



Dated February/March 2025

Vision Impaired Accessible Document



On the front cover is a photo of cupcakes – but very special ones! They are decorated with the logo of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Australian honours system, celebrated on 14 February with a reception at Government House.

#### NOTICES & EXCLUSIONS:

This version of our national magazine is not intended for general distribution to the wider public but is prepared as a service for those of our members who require the use of vision-impaired screen-reader technology. Thus, certain pages of the hard-copy version involving complex graphics or page layout have been omitted.

#### GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION.

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**FROM THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL**

## **HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC**

As your Governor-General, it has been a great privilege to come to know and understand Australia's Order of Australia more deeply.

I am grateful to the board and members of the Order of Australia Association, including the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, the National President, for so generously giving me the benefit of vital insights into the importance and purpose of the Order.

My most meaningful lessons, however, have come from conversations with members of the Order who have shared powerful reflections on what it means to be appointed and recognised in the Order of Australia. From "I have never felt more Australian" to "This is my motivation to do more", the Australian honours system plays an important role in our successful, modern and diverse national story.

In November, at Admiralty House in Sydney, I was delighted to welcome Dr Helen Nugent A.C, Chair of the Order of Australia Association Foundation, and the five 2025 Foundation scholarship recipients. It was simply inspiring to meet them and to hear about their studies and their plans to contribute to their communities.

Their aspirations for their future contribution to Australia was uplifting. Studying in fields as diverse as rural science, midwifery and aerospace engineering, these young Australians celebrated their scholarships as a priceless opportunity to immerse themselves in their passions. The link between the Order and the next generation of outstanding, community-minded Australians is a source of great optimism.

On my first Australia Day as Governor-General, it was a special privilege to announce the Australia Day Honours List. To read the stories of the recipients is to be reminded that care, kindness, respect and love, and contribution to communities across the country, are what matters most to all Australians, in every sphere of life. I am very much looking forward to meeting many of the newest members of the Order during the Autumn Investitures, and in my travels across the country.

In its 50th year, the Order of Australia remains so important and deeply relevant. Most recently, I was struck by the sincere delight expressed by family, friends, colleagues and communities of recipients on hearing news of their awards. In community newsletters and major newspapers, peak industry associations and local hobby groups, there was universal acclaim for their achievements and celebration of their recognition. And, as ever, the recipients were humble and so gracious in response.

With preparations well underway for your National Conference in Sydney in early May, I wish you every success for a successful gathering to celebrate the best of Australian citizenship.

### **SPECIAL FEATURE**

#### **FIFTY YEARS AGO – HOW IT ALL BEGAN**

In 2025 the Australian honours system will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an exclusively Australian honours system to honour Australian citizens for their contributions to Australian society. Interrelated with these honours and awards is the Order of Australia Association, which will celebrate its 45th anniversary in 2025 and which was designed to provide a mechanism for fellowship for the recipients of the awards and to provide a common bond regardless of social, political, cultural or economic circumstances.

The Order of Australia honours system was first suggested by the Hon. Gough Whitlam AC in 1967, when he raised the question in Parliament whether a system of Australian awards had been considered by the Australian Government. When he was elected as Prime Minister, he proposed it to the Queen in a visit to Buckingham Palace and, on gaining her approval, put forward a formal proposal for the establishment of an Australian honours system which the Queen approved on 14 February 1975.

The Australian honours system was announced on Australia Day 1975 and came into being officially from 14 February that year. The first Order of Australia honours and awards were conferred on the Queen's Birthday in June 1975. However, it was not until 1990, at the suggestion of the Queen, that British honours ceased to be available to Australians and only Australian honours and awards would be awarded from then on.

Prime Minister Whitlam was insistent that the awards should be based on merit, independently assessed and be free of political interference. The then Imperial awards were the subject of recommendations by the Prime Minister or Premiers, however the Australian awards were established such that all Australians could make recommendations and the Prime Minister or Premiers could only make nominations in the same way as any Australian citizen. This is what makes the Australian honours system special.

While the Honours policy is the responsibility of the government of the day, it is administered by the Governors-General, as Chancellor of the Order, and their office. Nominations are put before the Council for the Order of Australia which makes the final recommendations for awards to the Governor-General. The Council's recommendations go to the level of award (the merit-based approach for which is set out in the Constitution of the Order of Australia). While there are quotas for the number of Companions, Officers and Members that can be appointed in a calendar year, there is no quota or allocation on a state-by-state or territory basis. This feature of the Order goes to the merit-based design that underpins the system. The Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat, as part of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General, completes the administration and research for the Council.

The first awards were made on the Queen's Birthday 1975. From that time awards are made twice yearly, on Australia Day and now the King's Birthday. The Queen expressed a desire to conduct the first investiture. This occurred at Government House, Canberra, in 1977 during her tour of Australia. The original recipients came to Canberra for the occasion.

Some early investitures were made by the Governor-General during a tour of each State and Territory. Now investitures are conducted by the Governor-General, State Governors and the Administrator of the Northern Territory.

The Insignia the recipients receive was designed by the Australian Stuart Devlin A.O.C.M.G in 1976. Stuart, who had been granted the Royal Warrant as Goldsmith and Jeweller to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, had previously designed Australia's first decimal coins. The design uses the livery colours of the Commonwealth of Australia Coat of Arms — gold and royal blue. An individual ball of wattle blossom features in a simple convex golden disc with a rich texture of beads and radiating lines accentuating a ring of blue enamel representing the surrounding sea. The disc is surmounted by an enamelled Crown of St Edward signifying the position of The Sovereign as Head of the Order. The blue and gold theme is continued in the ribbon with a central band of wattle.

The Australian honours system has not been without its challenges. However, we have been very fortunate to have had Governors-General who have maintained the integrity of the Australian honours system when it has been challenged. For example, in 1982 a government advisory body reported to Parliament that there were certain inadequacies at Government House such as accommodation and office space and recommended to the Prime Minister that the problems could be solved if the Honours and Awards Secretariat was taken over by and accommodated within one of the government departments. The Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen, declined to endorse the proposal.

A more significant challenge to the system occurred in 1984 when the Department of Administrative Services conducted a review of the Australian honours system, mainly with a view to adding a range of new civilian awards. This review was adopted by Cabinet, but without consultation with the Governor-General's Office as required for cabinet submissions. The submission included a proposal to have 75 percent of the general awards recommended by the Prime Minister and the Premiers and only 25 percent of the awards recommended to the Governor-General by the Council.

This would have changed the original intent of the awards and opened the honours system to the politicisation that the Hon. Gough Whitlam A.C as Prime Minister sought to avoid. Fortunately, Sir Ninian Stephen stood firm and pointed out the consequences to the then Prime Minister. The Cabinet subsequently rescinded its decision and retained the position that the awards be administered by the Governors-General and their staff free of ministerial and departmental control and remain independent. This remains the situation 50 years later.

The Order of Australia Association has been linked for the last 45 years with the Order of Australia honours system, as only award recipients are eligible for membership of the Association.

The first suggestion to form an association of award recipients was made in January 1976 when an approach was made to Mr David Smith A.O, the Official Secretary to the Governor-General.

The first group was formed in 1978 in Victoria and proved to be quite successful.

The first recorded meeting was held in Melbourne on 14 February 1978, organised by Mr Bob Hicks A.M. As a consequence, a group of N.S.W recipients approached the Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowan, in 1979 who gave his support to the proposed formation of a National Association with State and Territory Branches and agreed to attend the inaugural functions of all the Branches.

