. Please feel free to bring your suggestions and your energy to this wonderful Alliance and help us to keep it alive and vibrant.

May each of you enjoy a happy and peaceful Christmas and may the year ahead be filled with kindness.

You inspire me, and for that I thank you.

Caroline  
Présidente - Alliance Française Sunshine Coast.