



THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION

NORTHERN TERRITORY BRANCH

PO Box 2171, Parap NT 0804

Chair - Alan James OAM

ChairNT@theorderofaustralia.asn.au

Secretary – David DeSilva AM

ddesilva@ddesilvahebron.com.au

Patron - His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie PSM

Newsletter, October 2023

Annual Dinner 8 August 2023

Our previous newsletter pre-dated the annual dinner in August, so it is good now to be able to report on that enjoyable event. Over 60 members of our Association Chapter attended the function in the Hilton Hotel, strengthening ties of friendship. Guest speaker for the evening was Ms Deana Cumings, Acting Director of the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat in the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. She explained some of the processes around the granting of Australian Awards – researching claims, checking referees, and generally facilitating good results. Listeners found her presentation illuminating and very interesting.

Highlight of the evening was a tribute to Mr. Earl James AM and Mrs. Wendy James OAM for their exuberant and illustrious contribution to life in Darwin over 80 years, a time that included the Second World War and the dramatic evacuation of Wendy and her family. The tribute was presented by the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO, National President of the Order of Australia Association, who has had a memorable association with the James family. It finished with Earl and Wendy receiving flowers and Certificates of Appreciation from the Order of Australia Association NT. Earl's Certificate was for his

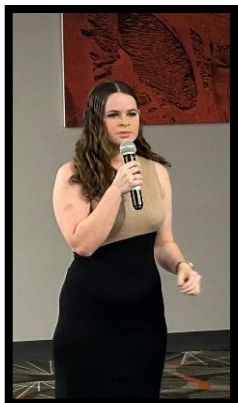
leadership in urban and rural development, representing the Northern Territory's interests at local, national and international levels, and his contribution to civic and municipal progress, across the Territory.

Wendy's Certificate commended her

lifetime contribution to the advancement of women and mentoring future female leaders, and her tireless voluntary service to the Northern Territory community.

One of our branch committee members Hon Jane Aagaard AM described the tribute as most heartwarming and informative.

Guests were also treated to musical items from Felicity Lamberton, a music student from McKillop College in Palmerston.



*Treasurer Jai Singh AM, Hon Jane Aagaard AM
Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO, Wendy James OAM,
Alan James OAM, Earl James AM, Linda Fazldeen AM*

Guests Enjoying the Annual Dinner



Above: *Duncan McNeil, Marie-Louise Pearson OAM, and Jennifer Duggan OAM*



Lita Connolly, Jan Riley, Susanne Bradley AM, Wendy James OAM



Left: *Rex Wild AO KC, Anthony Waite, Katrina Fong Lim AM*

Right: *Hon Peter Styles, Kate Carter, Linda Fazldeen AM, Paul Carter OAM*



Darwin and Alice Springs Investiture Ceremonies



His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie PSM, Administrator of the Northern Territory, presided over two Award Investiture ceremonies – one at Government House, Darwin, September 8 and the other at the Hilton Hotel in Alice Springs on October 2. These awardees were featured separately in our last newsletter. We are proud of the good number, and the diversity these high achievers represent and the Darwin members of the NT Chapter of



the OAA look forward to a closer relationship with our Alice Springs colleagues.

Front Left to Right: *Miss Keturah Zimran OAM, Ms Maureen York OAM, Mrs Barbara Gilfedder OAM and Mr Robert Baldock OAM.*

Back Left to Right: *Ms Gloria Morales-Segovia OAM and Ms Cecilia Alfonso OAM.*

The Administrator said: "It is truly important to recognise Territorians at the highest level for their achievements and contributions through the Order of Australia".

Lord Mayor's Reception 19 October 2023

NT Chapter of the OAA is excited over the re-instatement of a past tradition of City Council support and celebration of our group and of local Order recipients. On October 19, the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Darwin the Hon. Kon Vatskalis hosted a reception in the Civic Centre for our Chapter and gave a very warm speech about his delight at the event.

The focus of the evening was a tribute to Hon Ted Egan AO, Administrator of the Northern Territory from 2003-2007. Ted (91), present with his wife Nerys Evans, was honoured in a biographical panegyric by his long-time friend Earl James AM (92) and those present became increasingly aware of the historical significance of this semi-formal social event.

As a reminder: *Ted Egan was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 1993 Australia Day Honours List for services to the Aboriginal people, and for "an ongoing contribution to the literary heritage of Australia through song and verse". In 2004, he was promoted to an Officer of the Order (AO) as acknowledgement of "the significance of his continuing contribution to the community culminating in his being sworn-in as the 18th Administrator of the Northern Territory". As a singer and song-writer, Ted was the recipient of the National Folk Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award in April 2015 at NFF's Opening Ceremony in Canberra. Ted Egan is listed among the "Australia's National Living Treasures" by the National Trust of Australia.*



But Earl James' tribute was very special - personal, detailed, and full of interesting anecdotes and uniquely Territorian insights. Those present felt privileged to hear about Ted – while he was in the room – from a distinguished member of the Darwin community. What a couple of legends, and what a narrative! Ted himself treated the guests to one his

songs – *The Paragon Café*, and was then presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the NT Chapter, by Alan James OAM.

Members of the Committee of the NT Chapter with Lord Mayor Kon Vatskalis and Nerys Evans and Ted Egan AO, Wayne Kraft AM, Alan James OAM (at rear) Robynne Burridge OAM (front) Jai Singh AM, Hon Jane Aagaard AM, and Linda Fazldeen AM.





Hon Trevor Riley AO and Jan Riley.