On 21 September 1979, a steering committee was formed at a gathering organised by Alderman Ken Cavanough A.M who, for the record, remained involved until his death at the grand old age of 100. A meeting was held on 4 December 1979 with both N.S.W and Victoria representatives where the structure of the Association was planned.

The Association was officially formed at a meeting held at the Australian National University, Canberra, on Australia Day, 26 January 1980. This was followed by a dinner at which the Governor-General spoke and advised that, including awards that day, there were 1,402 Order of Australia Award recipients. Sir Colin Syme A.K became the inaugural National President, Mr R. Gordon Jackson A.C, later Sir Gordon Jackson A.K, the National Chairman, and Alderman Ken Cavanough A.M the Secretary.

It was proposed at the September meeting that “the purpose of the Association would be to promote the ideals and prestige of the Order so that in time it will lead to the development of a tradition enabling the Order of Australia to take its place amongst older Orders, some of which were established many years ago”. Fellowship was also seen as key to the Association, and this is still one of the main purposes of the Association.

The first Constitution of the Association was adopted at the A.G.M held in January 1981. This has been amended on more than one occasion over time. The first four AGMs were held in Canberra. The next one was held in Melbourne, and they are now held in different States on a rotation basis. Further development took place in 1986, when the Association became an incorporated body. The composition of the Board was considered in 1998 at the A.G.M held in Melbourne where it was agreed that only one Director from each Branch would sit on the National Board, which would comprise 13 Directors.

An important part of the Order of Australia Association is the Order of Australia Foundation. This was formed on 29 April 1999 with the purpose of supporting the next generation of leaders. It does this by sponsoring scholarships to worthy Australian students in their early years of tertiary study. By the end of 2024, it had awarded 55 scholarships to undergraduates across all States and Territories. The Foundation is self-supporting and independent of other operations of the Order of Australia Association, but with the O.A.A National Chairman as a member of the Foundation Board.

The Association now has more than 8,000 members nationally and internationally. It has Branches in each State and Territory together with Regional Groups associated with most Branches. It aims to be inclusive of all Australian recipients independent of their social, political, cultural and economic

circumstances. The intention is to provide fellowship for members while maintaining the ideals of service to others for the betterment of Australia and to celebrate and promote outstanding Australian citizenship.

Kathy Wooldridge O.A.M and Peter Wooldridge

*Acknowledgements: We wish to acknowledge some of the sources we have researched, in particular, previous work by Mrs Mary Doughty AM and Emeritus Professor Graham Swain AM as well as addresses by Sir David Smith K.C.V.O A.O and the Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowan A.K G.C.M.G KStJ Q.C.*

## **NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Notice is hereby given that the Thirty-Ninth Annual General Meeting of The Order of Australia Association Limited will be held at the Sofitel Sydney Wentworth 61-101 Phillip Street, Sydney NSW on

***Saturday 3 May 2025 at 9.00am (AEST).***

## **DRAFT AGENDA**

1. Opening.
2. Apologies.
3. Proxies.
4. To confirm the Minutes of 38th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 18 May 2024.
5. To receive, consider and adopt the Annual Report including Directors' Report, Financial Report and Auditor's Report for The Order of Australia Association Limited for the period ended 31 December 2024\*.
6. To note the Directors' Report and the Financial Report including the Auditor's Report for The Order of Australia Association Foundation and The Order of Australia Association Foundation Limited for the period ended 30 June 2024.
7. Advise of the election of the National Membership Director and the membership of the National Board for the coming year.
8. Approve the appointment of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2025.

**By Order of the Board**  
**Graham Hyde O.A.M**  
**National Secretary**

**8 January 2024**

\* The Annual Report will be available on the Association's website under

Governance-A.G.M from Friday 11 April 2025. Members requiring a hard copy should contact the National Secretary at [natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au) or Unit 191, 420 Queen Street, Brisbane City, QLD 4000.

## **NOMINATIONS**

### **ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO THE NATIONAL BOARD**

Members are invited to consider nominating for a position on the Executive Committee of the National Board.

For 2025 there will be an election, with the National Membership Director, Kathy Wooldridge O.A.M, completing a three-year term. Kathy is not renominating for the position. The new appointment will be for a three-year term. In line with the O.A.A Constitution (Clause 43), the current term of the National Chairman (Barry Nunn A.O), Deputy National Chairman (William Lye O.A.M K.C) and National Treasurer (Frank Crawley O.A.M) ends in 2026 and of the National Secretary (Graham Hyde OAM) in 2027.

A member of the Association is any member who is currently financial, in accordance with the Constitution (Clause 13.1). The Nomination form is to be completed by two members and the nominee. Nominees are requested to provide a resume of no more than 400 words noting their skills and experience relevant to the responsibilities of the position. Nominations are to be lodged with the Chairman of the Nominations Committee on or before 5pm (AEDT) 28 March 2025 as follows: Mr David North O.A.M, Chairman Nominations Committee, The Order of Australia Association Limited, 18 Bushland Ave, Mount Pleasant, N.S.W 2519. OR e-mail: [dirnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:dirnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au). Tel: 0419 485 071.

## **NOTE**

The Board Charter includes a Position Description, and Application Form for Executive Director positions is available from the National Secretary at [natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au), Tel: 0419 736 571. Information on the position can also be obtained from Kathy Wooldridge O.A.M, Tel: 0408 885 527. Intending nominees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the statutory and legal requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (A.C.N.C) and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (A.S.I.C): <https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/governance-standards%20>.

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION**

**VICKI O'HALLORAN, A.O, C.V.O**

As we welcome 2025, I am filled with a sense of optimism and a sense of pride for what lies ahead for the Order of Australia Association in our 45th year.

This is a special year all round, marking the 50th anniversary of the Australian honours system, 50 years of uplifting and honouring everyday Australians. These momentous occasions highlight the enduring spirit of service and excellence that has been the hallmark of many of our nation's most deserved citizens.

The Australian honours system has played a pivotal role in recognising and celebrating the outstanding contributions of individuals across our country. Over the last five decades, it has not only acknowledged those who have given so much to our communities but also inspired others to follow in their footsteps. This year, we celebrate these remarkable Australians whose actions have shaped our past and continue to influence our future.

At the heart of our Order of Australia Association is a community of volunteers who embody the values of the Order. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank each Branch and their members for 45 years of service going above and beyond. It is through your commitment that we continue to thrive as an association.

As we step into 2025, I encourage members to reach out to those who are not yet members of the Order of Australia Association to ask that they consider joining us in this meaningful journey. Together we can ensure that the value of the Order of Australia and the honours system remain a shining beacon of service to our nation.

Thank you once again to all current members, volunteers and supporters. Let's make 2025 a year to remember as we reflect upon the remarkable history of the honours system and the Association and look forward to an even brighter future.

I hope to see many of you at the National Conference in Sydney, 1-4 May, This is promising to be an incredible event not to be missed.

Go well.

**MESSAGE FROM THE O.A.A CHAIRMAN**

**MAJGEN BARRY NUNN A.O R.F.D E.D (Retd)**

We welcome 2025 as marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Australian honours system, of which the Order of Australia is a central part, as well as the 45th anniversary of the formation of our Association. It is pleasing to see 445 worthy Australians recognised in the Australia Day List for their contribution in this important year. I congratulate recipients and their families, colleagues and friends who have supported their efforts.



Regrettably, while there is some encouragement that the new year might be an improvement over those past, there is still a long way to go. There is no place for hatred in our society, it has the potential to undermine our democracy. As recipients of an award in the Order of Australia we all have the responsibility to demonstrate by our leadership, contribution and example how our society can embrace difference and challenge and emerge stronger for this.

