



Welcome from VIC Branch Chair

In presenting this, my first report, to The Order of Australia Association Ltd Vic Branch members, I thank everyone for the opportunity to serve as your Vic Branch Chair.

I would like to thank Helene Bender AM for her commitment as OAA Vic Branch Chair over the past seven years.

I also acknowledge the contribution of former Committee members, Barb Thomas OAM, Hatice Basarin OAM and Gary Lee OAM who recently retired from the Committee.

I am looking forward to working with the new Vic Branch Committee, particularly the two new members: Vic Branch Secretary Jill Page OAM and Vic Branch Treasurer Luz Restrepo OAM. I am pleased to have had approaches from members to fill the vacant position of Events Coordinator, and I am hopeful that this position will be filled soon. I also thank those members continuing to serve on the committee.

I am still seeking the support of a member to take on the role of Committee Member/Minutes Secretary. This is not an onerous task. It requires a member to attend Vic Branch meetings, generally via TEAMS and take the minutes. I am also looking for a member to take on the role of Committee Member/Coordinator Merchandise. Both positions allow the member to have input into all Vic Branch Committee discussions and decisions. Position Descriptions for both these roles are on the Vic Branch page of the OAA website: [2025 Vic Annual General Meeting Papers - The Order of Australia Association](#)

March and early April this year, were certainly a busy time for Regional Groups as they prepared for, and held, their Annual General Meetings. I congratulate and thank all members who accepted the responsibility of taking on the various roles within their Group. Your commitment to OAA and particularly the Vic Branch and your group, is much appreciated.

I thank Barb Brook OAM, Vic Regional Groups Co-ordinator for her efforts in attending many of the OAA VIC Branch Regional Groups AGMs.

As I outlined in my email to all members following my election to this role, my focus during 2025-2026 will be on the following:

- membership growth
- membership retention
- membership participation

It is great to see that these three points of focus formed the basis of reports from each Regional Group to the recent meeting of Regional Group representatives.

In closing, a reminder of the Vic Branch events for the remainder of 2025:

Tuesday 22 July – Mid Year Lunch

Thursday 20 November – End of Year Dinner

Fred Harrington OAM Vic Branch Chair E: chairvic@theorderofaustralia.asn.au M: 0417 116 304





Thank you to those who served and those who are serving

SAVE
THE
DATE



Victoria Branch 2025 Events

OAA members and their guests are welcome to attend Victoria Branch and Regional Group Events.

All venues selected by the Victoria Branch for Events in 2025 are in the Melbourne CBD and accessible by members and guests of all abilities.

They are close to metropolitan, regional and rural public transport options.

Mid-Year Lunch in Melbourne CBD

Date: Tuesday 22 July

Venue: Stamford Plaza Melbourne 111 Little Collins Street, Melbourne

Time: 12.15pm registration

Speaker: Jenny Gowan AM. Citation: For significant service to medicine as a pharmacist, to professional societies, and to community health

An OAA Foundation scholarship recipient will update members and guests

Cost: \$70 GST included for members and guests. 2 course lunch, drinks at bar price

End of Year Dinner

Date: Thursday 20 November

Venue: Stamford Plaza Melbourne 111 Little Collins Street, Melbourne

Time: 6.15pm registration

Speaker: Georgina Gubbins OAM. Citation: For service to primary industry, and to the community

2024 OAA Foundation scholarship recipient Ayman Miazhi will update members and guests

Cost: \$70 GST included for members and guests. 2 course dinner, drinks at bar price

OAA Victoria Branch and Regional Group Events for 2025, please refer to website:

<https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/vic/upcoming-events/>

Inspiring Australians Oration

The Inspiring Australians Oration held at The Angliss Conference Centre on Friday 28 March 2025 was delivered by John Wylie AC titled 'A love letter to Australia'.

The event was well attended by OAA VIC Branch members, friends and a representation of secondary students from Strathcona Grammar School. Further, a string quartet provided background music to welcome everyone and the Viva Voci choir from St Catherine's School sung a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem and an inspirational song to end formalities. Beverley Pinder OAM an OAA VIC Branch committee member MCed the Oration.

In delivering the Oration John Wylie AC (photo on the right) described his experiences of Australia's unique assets – its remarkable geographical features, resources, wildlife and history. A history brought into sharp focus by a visit to Arnhem Land where the millennia old rock art and stories provided a "greater appreciation of why we should celebrate our indigenous history".