Marilyn and Jeff Pinkerton OAM with Wendy James OAM



Karen and Jared Archibald OAM



Peter Whelan AM and Kate Carter

More Mayoral Reception Guests



Administrator Hon. Hugh Heggie PSM, Maureen York OAM, Wayne Kraft AM and Helen Egan at the Alice Springs Investiture



Nora Lewis AM, Amanda Leach AM and Mr. Leach



Carole Miller OAM, Joe Randazzo AM and Serena Randazzo

Newsletter Featured Member



Dr. Jan Hills OAM grew up in Brisbane, won a Commonwealth Scholarship to attend UQ in 1957, and graduated in Veterinary Science November 1962. She went to work in Kerang, and after a year of locums in country Victoria and NSW, returned to Brisbane, spending a short time in urban practice.

Jan had long thought about going to the NT, and learned that a private practitioner was desperately wanted. She packed her Holden station sedan, buying start-up drugs and getting some large wire cat cages made. With her Grandmother's kitchen table on the roof and her trusty German Shepherd dog, Kim, she drove to Darwin, camping along the way, arriving in October 1964.

Jan met Ted D'Ambrosio at the Animal Industries Branch, who suggested she set up camp at Mindil Beach. Soon she moved in with the Donatelli family in Edmunds Street, and was then offered the small kitchen of the AIB – about 8 feet square – to set up a veterinary practice. Jan says *"The room served the purpose well and people could park on the red dirt outside as there was a big space across to the street. Government vets did not want the daily supervision of the abattoir so I was appointed to that federal role, answerable to the CVO in SA. I did regular clinics in Katherine, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy, and once in Tennant Creek."*

In a Government land auction, Jan secured a block and built veterinary premises. *"For years I slept on a fold-up bed in a room next to the kennels – neither comfortable or soundproof."* Jan attended Veterinary meetings with Goff Letts as head of AIB, and was soon elected to represent the profession on the National Board. *Goff said about the position "this was hard-won. You must always retain the place."* So I started flying to Sydney for Board meetings". Back in Darwin someone advertised the start-up of Toastmasters, and Jan was a founding member. She evidently smartened up her public speaking skills, and became a critic for Penguins and Rostrum.

In 1977 Dr Jim Eedle established the Duke of Edinburgh Award in the NT and Jan was an applicant for the committee at that inaugural meeting – recalling her days of Outward Bound experience . She remained on the committee and succeeded as president after that role left the Education Department – holding the position for fifteen years. It was Jan's initiative that took the scheme to Aboriginal settlements – an extremely productive move. The Aboriginal kids termed it “Duke's Mob” – a term that has stayed and spread across Australia and beyond.

Meantime Jan had married, and she helped Ron build a house behind the Clinic on weekends and after work. *“Ron's ability later extended to obtaining a Pilot's license which enabled him to fly me to distant stations to do TB testing. My heavy workload did not enable time off for me to study for own license ... I would get in the vehicle sometimes and think 'Am I going to East Point, Mrs Flockhart's horses or Humpty Doo?'. I finally managed to get an assistant Veterinarian – not without drama in those early days.”*

After the NT was awarded self-Government in 1978, Jan applied for a position on the Northern Territory Development Corporation – in Roger Steele's Department. *“That was a wonderful time, for what I learnt, the people I met, the developments we were able to assist. I was the longest serving board member, and really enjoyed working with such dedicated people in this productive Government Department – enthused with their work and the opportunity to contribute to our Territory.”*

In the early 1980s Jan joined the Board of Kormilda College, and became chairman there, another position she enjoyed very much. She resigned when she decided to live out of Darwin and it was no longer feasible to continue.

A few years later, Jan and her friend Pip Bremner purchased the Grove Hill hotel, on the site of a former gold mine and railway siding in the Victoria-Daly Region – listed in the Northern Territory Heritage Register on 2nd November 1994. Jan spent many weekends discovering the history of the area and getting to know the locals. They got the hotel re-licensed, and Jan eventually took over the Hotel and moved there to live in 1996.

“After living very primitively for some years, I signed some ridiculous contract and put on the electricity, thereby creating a great boon for Ban Ban Station and others. I lived at the pub till 2000 when I went to live at a property I had purchased at Pell Airstrip some time before”.

In 2000 Jan joined the Board of the National Trust and became Chair, a position she held for nine years There were some good achievements and changes during that time. At Pell she ran cattle, researched and set up a tour about the very individual unit that worked there – 4RSU – and about which one airman wrote a book.

Jan says: *“The fact that many people drove through Batchelor and didn't realise its great history stimulated me to write 'The Batchelor Walk' when I was involved in a tourism committee there. The NTTC had big informational panels printed along with suitable photos and the walk is utilised by tourists today.”* Not being



satisfied with that, Jan applied for utilisation of the condemned buildings from the Uranium Mine days for a Museum. Eventually the buildings were leased to the Batchelor Development Association Inc in 2008. Jan a few friends spent two days a week for the next two years upgrading the neglected and ransacked buildings. The Museum opened on August 4, 2012, and has been presenting history now for over 11 years. A committee manages the Batchelor Museum, but Jan is trying to institute a more permanent body as committee numbers dwindle.

Jan was also the prime mover behind the Conversion of the Geises' residence at the Burnett precinct into a historic building under the National Trust for community enjoyment.

Jan concludes: *“I told a long-term friend and colleague when we were on tour after a Veterinary Conference in Zimbabwe, that I had been asked to be the first woman president of the Australian Veterinary Association. I have no regrets about my decision to decline for many reasons, and I congratulated Dr. Helen Fairnie-Jones on her election to the position. Whilst I did not know it, Helen nominated me for an honour in the Order of*

Australia, only realising when she phoned after the award was known on Australia Day 2020 and said 'and about bloody time too!.'"

We acknowledge Jan's interesting life's work on behalf of the NT.