As this magazine is issued Branches will be conducting their annual general meetings and electing branch committees for the coming year. I congratulate all committee members who have contributed during 2024 and wish those joining a committee a successful and enjoyable experience. A.G.M time is a chance to reflect on the past year and to ensure that committees are aware of coming needs. All members are encouraged to make their commentary heard at these important meetings.

Preparations are now well advanced for the 2025 O.A.A Annual Conference in Sydney from 1 to 4 May. This conference is not to be missed.

The 2026 O.A.A Conference was to be held in Darwin, but regrettably hosting by the N.T Committee has had to be deferred. The conference will, instead, be held in Brisbane and the Queensland Committee are already working hard planning this activity.

I look forward to meeting many of you in Sydney in May and look forward to hearing your views on the direction of our Association during the Members' Forum that follows our National A.G.M on Saturday 3 May.

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OAA FOUNDATION

DR HELEN NUGENT AC

### **2024 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES: A PROFILE OF SUCCESS**

The roundtable conference at Admiralty House with Her Excellency, the Governor-General on 25 November 2024 provided a lifetime of memories for the awardees of the five 2024 Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarships.

While Her Excellency recognized and applauded the distinctive academic and community contribution of each awardee, she insightfully identified common themes that underpinned their success to date and their vision for the future.

### **Their commitment to making a difference to Australia's future shone through.**

Jennifer Corderoy, undertaking a Bachelor of Rural Science in Agriculture at the University of New England, spoke compellingly of her desire to improve the sustainability of Australia's agricultural community by working in research and advocacy. Ayman Miazi, specializing in Aerospace Engineering while undertaking a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) at Monash University, outlined his audacious goal to develop reusable rocket systems for interplanetary missions. Paris Lay-Lee, in her second year of a Bachelor of Communication and Laws at the University of Technology Sydney (U.T.S), wants to walk on a world stage working for the

United Nations in communications, leveraging her passion for health and social justice. Matthew Selkrig, undertaking Bachelors of Commerce and Advanced Studies at the University of Sydney spoke of his aspiration to help with the green energy transition by pursuing a career in finance. Jade Harrison, undertaking a Bachelor of Midwifery at U.T.S, wants to make a real difference to women's health in rural communities.

**They identified the key role played by their family in shaping who they are and their vision for the future.** Jennifer's commitment to agriculture was shaped by her family, who are mixed cropping and cattle farmers near Narromine. Jade's commitment to women's health and midwifery emanated from her grandmother and mother's compassion, perseverance, resilience and connection to community in their role as midwives. Paris identified how her interest in social justice had, in part, arisen from her grandparents' decision to leave Timor for Australia to seek a better life. Ayman's parents moved from Dhaka in Bangladesh to seek a better life for him and his brother, at the same time as providing him with a deep sense of community, while Matthew's international perspective and leadership approach have come from having grown up in Hong Kong to an Australian father and a Korean mother.

**They spoke with passion of their commitment to community.** This included Jade's speaking about her work with the Cerebral Palsy Alliance on the N.S.W Central Coast; Paris's fundraising work for the SPARClE Foundation to increase awareness of allergic disease, and her work with the Sydney Children's Hospital Network Youth Council; and Jennifer's commitment to Narromine through her involvement with the Sydney Royal Ag Show and the Gorillas Rugby Union Football Club, both as a player and a leader. Jennifer, Ayman and Matthew have also been active in supporting community activities at their universities.

**Their academic excellence was recognized with the award.** Each awardee has achieved superior academic results. This includes Jennifer's so far achieving a rare Grade Point Average of 7, and Ayman's receiving straight high distinctions in his degree to date.

**Each awardee expressed their profound gratitude to the Scholarship donors.** Jennifer's scholarship was awarded by Mr Tim Fairfax A.C, Jade's by the N.S.W Branch of the Order of Australia Association, Paris's by the Order of Australia Association, Ayman's by the Victorian Branch of the Order of Australia Association, and Matthew's by Mr Paul Wheelton A.M K.S.J, who is also a Director of the Order of Australia Association Foundation.

**In turn, each awardee looks forward to the financial and other benefits provided by the Scholarship.** Each scholarship is worth \$40,000, paid in equal instalments over two years. The first instalment has been made. This will go some way to alleviate the financial pressures facing each awardee. In turn, the Foundation is in the process of identifying a mentor who will be able to assist each awardee with their career ambition. Their mentors will be announced in the near term.

This cohort of five worthy participants brings to 60 the number of Scholarships that the Foundation has awarded. The Governor-General will present this year's

Scholars with their certificates at the Gala Dinner of the Order of Australia Association during the Sydney National Conference on 3 May 2025.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### S.A. CHAIRMAN TONY METCALFE O.A.M'S REPORT

The S.A Branch held a number of successful activities at the end of last year, including fellowship luncheon meetings, our second New Recipients' Reception for the year, and several Regional Group events.

Notably, I thank Regional Groups Coordinator Ken Coventry O.A.M J.P and Association members and honours recipients from Port Lincoln and Eyre Peninsula, who met and agreed to form a new Regional Group.

I thank Her Excellency the Governor who hosted a Student Citizenship Awards presentation ceremony and reception at Government House, at which Amy Wallace from Scotch College was announced as the 2024 South Australian Student Citizen of the Year.

On behalf of the Branch Committee and members of the S.A Branch, I wish all members the very best for 2025. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events – which include further Honours recipients fellowship luncheon meetings, Regional Group luncheon meetings, our Annual General Meeting and our King's Birthday Luncheon in June.

Finally, on behalf of all S.A Branch members, I would like to congratulate everyone who has received an award in the 2025 Australia Day Honours List. We will acknowledge and welcome these recipients at our usual New Recipients' Reception, to follow soon after the investiture ceremonies at Government House.



Photo of members and guests of the proposed Eyre Peninsula Regional Group

## EVENTS

**Australia Day.** The S.A Branch held its annual 'Celebration of Australia Day' Luncheon on Saturday 18 January 2025 at Jarmer's Kitchen in Bowden. The guest speaker was George Belperio O.A.M, on the topic, "Australia: My Lucky Country". He reflected on his journey from arriving in Australia to his success in business (Fasta Pasta), which gave him the opportunity for his extensive charity work,

especially being involved in Variety .SA for 25 years and chairing three Bashes. In retirement, he found further time to give back to the S.A community through a range of organisations and the Defence Reserve Support Council. George was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, *“For service to the Italian community of South Australia”* (AD24).

Born in post-war Italy in 1954 and suffering serious health problems, George left their small village with his mother, to join his father, who had come to Australia three years earlier to find work. He reflected:

*“Italy was my mother and Australia was my father. My mother often reminded me that in Italy after the war, you would work hard for long hours every day just to be able to eat. Dad was a bit of an entrepreneur and a bit of a dreamer, but he was always prepared to have a go. Nobody could tell him something was not do-able. I believe I got a little bit of the best of both of them passed down to me. Similar to the combination of the best bits of Australian and Italian culture”*.

Of his entry into the hospitality industry he noted:

*“My Italian background and Mom’s cooking allowed me to understand what makes food taste great: tomatoes, garlic, olive oil and salt”*. After a return trip to Italy, George says he realised that, *“I wasn’t really either Italian nor Australian, but a hybrid. I decided then that I would try to embrace the best of both cultures. I had all the ingredients at my fingertips; I just had to learn how to put them together. I was born on a farm in Italy and grew up on a market garden in Adelaide. The common denominators are good fresh produce and hard work; this provided the foundation for my working life”*.

