



**THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**

PATRON

Her Excellency

**The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC
Governor of New South Wales**

NSW Branch Chairman's Report to the 2023 Annual General Meeting

I first acknowledge the traditional owners of our country who have cared for God's creation longer than any others and who are more connected to the earth than those who through their ancestry and/or migration have made Australia their home.

We give thanks that through their stewardship, lore and custodianship, we have much to learn about how to conserve, benefit and sustain our land for countless generations to come.

The recent years have seen dramatic changes to challenge the ways we meet, learn, value, relate, sustain momentum and view the future with hope. Thus my 2023 report will centre much on the future for we cannot change history, and this will show the changes your Branch Committee foresees and plans to better the values of membership of our Association.

The Association's constitutional objects are simply summed up as "to celebrate and promote Australian citizenship" through:

- Promoting The Order of Australia as our Nation's pre-eminent awards;**
- Supporting and encouraging young Australians in their careers and service to the Nation; and**
- Building networks amongst recipients of an Award through membership of our Association and its activities.**

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Mirroring the Association's National Board, the Branch Committee is finalising the Branch's plan for 2023 to 2025 years and shortly we will share that with the NSW Members. It will focus on:

- The nominations of more diverse, invaluable contributions to our community, particularly younger aged Australians;**
- Growing the value of membership of our Association;**
- Building a better future for the Association; and**

- **Investing in community partnerships and projects.**

for NSW, we will have an additional goal of a successful National Conference in NSW in early May 2025. That work has just begun.

In many ways, the first four goals are already happening in NSW with the Branch Committee pushing the nominations responsibility to our members and providing guidelines, introducing a Members benefits purchasing programme, promoting an explanatory marketing statement on the benefits of membership of the Association which is being further considered by the National Board, encouraging the Regions to adopt local partnerships and sponsorships, and working with an independent group which has initiated a “Young Australian Leaders” programme for young Australians in their tertiary education age group and beyond.

Our Association is ideally placed to influence Australia’s present and future community leadership, building on the inspirational backgrounds of Awardees. Our Youth Community Service Awards programme is ripe to recognise potential new leaders, many of whom have already been attracted to join that programme which we hope our Branch can formally partner in the future with the provision of our Association members as mentors.

BRANCH ACTIVITIES

The NSW Reception of new Awardees resumed in November 2022 after a two year gap because of Covid social distancing restrictions and the inability for our Association to be represented at Government House Investiture ceremonies, as well as difficulties finding an appropriate venue with the lengthy refurbishment of NSW Parliament House Dining Room. That has been an unwelcome discouragement to enlisting new members.

Sydney events include the Opera and Christmas luncheons, resumption of the Australia Day annual harbour cruise (cancelled in 2022), the creation of the Northern Beaches Sub-region. There is a great raft of more events this calendar year which augers well, including a Sydney based Coronation event.

I thank the team led by Branch Deputy Chairman John Gullotta AM and his team, including his wife Mara and Branch Secretary Martha Jabour OAM, as well as Gail Dunne OAM, our Treasurer whose initiative it was to start the Sub-region.

I also applaud the fundraising results for the Sydney based events as well as a number of regions doing likewise, the latest being the Central West region’s support of the Country Education Foundation of Australia as their local project. Fundraising certainly helps lift our Association’s profile and reflects our continued giving for a better community.

REGIONS

All but three of our 16 Regional Groups had at least one function over the last year, with a number holding more events, some even with regular morning and/or afternoon teas or the like to keep contact with members.

Leadership of eight has changed with new enthusiasm as we recover from Covid impacts. Fortunately, the groups have a positive mix of new and old so that the local corporate history has not been lost. I see a very encouraging rebirth or at least re-energising for 2023-4.

I particularly want to acknowledge the recent retiring regional convenors : John O'Dwyer OAM (Illawarra), June Cameron AM (The Hunter), Audrey Hardman OAM (Central West) and Greg Hartig AM (Taree Manning). I also welcome the incoming Convenors: Harold Sharp OAM (Central Coast), Mary Brell AM (Central West), Peter Corcoran AM (The Hunter), Phil Thompson AM (Illawarra), Wendy Borchers OAM (Taree Manning), Sharon Hooglands OAM (Southern Highlands), and the return of Anne Stewart OAM (Coffs Harbour).

Unfortunately, the Southern Tablelands Group has not operated for some five years or more and the Branch Committee is currently working with resident members there as to which neighbouring regions they would like to join within NSW or connecting with nearby ACT Branch.

Certainly, Chris Dunne OAM , our Regional Groups co-ordinator on the Branch Committee, has done a mammoth job resourcing the regional leaders. Chris, Gail Dunne OAM and I have tried to attend all regional functions where we have been given advanced notice. It is important the Branch Committee and regional leadership connect regularly. This has especially been done by regular Zoom meetings of those leaders and the Committee, at which all but one region has been present. This will continue as this is one of the benefits of the pandemic, namely meetings are more convenient this way as they do not involve travel time and costs.

With the rapid urban growth and function costs in Sydney, the Branch Committee has successfully trialled the Northern Beaches Sub-region which had two local functions. The Lower Blue Mountains Region includes the Penrith Nepean and Hawkesbury Council areas. Both look at lower cost club venues and we seek interested sub-regional leaders to cover Hills, North Shore, Southern and South- Western areas as we are also conscious that Sydney City based events require significant travel from outlying suburbs. The sub-regions would include an inspiring speaker with which our Association is abundantly gifted.