John explored the notions of resilience and egalitarianism, which motivate athletes, leaders, and community members to excel and contribute towards overcoming adversity and challenges for a more robust future. This is marked by many achievements and initiatives including, accomplishments in sports, the avoidance of recession over 31 years ('save for the initial impact of COVID'), systems which represents an ethos of affordable health care for all in the community such as the NDIS (despite its flaws), and an internationally enviable strong university education system.

The Love Letter, was not only appreciative of Australia, but provided some "tough love". The Oration presented a call to action on three fronts.



Firstly, a message for the students to consider when becoming involved in public and community life. John referred to his own experiences, particularly through philanthropy, as a way of making a difference. He also drew attention to public service through politics, however, warning of the trap of advancing personal interests rather than the "long-term interests of the entire country".

The second call to action was to "restore empathy and kindness in our civil society" something he contends was becoming increasingly difficult given the way social media is used, and, as a result of how people are responding to the increasing tension from geo-political issues globally.

The final call to action was to "dream big", that is, to respond to the national need not to fall into complacency or inactivity in shaping a better future for the next generations. Rather, take up the challenge personally and contribute actively.

The Oration certainly inspired, provoked and, in parts, entertained the appreciative audience.



Inspiring Australians Oration continued

2004 was the inaugural year of the Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarships; it was a pleasure to have one of the recipients Dr. Felicia Eng provided a fascinating and personal perspective on the value of the scholarship in opening up opportunities which would otherwise remain unrealised.

Felicia graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Melbourne. However, this was achieved only through the support of the OAA Foundation scholarship. Felicia provided a frank and personal account of how family care issues resulted in a major upheaval which meant she was unable to focus on her study ambitions.

By chance the young Felicia Eng came across information on the scholarship and after much hesitation, and a lot of "what ifs", she submitted her application. She recounted her surprise and delight when on Christmas Eve of 2003 she received the good news – news that would have an extraordinary impact on her life, and the contribution she has made to Haemonetics, a global medical devices company based in Boston and currently at IBM, as part of leading in AI and Quantum technologies.



The scholarship provided an opportunity for Felicia to move into Janet Clarke Hall, the University of Melbourne and the financial independence to pursue studies away from complex challenges at home. It also assisted Felicia to seek clinical assistance for depression and tackle study and life challenges.

Felicia also attributes her success to the mentoring that the scholarship provided. Felicia was paired with Professor Adrienne Clarke – still a valued mentor and friend till this day. She also acknowledged the generosity of her scholarship donor Hugh Morgan AC.

Felicia's own experiences led her to a Board Directorship at St. Hilda's College, and, as they say, passing on the baton through her own scholarship fund: "I shape the experience of the students who live there. They place their trust in us to provide them a safe space to learn, grow and build their identity. I also fund a scholarship at the College. The scholarship provides students the opportunity to get hands-on experience working with disadvantaged communities. They get to see a different perspective, and learn how they can make an impact in this world."

In closing Felicia acknowledged an inspirational reminder of the power of the OAA Foundation Scholarships, and her own remarkable contribution to academia, science and the lives of others as a result, "I can say definitively, without the Foundation's scholarship, I would not be the person you see in front of you today". She encouraged students to pursue their passions with determination and ambition.

Photo above: Dr Felicia Eng

Inspiring Australians Oration continued

OAA VIC Branch Chair Helene Bender AM mentioned one of the key objectives of former Victoria Branch Chair, Paul Wheelton AM was to have a 'signature event' created for the Victoria Branch. From this the annual Inspiring Australians Oration was established.

The initial Oration in 2017 was delivered by Her Excellency Linda Dessau AC Governor of Victoria.

The OAA VIC Branch committee agreed to rename the Inspiring Australians Oration from next year to the Paul Wheelton AM Inspiring Australia Oration. This pays tribute to the longstanding contribution of Paul Wheelton AM to this event.

When asked about the tribute, Paul explained:

The Oration goes back to when I was Chair of Victoria of the Association and Deputy Chair of the National Board. I struggled with the Association's true purpose.

Most activities revolved around social events and a gathering of new awardees. The National Board became engaged in the need to fund scholarships via the OAA Foundation, which they had not done for years. Taking the lead, we raised the money to fund a Victorian Scholarship, and this began an ongoing achievement of the Victorian Branch in funding more scholarships than any other State or Territory.

The idea of the Oration was born out of my desire to engage recipients of an Order of Australia with a yearly oration given by a recipient that would inspire others in our community to go above and beyond in their desire to make a difference.

Because of my involvement with several schools as a mentor in the Youth in Philanthropy program run by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, having young Australians attend would be worthwhile and also guide the speaker in inspiring these young Australians in their content.