George provided the group with two key observations:

*“Over the course of my life here, I’ve found Australia is a country full of opportunity, and with a strong culture of sharing and giving back”*.

*“I’ve been very fortunate to have been able to give back to the community. We have here in Australia a culture of volunteering that is the envy of the world”*.

## **STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARDS**

Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson A.C, Governor of South Australia and S.A Branch Patron, hosted a Student Citizenship Awards presentation ceremony and reception at Government House on Monday 25 November 2024.

Her Excellency presented ‘With Distinction’ plaques to the Top 10 students. Amy Wallace, a year 11 student attending Scotch College, was announced as the 2024 South Australian Student Citizen of the Year. Amy’s citation reads as follows:

*An extraordinarily gifted and inspirational young person, Amy has shown outstanding leadership and citizenship through a myriad of high-value service activities and initiatives spanning local, national and international levels.*

*Driven by her passions, Amy has consistently contributed to the College and wider communities through volunteering, mentoring, fundraising and advocacy. Amy has held various leadership roles throughout her school journey and, with her strong commitment to inclusivity and positive change, has been an excellent role model for her peers.*

Student Citizenship Awards Convenor, Noel Hender O.A.M B.E.M, reported that a total of 49 nominations were received this year, from 35 schools. The 10 students judged most worthy received a 'With Distinction' certificate signed by the Governor and the Chairman of the SA Branch, Mr Tony Metcalf O.A.M.

In addition to these, a further 39 students, 19 of whom were rated as 'Highly Commended', received a certificate and medallion which were presented by Branch members at end-of-year ceremonies during Term 4.

## VICTORIA BRANCH

### CHAIRMAN HELENE BENDER A.M.'S REPORT

Firstly, on behalf of the Victoria Branch of the O.A.A, our thoughts are with members and their families Australia-wide affected by the ongoing challenging weather resulting in fires, storms and floods.

Thank you to our members and guests who attended our booked-out End of Year Dinner late November last year at the Stamford Plaza Melbourne with speaker Pamela Clark A.O and O.A.A Foundation 2018 scholarship recipient Hannah Gandy.

We acknowledge the 105 new recipients in Victoria and congratulate the entire Order of Australia 2025 Australia Day Honours award recipients and say "thank you" for your contribution to Australia as an individual or as part of a team.

These awards bring a list of diverse recipients recognised for excellence at local, national and/or international level; thank you to members who took the time to prepare successful nominations.

There are committee vacancies at our Friday 28 March Annual General Meeting offering opportunities for a Treasurer/Bookkeeper and a Secretary to join the O.A.A VIC Branch committee. The A.G.M will follow the Inspiring Australians Oration. Venue: The Angliss Conference Centre. 555 La Trobe Street Melbourne. Time: 10.15am registration for 10.30am start. Scheduled to finish at 12.25pm The Oration will be delivered by John Wylie A.C, and O.A.A Foundation 2004 scholarship recipient Felicia Eng will provide an update on her studies, employment and community commitment. The cost is \$10 per person, G.S.T included, for members and guests. Book via TryBooking link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/CYMNJ>

The AGM is at 12.30pm sign-in for 12.35pm start. There is no cost to attend the AGM; booking is required via TryBooking link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/CYMNK>

Please refer to <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/vic/vic-annual-general-meeting/>

## FEATURED MEMBER

CONNIE BOGLIS O.A.M

### **A voice for mental health reform, veterans and their carers**

Connie Boglis O.A.M admits that “it has always been in me to help people”. This sense of altruism and community commitment led her to social sciences and counselling degrees.

She focused on young people, especially at-risk and incarcerated youth. She jumped right in at the deep end. Connie seems to be a person who, when she sees a gap, seeks to fill it.

Connie did not think of herself as a budding counsellor or youth worker when she was young. In fact, it was her mother who brought this pathway to her attention when she was in her teens during a discussion about her future career path. “She said I had a natural tendency to always stand up and help people – that simple,” Connie says.

To help her daughter, Connie’s mother organised a meeting with a local Councillor to discuss how best to support her community in advocacy. However, Connie at that time was seeking to help people as a mental health counsellor, not a councillor. The twist is that it may actually have been a “mother’s intuition” as Connie now finds herself to be both a counsellor and a recently elected Councillor for the City of Darebin.

Connie is a relatively young recipient of an Order of Australia *for services to mental health reform and advocacy into veteran suicide*, having brought her lived experience to federal government as a reform opportunity.

Unfortunately, Connie’s experience with veteran suicide was personal. In 2017, her partner Jesse, an Australia war veteran who served in Afghanistan, died by suicide after battling post-traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D). He was only 32 years old but had experienced a soldier’s life. And it was hard.

Connie’s close experience of the world of working in mental health made her all too aware of the startling gaps in services for veterans and their carers and loved ones. She and Jesse’s mother took on a mission to advocate for the voices of the voiceless, and their work contributed to ensuring that a Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide was established.

Connie has seen many changes to the system but admits that it was hard work to penetrate the ‘autocratic system’ set up by the Departments of Defence and

Veteran Affairs. The system, as Connie explains, led to exacerbating PTSD and the disenfranchisement of veterans by society in regard to services, support and even a conversation.

“I have a white card now. I can get support and services; I don’t have to fight. Veterans and their partners are now starting to be recognised as individuals. The language is now different, its veteran-centric. The mission for Jesse’s mum and myself was to put a heartbeat into an autocratic system; we felt we did that. I had nothing to lose in the fight; my world was already shattered.” Before the reforms that came out of the Royal Commission, supports and services were not inclusive of all. R.S.Ls were set up to support veterans but Connie says, “This space is still currently limited. We need to be better about how to support veterans, as we are with other marginalised groups across our society. A lot of work needs to still be done in mental health and wellbeing, and these services being accessible across all states and territories of Australia, not just near bases”.

Not only did Connie’s work contribute to the 2021 Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, she took on various lived experience projects and committees, consulting on improved outcomes from the Royal Commission’s Mental Health System. Last year, in fact, she was involved in opening the first family care- led centres with Minister Williams.

Now her advocacy work has led her along a political pathway. Connie says that she has learnt a valuable lesson in how advocacy can lead to reform and this is what she is keen to do.

After more than 20 years of working in the mental health sector and government reform, Connie explains that receiving the Order of Australia has been a very humbling experience, but one that also acknowledges the importance of the work she undertook in making sure her lived experience was not lived by others.

She certainly was not expecting such an honour. When she received a call about the award, she was taken aback. She had been waiting for a call from a repair service! She says, though, that it was a very emotional moment, but she accepted it with pride, knowing that “the Australian community chose me”. Connie’s parents are immensely proud of her. Connie attributes her strength and resilience to the support they provide. “They know I am always advocating for something or other and they make sure to check in on me. They make sure I am taking breaks to enjoy life. My mother is my soul food in terms of support. Hopefully, going into a councillor position, I can work from a different angle. “

*If this story has raised concerns for you, please contact:*

*Lifeline: 13 11 14 (24/7)*

*13YARN (139276)*

*Suicide Callback Service: 1300 659 467 (24/7)*

*Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 (24/7)*

*If you are an Australian veteran or family of a veteran, you can also call Open*

*Arms, Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service, on 1800 011 046.*



*Photo of Councillor Connie Boglis O.A.M with very proud mother, Sophie Boglis*

## NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

### CHAIRMAN DR JOHN GULLOTTA A.M.'S REPORT

As I approach my first year as Chairman, I have had the pleasure and the privilege of meeting and getting to know some of our fellow esteemed award recipients, who are incredible human beings and often unsung individuals involved in charity, voluntary and community organisations.