COMMUNICATIONS

Unlike the other Branches who circulate a glossy intra-branch quarterly publication to complement the national "The Order", our Branch issues eleven themed Newsletters from the Branch Chairman as a more effective contact with our members. This regularity ensures members are more currently kept aware of relevant national and Branch events, issues and challenges.

The Branch website plays an important complementary role and I encourage Regional Convenors to send reports with photos of their events to Louise Davis AM, our Communications and Promotions Manager, and Chris Dunne OAM in his other role of Website Manager. These and individual member profiles are needed to make the Branch Newsletter, "The Order" and the Branch website interesting and stimulating reading for all of us.

We value your ideas and feedback for each of these Communication tools. Even some regions send out periodical communications and I compliment their initiative.

MEMBERSHIP

We lost many members through death or moving into residential aged care. However, our recruiting new Awardees during the pandemic and the resultant social restrictions severely hit our membership numbers which nationally plateaued. Consequently, the Branch Committee has concentrated on developing a promotable statement of the benefits of membership of the Association as well as our Branch trialling a member purchasing benefits programme. We thank our Branch Secretary Martha Jabour OAM for spearheading that initiative and Sharon Hooglands OAM on cleverly crafting the statement.

Our Branch Membership Secretary, Geoffrey Glassock AM, has significantly reduced the number of unfinancial members just by ringing each person the National Membership Officer Heather Willis advises us each month. Heather has incredibly supported Geoff, as well as helping Louise Davis with new Awardee congratulatory letters and with the distribution of our monthly Branch Newsletters.

Each new member receives a letter of welcome and regional members are advised of the region to which they will be part of and the details of their Regional Convenor.

Our recruiting goal is for more than 35% of new Awardees joining the Association and that has already been surpassed with the latest National statistics. Any member organisation is only strong where there is recruitment of active and stimulating members.

YOUTH COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

This is the highest community profiling activity for our Association in NSW and I strongly sense is the envy of many other organisations.

Frank Kelleher has mastered the organisation of this programme and will be assisted by Trish Wetton OAM this year as part of supporting the amazing efforts of Frank but also to evidence succession planning as cannot afford to fail.

The programme is supported by the interaction with the NSW Education Department as we approach over nine hundred high school principals to

encourage them to nominate a student. The nominations are assessed by a panel of three judges. Frank then co-ordinates with the twenty-five chosen winners whose award is presented at Government House in Sydney and the other nominees receive a certificate to recognise their contribution to community which they can include in their CVs. Other Committee members help as needed and we thank the NSW Lieutenant Governor the Honourable Andrew Bell for presenting the 2022 Awards and look forward to Her Excellency Margaret Beazley AC KC resuming this task in 2023. The relationship with Government House is paramount to membership development and she too is greatly encouraging our young people.

We look forward to the Regions helping to encourage their local School Principals to nominate and see the feasibility of creating a continuing relationship with the nominees in their post-school careers. Similarly, the Branch Committee is developing a strong interaction with the Young Australian Leaders organisation which was independently started by several Association members to mentor our programme's Awardees. Watch this space because the youth of today are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but they already are now and have much more to offer. Our members should make great mentors. As a sign I recently sighted said: "hope equals a brighter future." We can be part of that by supporting our youth.

THE FOUNDATION and 2025 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Our Branch Deputy Chairman and Secretary are forming a 2025 National Conference Organising Task Group which will be accountable to both the Branch Committee and the National Board. We need NSW members with solid experience in event management so please speak to either of John or Martha if you wish to be considered. There is much to be done well before the 2024 National Conference in Perth where we will need to nationally "sell" Sydney's turn in 2025.

It is also traditional that the hosting Branch fundraise a Foundation scholarship which can be awarded at the Conference host's annual dinner whereat the Governor-General presents the scholarship winner(s).

Branch Committeeman Harold Sharp OAM will spearhead the appeal to NSW members who are able to donate to the Foundation which is a "Deductible Gift Recipient" for income tax purposes, unlike the Association, which is a not-for-profit organisation, even though both organisations are accountable to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

BRANCH COMMITTEE TENURES and THANKS

Our current Constitution prescribes a term of three years for each Office Bearer and Committee Member. Each can serve for two more consecutive terms. The ultimate aim is for a rotational re-election or replacement to ensure input of fresh energy whilst retaining reasonable corporate history.

However, there is only one vacancy this year but next year, I will be stepping down from the Branch Committee. It is hoped that John Gullotta and Martha Jabour are elected as the incoming Branch Chairman and

Deputy Chair respectively, each for a three year term. At least three of the current Committee members will be up for re-election or replacement in 2024. This will enable an election of one-third (4) of the Committee (12).

At this stage of the Branch Chairman's Report, I want to acknowledge the contributions of the Branch Committee.

All are volunteers to whom we allocate identifiable roles to avoid having passengers. Each has served the members well and we will miss Adrienne Cahalan OAM who is standing down to pursue another community role and wish her well and success.

Treasurer Gail Dunne has been formidably exacting with the work she does in that role alone, let alone her supporting with regional visits and developing the Northern Beaches Sub-region. Romano Di Donato OAM has supported her and John Gullotta with events and has another year before re-election.

Louise Davis and Martha Jabour have been superb in their support of myself, organisationally, administratively and wise counsellors, as well as assessing my writings and strategic thinking.

This Branch Committee is blessed with thinkers, energy and doers. I applaud each one.

**Jim Mein AM
NSW Branch Chairman and NSW Branch Nominated Director**

7th March 2023