Vic Branch certainly looks forward to successful Inspiring Australians Oration in the years to come.

Photo above L-R: Paul Wheelton AM, Dr Felicia Eng and John Wylie AC

Inspiring Australians Oration continued



Photo: St Catherine's School string quartet

OAA member Mike Zervos OAM provided his reflection on attending the 2025 Inspiring Australians Oration noting "it was a wonderful opportunity to interact with other members and hear such inspiring presentations. I will certainly be attending other events in the future."

Having students from both St Catherine's School and Strathcona Grammar School leader program added a youthful energy to the Oration.

In HIS role as CEO of the education charity Courage to Care Victoria, Mike has interacted with Strathcona Grammar School as part of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (LMCF) Youth in Philanthropy grant program. Schools interview various charities and recommend if they be awarded funding; it was a wonderful surprise for him to reconnect with these students and their teacher at the Oration.

Courage to Care was this year's recipient of funds from Strathcona's 2024 Youth in Philanthropy initiative. This is an excellent educational opportunity for students to assess the impact of charitable giving and activities plus a source of much needed funds to charities.

Strathcona did recommend funding support and as a result a grant was made by LMCF. Courage to Care used these funds to continue offering free Upstander education into Victorian schools; the programs educate participants on how to counter the dangers of racism, prejudice, discrimination and bullying and not be bystanders.

I congratulate the OAA VIC Branch committee for arranging this event and the involvement of school students.



Photo left:

Mike Zervos OAM

Dr Felicia Eng

Strathcona Grammar School students

Upcoming OAA VIC Branch Regional Group Events

Barwon Regional Group

Movie afternoon on **Sunday 25 May** at Queenscliff; the movie will be "Conclave".

Central Highlands Wimmera Regional Group

Annual Luncheon on **Sunday 18 May** at the Midlands RSL Ballarat

Guest Speaker Judy Ryan OAM "The Importance & Power of Community Activism"

Cost: \$40 per person incl GST. Refer to page 8 for the lunch invitation.

Bookings to Jean Wise OAM honeywise@bigpond.com

Gippsland Regional Group

Autumn Luncheon on **Sunday 18 May** at the Fish Creek Hotel at 12noon for a meal at 12.30pm

North Central Suburbs Regional Group

Thursday 15 May Monthly ZOOM session with guest speaker commencing at 5:30 pm.

Bookings to Fred Harrington OAM fred.harrington@gravity.net.au by 5:00pm Wednesday 14 May

Wednesday 11 June Informal Seasonal Lunch at 11:45 am at the Sycamore Tree Café, 185 Burgundy St Heidelberg. Members and guests can order from the menu and individually pay for food and drinks.

Bookings to Irene Harrington OAM harri@gravity.net.au by Friday 6 June

Thursday 19 June Monthly ZOOM session with guest speaker commencing at 5:30 pm.

Bookings to Fred Harrington OAM fred.harrington@gravity.net.au by 5:00pm Wednesday 18 June

Reminder OAA members and their guests are welcome to attend OAA Victoria Branch Regional Group Events statewide; this includes virtual events via ZOOM or TEAMS.

OAA Victoria Branch Regional Group Events for 2025, please refer to website:

<https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/vic/upcoming-events/>

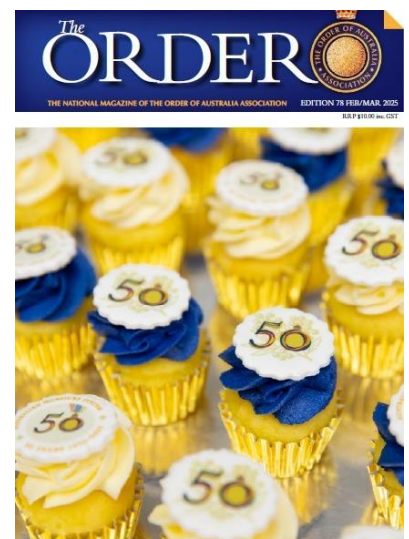
Receive an e-copy of *The Order* national magazine

With a focus on the environment and reducing plastic wrap and printing, members are encouraged to opt for an e-copy of the quarterly national magazine.

This approach will reduce the cost of printing, plastic wrap and postage.

If interested please email OAA National Membership Officer (Heather) aaanatmbrofficer@theorderofaustralia.asn.au asking for the national database to be changed to the e-copy distribution of *The Order* national magazine.

Thank you in advance for making a difference.