It is pleasing to see that our membership is slowly increasing. There has been increased diversity in our new recipients as well as a close match now in gender. Unfortunately, we still need the process to be quicker from nomination to investiture and hopefully decrease the amount of posthumous awards given to family members, which is very sad to witness.

The 2024 King's Birthday New Recipients Reception was held on 11 November at N.S.W Parliament House attended by 33 KB24 recipients. Professor Tracey O'Brien A.M, N.S.W Chief Cancer Officer, Chief Executive Officer of the Cancer Institute N.S.W and N.S.W KB24 awardee was our guest speaker. Tracey was "in conversation" with N.S.W Branch committee member Sophie Scott O.A.M. She gave an excellent account of her long and diverse experience in cancer care and research and how early diagnosis with improved treatments has improved survival rates.

Our Christmas Luncheon was held on 30 November 2024 in the Cellos Grand Dining Room at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. Our Deputy Chair and N.S.W 2025 Local Hero, Martha Jabour O.A.M, was our guest speaker. It was very moving to hear of her incredible work in assisting victims of homicide by establishing Grace's Place.

We also held our 2025 Annual Australia Day Harbour Cruise Luncheon aboard



M.V Captain Cook III. It was a well enjoyed day on our beautiful Sydney Harbour with more than 140 members and friends attending and enjoying the festivities in the air and on the water and foreshore.

The N.S.W Branch is attending as many regional events as possible and a sincere thank you to our Regional Director David North O.A.M and our Hon. Secretary, Dianne North O.A.M for representing the Branch in our regions, the lifeblood of our Association throughout regional and remote N.S.W.

It has been a busy time for the Branch with preparation for the National Conference on top of our usual Branch events. Preparations are well under way for the Sydney Conference 1-4 May 2025 which also marks 50 years of The Order of Australia Awards. Registrations are coming in fast, so please register early to avoid missing out on the Welcome Reception and Farewell Lunch as spaces are limited. There is more information and a link on the O.A.A National Website. We have secured some dynamic and motivating speakers who are listed in the draft programme and we have more who are yet to confirm.

I would like to sincerely thank the sponsors that have already come on board for their generous support. Our Platinum sponsor is ABAL Banking. Gold sponsors are LSH Auto Australia and HSBC. Our Silver sponsors are Stanmore Mazda and DeLorenzo Australian Made Haircare. We are looking for more company and individual sponsors, so please contact me if you can help in any way.

I would like to thank all the hardworking N.S.W Branch Committee members for their support and tireless dedication throughout the year and I look forward to a bigger and better 2025. I look forward to seeing you all at SYD25!

## EVENTS

### **KING'S BIRTHDAY 24 NEW RECIPIENTS' WELCOME RECEPTION**

The Order of Australia Association NSW 2024 King's Birthday New Recipients Reception was held on 11 November at NSW Parliament House.

NSW Chairman Dr John Gullotta A.M extended a warm welcome to the 33 King's Birthday 2024 (KB24) new recipients present together with their family and friends. Being a special day, Remembrance Day, KB24 awardee Brigadier Brendan Casey A.M was asked to recite the Ode followed by a minute's silence.

Dr Gullotta said, "This event is an opportunity for our Association to celebrate your great achievements. Every year I am truly amazed by the extremely high calibre of recipients that are honoured and all of you here today are certainly no exception. You come from all walks of life, a myriad of professions and of course the quiet achievers working away in your local communities, especially in rural and remote parts of NSW. All of you have a unique and special story that you should be very proud of and that we acknowledge and honour here today.

I would like to welcome and thank Stephanie Di Pasqua M.P, member for Drummoyne, for being our parliamentary host and Professor Tracey O'Brien A.M, N.S.W Chief Cancer Officer, Chief Executive Officer of the Cancer Institute N.S.W and N.S.W KB24 New Recipient, for agreeing to be our special guest speaker.

Professor O'Brien A.M is a globally recognised oncologist and researcher, actively engaged in the forefront of cancer care. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia *for significant service to cancer medicine, to medical research and education, and to professional bodies*. Tracey was "in conversation" with N.S.W Branch Committee Member Sophie Scott O.A.M who, with 20 plus years as an award-winning medical TV journalist for the A.B.C, is now an international speaker and educator with expertise in mental health and wellbeing. Sophie received an Order of Australia Medal *for service to broadcast media, and to community health*.

Our Hon. Secretary Dianne North O.A.M proposed a Toast to the New Recipients which was followed by a Toast to the Order of Australia Association on behalf of all the KB24 New recipients by His Honour Judge Rolf Driver A.M.

Judge Driver A.M was a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia and Family Court of Australia before his retirement in August 2022. Before he was appointed Judge he was a Senior Government Solicitor at the Australian Government. He is the former Chair of the Australian Chapter of the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges and is a KB24 Order of Australia New Recipient.

## AUSTRALIA DAY HARBOUR CRUISE AND LUNCHEON 2025

Australia Day is a day to reflect, respect and celebrate the Australian spirit and the best of this country – our mateship, our sense of community and our multicultural diversity.

This year a crowd of more than 140 N.S.W members and guests enjoyed our Australia Day harbour cruise and luncheon, a longstanding annual event for our branch.

It was a most enjoyable, relaxed day on Sydney Harbour aboard the Captain Cook III on a picture-perfect summer day. Everyone enjoyed the atmosphere with good food, drinks and importantly exchanging stories and life experiences with other Order of Australia recipients from all walks of life and different cultural backgrounds. All aboard had front row seats to the 21 Gun Salute, Australia Day Ferrython, Air Force Roulettes flying display, Navy Seahawk Helicopter flag display and Australia Day Harbour Parade.

In the theme of the Australian spirit, the charity we supported this year was the Order of Australia Association Foundation. The Foundation scholarship programme aims to identify full-time students in their second year of university who are exceptional in their field of study, who have given back to the community, and who can benefit from the financial support provided by the Scholarship. It is hoped these students have the potential to become future awardees of the Order of Australia. Our very generous members and guests raised close to \$3,000 on the day towards our N.S.W Scholarship.

It was a very successful and enjoyable day and we look forward to reflecting, respecting and celebrating every day leading up to Australia Day 2026.



Photo of members enjoying the cruise, with the Sydney Harbour Bridge as a backdrop

O.A.A NATIONAL CONFERENCE SYDNEY 2025  
1 – 4 MAY 2025 AT SOFITEL SYDNEY WENTWORTH

DRAFT PROGRAMME

**THURSDAY 1 MAY 2025**

- Arrival and Registration for Conference – Sofitel Sydney Wentworth
- Board and Branch Chairs Meeting - Sofitel Sydney Wentworth
- Evening Welcome Reception at Government House Sydney

**FRIDAY 2 MAY 2025**

- Arrival and Registration for Conference – Sofitel Sydney Wentworth
- Welcome to Country and Official Opening
- Oration – General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove A.M A.C (Mil) C.V.O M.C (Retd)
- Keynote Speakers
- Guest Speakers and Panel Discussions
- Post-conference Evening Opera Musical Event to celebrate 50 years of The Order of Australia with Gaetano Bonfante, Tenor and Clarissa Spata, Soprano
- Dinner at leisure

**SATURDAY 3 MAY 2025**

- Annual General Meeting
- Members Forum
- Afternoon at leisure
- Conference Gala Dinner and Foundation Scholarship Presentations  
Master of Ceremonies: Peter Overton A.M

**SUNDAY 4 MAY 2025**

- Wreath laying ceremony aboard H.M.A.S Canberra
- Farewell lunch and handover to Brisbane aboard H.M.A.S Canberra

QUEENSLAND BRANCH

CHAIRMAN RONDA NIX O.A.M'S REPORT

Congratulations to the Queenslanders and to all Australian citizens honoured for their service in the recent 2025 Australia Day awards. Our Branch Committee and our members look forward to meeting them and hearing about their contributions to our great country at either their investiture ceremonies in May or at the Celebratory Welcome function which will be held by our Branch in their

honour.

