

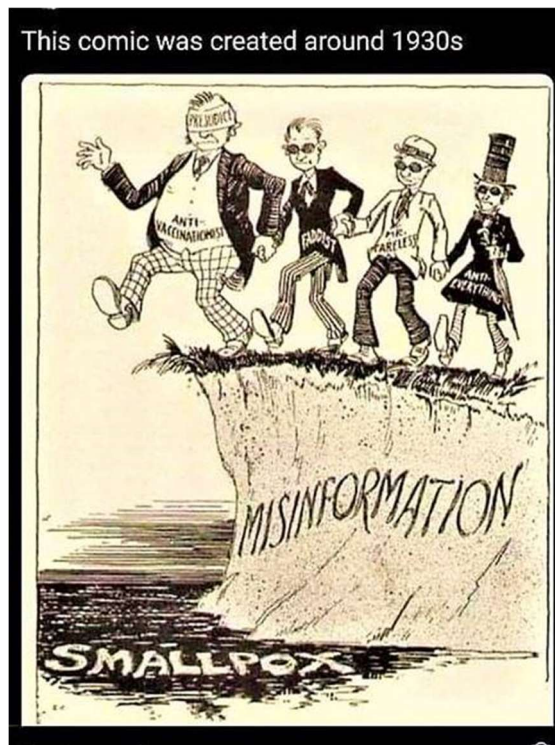
Communique from the Branch Chair

Hearty Greetings to fellow members of the Queensland Branch of The Order of Australia Association (OAA).

Calendar year 2021 draws (thankfully) to a close. Like 2020 it will be remembered mostly for a continuation of COVID pandemic challenges covered by a myriad of transient mandated regulations. In recent days border restrictions have eased for people travelling to Queensland; finally we can welcome into open arms our Inter-State family members, albeit, under a raft of conditions. Moreover, we Queenslanders enter a new set of rules governing our social interactions; viz. businesses are only permitted to allow fully vaccinated people to attend hospitality venues and to visit our aged family members residing in aged care facilities. We thus need to carry our vac-certification record and the easiest way is to combine it onto your QR Code app. If, like me, you grimace with digital changes, one needs to be patient and if possible have a grandchild close by for tech support.

We all now have to live with this evolving virus and with so much misinformation about it is best to access current requirements at <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/queensland-restrictions-update/public-health-and-social-measures-linked-to-vaccination-status>.

A cartoon from yesteryear is apt for awareness today, viz.



Queensland Branch members continue to attend functions in most heartening numbers. Since my last communique well-attended luncheons have been held throughout the State including Rockhampton, Townsville, Bribie Island, Toowoomba, Gold Coast, Cairns, Mackay and Brisbane. The energy and commitment of our event organisers are truly commendable. In this vein we collectively record a sincere thank you to Paul McNally OAM, long time Darling Downs Regional Convenor, who has stepped down from the position. We warmly welcome Megan McNicholl OAM to the role.

The 22nd Annual Secondary Schools Citizenship Award Ceremony was held at Parliament House with 62 nominations of worthy year 12 students from 53 Secondary Schools comprising good representation of both State High Schools and Private Colleges from right across Queensland. Twelve outstanding year 12 students were selected by a three-person judging panel and received their Award from the Governor of Queensland.

A OAA Recipients luncheon attracted record numbers. For many years the Branch has hosted two Celebratory Luncheons; one for Australia Day Award recipients and one for Queen's Birthday Award recipients. COVID-19 restrictions again prevented the process in 2021 so the Branch held one composite function on 26 October. Of the 238 guests attending some 65 were new Awardees, a local record. Furthermore, 50 of the new Awardees had already joined the Association. The 2021 overall uptake of OAA membership is a healthy 43%.

It was my privilege to represent the Association at Government House:

- two farewell functions held to mark the term exit of our Branch Patron, His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, CVO the Governor. A formal letter of appreciation for his personal support was recorded.
- a greeting function to welcome the new Governor, Her Excellency The Honourable Dr Jeanette Young PSM. It is with pleasure that I can report that the new Governor has agreed in formal correspondence to be our Patron for the duration of her term of office.

The Branch Committee has returned to monthly in person meetings and while we all agreed that the ZOOM formats are efficient and will continue when opportunity requires, viz regional inclusive discussions, there is no substitute to eye ball business discussion. A reminder that more information on The Order of Australia Association both nationally, including the OAA Foundation seeking funding for scholarships, and amongst the State Branches can be readily accessed at; <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/>. There are still a small number of our members without web access. Perhaps you can assist their digital contact via a family member or friend.

In signing off I wish you and yours a safe and inclusive celebration of the Christmas break in your own traditional manner. I shall enjoy my favourite local forest (attached). May the New Year 2022 bring to fruition every expectation we seek as committed members of a truly blessed, caring Australian community.

Kind regards



18 December 2021



Dr Gary Bacon AM, Chair OAA Queensland Branch.

Ferny Grove Sentinels



I ride through their scented territory

Can't miss them

All newly clothed in orange garb

Standing firm in battalions arrayed

Awaiting a call to claim the upslope

The odd black suits seemingly in charge

Gray flannelled adjutants dispersed.

None are reference specimens

Amassed they colour fill the landscape

Awash in multi stripes all angled

Not a single one unwanted

All core to the canvas forest vista

The eye scans expectantly, the ear awaits

Finally the call, a rifle bird holes the air.

Countless disrupters have harried through

The sawtooth thinned the originals

Steel rails brought steam clouds and noise

Hot fires singed, droughts starved them

Cloven hooves compacted their feeders

Nowadays only wanted gazes fix upon their form

Our sentinels can now stand and expand.