CENTRAL HIGHLANDS WIMMERA REGIONAL GROUP

Chairman, John Burt OAM & Committee

Invite

OAA Members, Recipients & Partner/Guests

To the Twenty Sixth Annual Luncheon

Sunday 18 May 2025

Venue: Midlands – Ballarat RSL

330 Heinz Ln, Invermay Park, Ballarat

Time: 12.00noon for 12.30pm start

Cost: \$ 40.00 per person (GST Inc.) Drinks at Bar Prices

GUEST SPEAKER

Judy Ryan OAM

“The Importance & Power of Community Activism”

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RSVP on form below by Sunday 11 May 2025

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Large Order of Australia medals may be worn to this lunch

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of The Order of Australia

I am able to attend the 26th Annual Luncheon of the Order of Australia Association Central Highlands Wimmera Regional Group on Sunday 18 May 2025 at Midlands Ballarat RSL

Member/Recipient

Partner/Guest(s)

Dietary Requirements

Payment \$40.00 (GST Inc.) per person: \$

Pay to: OAA Central Highlands Wimmera Group

BSB: 633 000 Account: 1570 080 20 Ref: Please use your SURNAME

Or by cheque payable to: OAA Central Highlands Wimmera Group

Jean Wise OAM, PO Box 42, WARRACKNABEAL 3393

For further information or to register apologies/attendance by Sunday 11May 2025

Please email: honeywise@bigpond.com or Phone: 0407 242 914

News from the Regional Groups

Central Highlands Wimmera Regional Group

The Annual General Meeting of Central Highlands Wimmera Regional Group was held at the Ararat RSL on Sunday 23 February and was well supported with 24 members and partners in attendance, enjoying lunch before settling in for the business at hand.

Three of our new members were in attendance, with two of these joining the Committee, one as Treasurer. New blood on the Committee means new ideas.

Office Bearers for 2025/26 are:-

Chairman John Burt OAM

Vice Chair Voi Williams OAM

Secretary Jean Wise OAM

Treasurer Michael Ryan OAM

Committee Members Geoff Crick OAM, Barbara Wellington AM, Pam Cupper OAM and Michael Stephens AM

The first event for the year will be the Annual Luncheon at the Midlands RSL Ballarat on Sunday 18 May 2025 (Invitation on page 8).

Eastern Suburbs Regional Group

The Eastern Suburbs Regional Group has been encouraged by several offers from members to join our committee, and we were delighted to appoint four new members at the Annual General Meeting recently. We returned to the Blackburn Lake Sanctuary for our meeting and were particularly grateful to Professor June Kane AM for stepping in at short notice when our advertised guest speaker was unable to be with us. June shared some of her story and members were in awe of her lifetime record of work in combating human trafficking, exploitation of children and violence against women and children.

Photo: New ESRG Committee members Dinah Reddihough AO, Kay Tranto OAM and Santosh Kumar OAM at the ESRG Annual General meeting, with (seated) Regional Coordinator Barb Brook OAM and Guest Speaker June Kane AM.



We continue to plan for webinars, although the attendance at these is generally disappointing. For some members, though, this type of event, along with our recordings posted on our YouTube channel, are a very important way of engagement, especially if limited mobility means face-to-face events are difficult. The speaker at our most recent webinar, just last week, was Dan Collins, who participated in four Olympic Games and is now an inspirational speaker engaging with large and small organisations to encourage the use of teams to create safe, challenging, and purposeful environments. Our inspiring speakers can be seen at any time on YouTube at https://youtube.com/@oaa_esrg

Eastern Suburbs Regional Group continued

Our current membership is 405, down from 421 this time last year. Since 1st January we have removed seven names, (including 2 deceased, 2 change of address, and 3 non-renewals) and 2 added (new awards). We find that about 50% of those who decide not to renew membership advise us, and the rest simply let their membership lapse. In looking at membership trends, we also need to look at the number of awards made in the Australia Day and King's Birthday Honours & Awards. The number of awards in the last two has been, at least for the Eastern Suburbs Region, significantly lower than in previous years. In the six years prior to 2024, the average number of new awards in each list for the Eastern suburbs was 43 (ie a yearly average of 86), while the total number of awards in the last two lists has been 39, a drop of over 50%. It is not clear whether this represents a change in policy or a lack of nominations.

Gippsland Regional Group

Although the Annual General Meeting of the Gippsland Regional Group held on Sunday 23 March was not well attended with only 11 attendees in person, there were 17 apologies and 6 proxies submitted which suggests that there is still a reasonable amount of interest by members in the activities of the Regional Group in Gippsland.