Our Branch Committee is always very busy at this time planning the events in the first half of the year such as the Celebratory Welcome function for the Australia Day Award Recipients, our Annual Dinner and A.G.M, and a function to celebrate the King's Birthday in June. Plus, many of our Branch Committee will attend the National Conference in Sydney in May. The Queensland Branch was scheduled to host the 2027 National Conference, but due to circumstances beyond our control our "business" has just ratcheted up several notches by our decision to accept the challenge to host the 2026 Conference instead. In Chinese culture 2025 is the Year of the Wood Snake. Apparently, Wood Snake individuals tend to exhibit resilient, courageous and positive personalities, allowing them to maintain the drive and confidence to persevere in the face of adversity. Our committee members will need those characteristics this year no matter what year they were born. However, I am confident that we will be able to achieve and deliver a wonderful event in 2026.

## EVENTS

### **U.3.A AND A PONY CLUB IN CHINA**

Megan McNicholl O.A.M, the outgoing Darling Downs Regional Group Convenor, arranged a marvellous programme centred on local members who had been working in China over a number of years. Carol Cox A.M was the facilitator and M.C for the morning as Megan had to welcome a new grandchild overseas (a most important mission!)

Rhonda Weston A.M (the incoming Darling Downs Regional Convenor) told of her impressions of presenting to the U.3.A International Conference in China with travels around the various precincts of that vast country. She had made contacts within many different Chinese U.3.A groups and was impressed by their enthusiasm for learning about how we do things here in Australia. The young people she met were thirsty for knowledge and cultural exchange.

Carol Paterson O.A.M followed up with a wonderful PowerPoint slide show depicting her long-standing involvement with setting up the models for Pony Club in China over a long period of time. She showed some amazing photos of the horsemen in Mongolia and a stables and Pony Club situated on the 33rd floor of a high rise building in a large Chinese city. She also included some cultural artefacts with stories which she willingly shared.

Carol said she's made lifelong friends in China through this work.

A delicious spread was available for the 47 members and guests who attended, including three Queensland members of the National Board. Members were thoroughly uplifted by the international cooperation and goodwill of our speakers as well as looking outside our borders to some of the challenges faced by their Chinese friends.

### **WHEN THE CITY MET THE COUNTRY**

A most pleasing sequel to our successful 25th annual Secondary Schools Citizenship Awards Presentation this year occurred at St George, 550 kilometres south-west of Brisbane on Monday 11 November.

As reported in the previous edition of *The Order*, the Queensland Branch presented these awards to 11 of 12 secondary school students from throughout Queensland at Parliament House, Brisbane on Friday 13 September. Unfortunately, Jacob Hiles, a year 12 student representing St George State High School, was unable to join the others at the Parliament House celebration.

Geoff Cowles O.A.M, the Awards and Metro Events Coordinator, who also coordinates the Secondary Schools Citizenship Awards, decided that if the country could not come to the city, then the city should go to the country. So Geoff visited St George to ensure that Jacob was presented with his well deserved award in style at the Schools 47th annual Awards Presentation.

Jacob is the fourth student from St George State High School to receive a Secondary Schools Citizenship Award; the last student to do so was Laura North (nee Worboys) in 2005. It was fitting, therefore, for Laura to have the honour of actually presenting the award to Jacob after Geoff had delivered a speech to the assembled students, teachers and parents about the awards programme and highlighting Jacob's achievements.

Jacob is a wonderful ambassador for the School. He is one of the School's 2024 Captains and earned his award by leading, inspiring and mentoring all those around him. He is an Indigenous student who is proud of and extremely involved in his culture, both in and outside his school. All students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous look up to Jacob as a role model. The school has stated that he is well respected by all staff and students who know him. Not only does Jacob excel in schoolwork, he excels on the sporting field, being a member of the local A grade rugby league team, and he works part-time to help support himself and his educational goals. Indeed Jacob is a worthy recipient of a Secondary Schools Citizenship Award.



Photo of two winners of the Secondary Schools Citizenship Award from different eras, both representing St George State High School: Laura North (nee Worboys) who received her award in 2005 and Jacob Hiles who received his award in 2024.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY BRANCH

### NEWS

#### **CYCLONE TRACY 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION CEREMONY**

In December the Prime Minister attended a Memorial ceremony to remember the horror and destruction of Cyclone Tracy and share the remembered pain of survivors. Several members of our Association were there, reflecting on their traumatic experiences 50 years ago, and how it changed their lives.

At the memorial a monument was unveiled called 'Five Decades, Five Flowers', featuring frangipanis – a Top End symbol – representing beauty and resilience.



Photo of attendees looking at the new memorial monument in Darwin

#### **VALETE TO TWO EMINENT MEMBERS OF OUR COUNTRY AND OAA COMMUNITY**

**The Honourable Austin Asche A.C K.C** died in December 2024, aged 99, after a highly accomplished life. He was a much-loved jurist, and Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1993 – 1997.

In 1976 His Honour was appointed as a Justice to the newly formed Family Court of Australia. Then in 1986 he was appointed Justice of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and in 1987 became Chief Justice of the Court. While Chief Justice, His Honour also served as Chairman of the Northern Territory Parole Board and President of several Territory societies.

In 1993 His Honour was made a Knight of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem and appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (A.C) in 1994 for service to the law, tertiary education and the community. The multifaceted nature of Austin's career and life was reflected during the state funeral, in which eulogies were from eminent leaders, the judiciary, the armed services and family members.

**Grant Ernest John Tambling A.M** died on 24 January 2025. He was a Member of

the House of Representatives from 1980 to 1983 and then a Senator for the Northern Territory from 1987 to 2001. In federal parliament, he sat with the National Party, and later served as Administrator of Norfolk Island from 2003 to 2007.

## A.C.T. BRANCH

### CHAIRMAN ANDREW PHELAN A.M.'S REPORT

We are delighted that Dr Suzanne Packer A.O has agreed to become the A.C.T Branch Patron. A tireless advocate for the rights of children, Dr Packer was appointed a Member of the Order in the 1999 Australia Day List *for service to child welfare, to paediatric medicine and to the community*, and an Officer in the Order in the 2021 Queen's Birthday List *for distinguished service to children through roles in health, welfare and protection initiatives*. She was the 2019 Senior Australian of the Year and has been very active in the Association for many years.

I congratulate all the Honours recipients announced in the 2025 Australia Day Honours List, in particular the 27 recipients from the A.C.T and region. This year we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Order of Australia Awards. The Branch will be helping to promote awareness of the Order, initially by staffing a stall at the Government House Open Day in Canberra on 15 March 2025.

The Branch conducted nine well-attended events in 2024, one highlight of which was the evening presentation of Student Citizenship Awards to outstanding students and student groups from all sectors of A.C.T schools. I would like to acknowledge and thank our judging panel for the Awards, Dr Bill Maiden P.S.M O.A.M, Dr Joe Johnson C.S.C O.A.M A.A.M, Ms Narelle Hargreaves A.M and Ms Lynn Fletcher O.A.M for their outstanding work in this most important local programme.

I am very grateful to all members of the Committee for their diligence and ongoing commitment to the good governance of the Branch. I make special mention of Dr Bill Maiden P.S.M O.A.M and Ms Narelle Hargreaves A.M, who are stepping down from the Committee after many years of service to the Branch, especially in the organising and judging of the very successful Student Citizenship Awards. Dr Alan Morison .AM resigned as Branch Nominated Director (B.N.D) on 27 November 2024 and I was appointed to replace him pro tem, pending election of a new B.N.D at the Branch A.G.M. I wish to pay tribute to Alan for his years of quality service to the Association, the board and its committees, including through the most difficult period of COVID. The Branch A.G.M will see three new Committee members elected, as well as a new B.N.D.

Monica and I are looking forward to attending the National Conference in Sydney in May 2025. We hope to see as many of you as possible there.



## EVENTS

### A.C.T STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

On 29 August 2024, 80 members, friends, school children and their families and school officials celebrated the outstanding community service of winners in our 2024 Student Citizenship Awards. Eleven awards were presented, including to Amelia Tattam, Year 12, University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra.

Amelia's nomination cited examples validating exceptional leadership, community service and civic engagement. Her achievements have been recognised before through the Australian Defence Force Long Tan Youth Leadership and Teamwork Award.

In addition, her nomination cited commitments to positive change that have impacted her schools, her community and even A.C.T legislation. A particular example of Amelia's commitment is as an active team member in addressing issues affecting young women and girls, in advocating for free feminine health products in all A.C.T schools, an initiative which has subsequently been passed into A.C.T law.

For Amelia's sustained and conspicuous leadership and community service throughout her high school and college years, she was awarded the Association's Medallion and Plaque Award for outstanding community leadership and achievement.



Photo of student citizenship award winners

## FEATURED MEMBER

### Suzanne Packer A.O

Now Patron of the A.C.T Branch of the Order of Australia Association, the 2018 Senior Australian of the Year Dr Sue Packer A.O has worked tirelessly to advocate

for the rights of children since starting her career as a paediatrician in 1972. Sue has been a leader in child abuse prevention and treatment, and a champion of the importance of early childhood environments for the developing brain.

She has been involved in child abuse prevention through the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect since its early days and has treated babies and children suffering terrible trauma from child abuse and neglect. In addition, Sue has championed the importance of early childhood environments for the developing brain, leading to recognition by education and government agencies.

Sue was one of the driving forces behind the acknowledgement of the importance of creating child-friendly spaces in hospitals and the value of play in recovery.

In 2013 Dr Packer was Canberra Citizen of the Year in recognition of her personal efforts and significant contributions to the A.C.T community, particularly as an advocate for the safety and wellbeing of children. In June 2021, she was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia for *distinguished service to children through roles in health, welfare and protection initiatives*.

## TASMANIA BRANCH CHAIRMAN ALASTAIR DOUGLAS O.A.M.'S REPORT

Former Tasmania Branch committee member, the Reverend Jim Colville A.M, had a big year in 2024. It was the 50th anniversary of Colony 47, a registered charity that provides young children aged between five and 25 with a safe, stable foundation to grow, dream and build their future. Colony 47, now called Home Base, was established by Jim in 1973. He also served as inaugural chairman of the Tasmanian Consultative Committee on Social Welfare, as a member of two national committees on family policy and income security, and held various senior positions in other Commonwealth departments in Tasmania. Jim was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2002, was a member of Branch Committee for several years and was named the 2024 Tasmanian Senior Australian of the Year. Well done, Jim!

Members will be saddened to learn that Mrs Bernadette Connor O.A.M died on 16 November 2024. Bernadette was a much-liked member and great supporter of the Association. For many consecutive years she was an enthusiastic attendee at National Conferences. She also served on Branch committee for many years in the mid-2000s and was meticulous in organising various Branch events.

Fifteen Tasmanians were recognised in the Australia Day 2025 awards. We look

forward to meeting and welcoming these worthy recipients on the day of their investiture and at the Branch Investiture Day Lunch.

## **FEATURED MEMBER**

### **DALE ELPHINSTONE A.O**

#### **“WE DID IT BECAUSE WE DIDN’T KNOW WE COULDN’T.”**

It is not common to hear of an Australian receiving a prestigious award from a foreign country but one who did is Dale Elphinstone A.O who resides and works in Burnie. Dale is fresh from receiving the significant and rare honour of being the first person outside the United States to be inducted into the prestigious United States National Mining Hall of Fame in Denver Colorado on Saturday 2 November 2024.

Dale is the founder and Executive Chairman of the Elphinstone Group. He was born in 1951 and raised on a mixed dairy farm at Highclere, an inland community on the northwest coast of Tasmania.

He started as an apprentice diesel mechanic at age 15 at the Tasmanian Caterpillar dealer William Adams and, after working for several other companies, registered his own company in 1975. Now, 50 years later, Dale has established Elphinstone as a recognised Cat original equipment manufacturer, producing off-highway haul trucks, road-rail excavators and Elphinstone underground support vehicles.

Today the Elphinstone Group is a private, family-owned global enterprise which consists of 11 operating businesses with substantial property and equity portfolios. Employing approximately 3,000 people, the combined businesses generate an annual revenue close to 2 billion dollars.

Initially modifying Caterpillar surface mining equipment to provide safer and more efficient underground operations, Dale Elphinstone has been instrumental in the transformation of the global underground mining industry. He used this experience to design and manufacture a new generation of Elphinstone Underground Mining load, haul and dump (L.H.D)s and Articulated Trucks. The exceptionally productive and reliable Elphinstone equipment gave new economic life to many marginal mining operations. His company designs and manufactures safe, reliable and innovative surface haulage solutions and underground mining support equipment, commissioned and delivered to loyal and valued customers around the world.

Dale embarked on the design and manufacture of the first purpose-built articulated underground mining dump truck in 1982 and in 1986 the first Elphinstone-designed L.H.D machine was released.

Clearly Dale’s statement “We did it because we didn’t know we couldn’t” has been a guiding principle for his team of free thinkers in seeking new and better

solutions for the many issues that confronted the mining industry.

Dale continues to relentlessly advocate for his employees and local communities. He is a generous philanthropist and works tirelessly to assist many business groups, governments and organisations with the goal of elevating the prosperity and perception of the global mining industry. Dale and his wife Cheryl continue to live in Burnie, along with their two adult children Kelly and Adam, and their respective families.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### W.A. CHAIRMAN BETTINE HEATHCOTE A.M.'S REPORT

The Branch held an early Christmas celebration at R-double-A-F-Australia Estate and we were especially privileged to have a quartet of young musicians entertain us with Christmas Carols and songs. We thank Dr Margaret Pride O.A.M for introducing and sponsoring these young people who made a very special contribution to the event.

Members of the W.A Branch met on 22 February 2025 at our Annual General Meeting, which was followed by brunch in the pleasant riverside surroundings at Matilda Bay. There were five vacancies on the committee and five nominations were received. It is with pleasure that I announce the new Chairman for the W.A Branch is Ms Judy Hogben A.M. Ms Claire Brittain A.M joins the committee. We pay tribute to the extensive contribution made to the Branch by Mr Bill Hassell A.M, who has come to the end of his three x three-year terms and therefore has retired.

There were 43 W.A recipients of an award in the Australia Day Honours List and the Branch celebrated with a reception at R-double-A-F-Australia Estate in Bull Creek. We thank the management of R-double-A-F-Australia who enabled the reception to be held there when previous arrangements fell through at the last minute.

We were delighted to read that three of our members were named as State Cultural Treasures on 24 November 2024 at a ceremony at the W.A Museum Boola Bardup: Geoffrey Lancaster A.O, Dr Dorothy Ericksen A.M and Jenny Davis O.A.M. State Cultural Treasures Awards celebrate and honour senior Western Australian Artists who have made lifelong contributions to their art form and community.

The committee has a full year of activities planned and, as retiring Chairman, I wish the members of the W.A Branch a very enjoyable year.

## EVENTS

### CHRISTMAS LUNCH

On 26 November 2024, 75 members and guests of W.A Branch met at R-double-A-F-Australia for lunch. R-double-A-F-Australia had been the venue in the past for this occasion and we were delighted to be back in the renovated function room. Attendees were entertained by a quartet of professional singers from the University of Western Australia Conservatorium of Music with two 10-minute renditions of Christmas songs and Carols. We are very grateful to Dr Margaret Pride O.A.M who arranged and paid for this special Christmas entertainment. The regular Christmas raffle, together with the proceeds of a silent auction for two bottles of donated Port specially put down for the Association in 2000, raised \$700 which is to go towards the Order of Australia Association Foundation. We are grateful to all who donated prizes.



Photo of the Quartet: Sanya Jones, Rachel Doulton, Thomas Allen and Ciaran McChord

## FEATURED MEMBER

**DR DOROTHY ERICKSON A.M P.h.D, Associateship in Art, B.A, F.R.W.A.H.S, F.C.C.W.A, M.P.H.A, Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame, State Cultural Treasure**

Dr Dorothy Erickson A.M, who received her Order of Australia in 2024, has recently been recognised as a State Cultural Treasure for her amazing and lifelong contribution to art forms and the community. Dorothy, who grew up on a farm in Bolgart in the wheatbelt of W.A, is a true West Australian and someone West Australians should be proud of.

As a trailblazer she has showcased the unique flora, fauna and landscapes of W.A to the world. Originally trained as a teacher, she has had a multifaceted career as an outstanding artist, jeweller, author, historian and curator. She has had more than 40 solo exhibitions worldwide including a retrospective at the Art Gallery of Western Australia and has taken part in more than 350 group exhibitions in all states of Australia, in New Zealand, in most countries of Europe, Asia and the U.S. Her work is held in prestigious international collections.

As well as winning prizes and awards for her jewellery, in her writing and teaching she has focused on her fellow Western Australian artists. Author of a number of

books and many articles, her most recent book, *Inspired by Light and Land, Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1970 to the 21st Century*, was the winner of the Williams/Lee Steere Book Prize 2024. In it she has written: "Art is not made in isolation. Whether it is made as an adornment to social life, a critique upon it or an activity of personal necessity, it remains the product of the economic and social milieu in which it was developed." It records and demonstrates how important art and design is in the history of a place.

## SPECIAL FEATURE

### THE LONELIEST V.C.s

Why, after more than 100 years of service, has the Royal Australian Navy (R.A.N) only one Victoria Cross? And why did it take 78 years for it to be awarded? Was it the case that there was less conspicuous bravery in the R.A.N? Certainly not. So why have its naval heroes been less rewarded?

To put things in perspective, John Winton's *The Victoria Cross at Sea* discusses 124 such decorations. Looking at another great naval nation, the United States, the Medal of Honor, that nation's highest distinction, has been awarded to 749 naval men and 300 of the Marine Corps – no V.C or Medal of Honor has ever been awarded to a woman. So why did Australia not share a comparable number? Such high awards are not given on the basis of a percentage, but Australia by the end of WWII was around six million people; the UK 50 million; the USA 150 million. Should not at least one Australian naval V.C have been awarded?

The answer is two-fold. The R.A.N was a daughter-navy of the Royal Navy (R.N). Having only come into existence in 1911, the Australian Service was steadily grown under the patient tuition of the R.N. It was only some time into World War Two that the new navy had its own flag officers, since it takes decades to graduate, train and give experience to senior personnel. The system of recommending honours was a British one, and approval for bravery awards was processed in London. The other two Australia military services, the Army and the Royal Australian Air Force, were fully commanded from within Australia and therefore processed their honours system, although they required royal assent for the senior awards, within Australia. As an example, there were 65 Victoria Crosses awarded for Army service within the Great War, another 20 within WWII, and by the end of that conflict four given for bravery within the R-double-A-F. As a result of being almost a distant arm of the R.N, the R.A.N's honour system faltered and was fumbled with during World War Two.

There were many examples of bravery which went unrewarded. For example, one cruiser captain went down fighting to the last with no honour given. Captain Hector Waller took *H.M.A.S Perth* to a gallant end alongside the cruiser *U.S.S Houston*, both he and Captain Rooks battling against a superior Japanese force.

Due to the constraints of a small service beset by both disaster – the R.A.N lost many ships in 1942 – and a shortage of staff, no application for a bravery honour was made for Waller, despite Rooks being given the Medal of Honor within months of his death. It was not until after the war that someone in the R.N, ironically, noticed this deficiency. Waller was awarded only a Mention in Despatches though – an example of the second major deficiency of the Australian system: there was and still is a reluctance to award honours late after the event.

British readers may be well familiar with the V.C of Captain Fogarty Fegen and *H.M.S Jervis Bay*. He commanded that ship, the sole escort of a Canada-Britain convoy, in November 1940. Surprised by German surface raiders, Fegen took his ship directly towards them in an effort to let his convoy escape. He died on his bridge as the ship went down. But *H.M.A.S Yarra*, in a similar sole defence of a convoy north of Australia, received no such decoration. Indeed Lieutenant Commander Robert Rankin received nothing at all.

That second national failure, the reluctance to award retrospectively, haunted yet another action for years after the war. This one was even more memorable, perhaps because it concerned just one young sailor at his post rather than the command of an entire vessel, as had been the case with Waller and Rankin. Only 18 years of age, the last stand of Teddy Sheean was one that many were not willing to see unrewarded, and the one where the only V.C ever awarded to the Australian navy was finally granted.

*H.M.A.S Armidale* was one of 56 corvettes that the R.A.N commanded in World War Two. On 1 December she was caught south of what is now East Timor by Japanese aircraft. For more than an hour she was tormented by repeated air attacks and finally an approach by twin Betty bombers from different directions sealed her fate. Both released a torpedo, and *Armidale* was hit twice by these massive weapons and began sinking rapidly. While more aircraft poured in fire, with Zero fighters being particularly effective, the ship's company obeyed Lieutenant Commander Richards' order to Abandon Ship. Some say Sheean was already wounded but, whatever the case, the Ordinary Seaman returned to his gun and began firing to protect his comrades. He loaded and fired his 20mm Oerlikon to the end as the waters closed above the ship.

Over many decades the story of Sheean and his gallantry refused to die. Questions were raised in the Australian Parliament; petitions were raised; inquiries held. The second of these resulted after considerable public debate with a request put forward to Her Late Majesty the Queen, for although a new national honours system had begun in 1975, this needed Assent. Many thought it would never be received but, on 1 December 2020, 78 years after the event, Teddy Sheean's V.C was given to his family.

The boy from northern Tasmania who had proved himself a man would be forever the Navy's foremost hero.

There have of course been hundreds of distinguished members of the R.A.N with recognised gallantry honours. In World War Two alone the George Cross and

Medal were awarded to many, chiefly for mine-disposal work, often in Britain. Distinguished Service Orders, Crosses and Medals, a variety of other awards, and 620 Mention in Despatches have been distributed. Will another VC. be awarded? Likely not for past events – that reluctance to award retrospectively is still there. But, like it or not, war is still with us, and somewhere in the future another Victoria Cross for Australia's Navy is a prospect.

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