Of note was a notice of motion submitted in advance of the meeting to develop a 'staggered tenure' approach to the election of committee members and, following a short discussion, the motion was passed that will enable half the committee positions to serve a two year term going forward therefore creating an alternating two year period of tenure into the future. The outcome of this year's election of committee and office bearers is as follows:

The Gippsland Regional Group Committee for 2025 (and beyond) is to consist of:

Doug Caulfield, OAM RFD – Chair for 1 year

Dr Peter Stevens, OAM – Deputy Chair for 2 years

Alan Wilson, OAM JP – Secretary for 1 year

Ian Ewart, OAM OStJ – Treasurer for 2 years

Anne Macarthur, AM – Committee for 1 year

David Tulloch, OAM – Committee for 2 years

The motion passed to stagger Committee appointments was to ensure that there was continuity of 'corporate knowledge' and therefore not create a void of capability and knowledge should a number of committee members not stand for re-election in the future.

Following the AGM formalities the group was addressed by the Chair of the Fundraising Subcommittee of the Rotary Centenary House Committee of Management (Kaye Radford) who delivered an interesting insight into the current and future operation of the facility that is located adjacent to the Latrobe Regional Health facility in Traralgon.



Photo:

Gippsland Regional Group Chair

Doug Caulfield, OAM RFD presents the Annual General Meeting guest speaker Kaye Radford Rotary Centenary House Fundraising Subcommittee Chair with a token of appreciation.



THE
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
ASSOCIATION LTD
VICTORIA BRANCH

GIPPSLAND REGIONAL GROUP

Members, Recipients & Guests
are cordially invited to attend a Lunch
at

THE FISH CREEK HOTEL

1 Old Waratah Road, Fish Creek

Order from the menu and pay on arrival for a 1230pm service
(main course meals cost range from \$20. Seniors meals available)

Drinks at bar prices

Sunday 18 May 2025

12.00noon for 12.30pm

Guest Speaker: Mrs Natalie Wischer OAM

"My journey to CEO of National Association of Diabetes Centres"

Full Size Order of Australia Medal may be worn at this lunch

If you wish to attend please complete below and mail to
OAA Post Office Box 906, Traralgon 3844
or email to David Tulloch, at dajudy@bigpond.net.au

RSVP: Friday 9 May2025

Member's name.....

Post Nominal/s.....

Guests' name/s.....

Photos taken at this event may be used in promotional material, please advise the event photographer if you do not wish to be photographed

"To celebrate and promote outstanding Australian Citizenship"



Loddon- Campaspe Regional Group

Twenty members and friends visited Rochester on Friday 4 April, which was our second event for this year. The attendees were really impressed with the volunteers and exhibits at the Rochester Sports Museum. It is a first-class attraction. After lunch we enjoyed their annual mural exhibition, held in the town centre. The murals were vibrant and engaging.

A great community still recovering from a terrible recent flood.

North East & Goulburn Valley Regional Group

The North East Goulburn Valley Regional Group Annual General Meeting was held at the Benalla Lakeside Centre on Friday 21 March, 2025, with one of the committee members entertaining the large crowd in attendance.

Reg Poole OAM, who was presented with his award for services to Country Music in 2016, thrilled those in attendance with some popular songs and some snippets in his life as a country music entertainer.

Reg had been a fan of country music as a child and dreamed of being a recording artist. He also wrote songs as well as recording. Country music became his life and he travelled far and wide around Australia to sing his much-loved country songs.

He won three Golden Guitar awards at Tamworth and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Renown in 2006.

Reg was elevated to become a Country Music Living Legend, an award designed to honour his achievements and providing a lasting contribution to Country Music in Australia.



The attendees were delighted to be entertained by one of their own members and showed their appreciation of his talent. It was a very successful event with something different for the patrons to enjoy.

NEGV OAA Committee Members 2025

Mary-Lou Davis OAM.	Chairperson
Don Kilgour OAM.	Vice Chairperson
Marg Attley OAM	Secretary
Ailsa Fox OAM.	Treasurer
Sue Campbell	Committee member
Judi Hanlon	Committee member
Pieter Mourik	Committee member (new)
Libby Mourik	Committee member (new)

A big welcome to our two new committee members. Also, a huge thank you to Ron Webb OAM, who was a great support as a committee member, including organising the merchandise and badges.

South Central Suburbs Regional Group

Following the South Central Suburbs Regional Group Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 21 April, the Group welcomed two new committee members:

Colin Neave AM and George Voyage OAM who replaced retiring committee members Jo Newton OAM, Kathy Kaplan OAM and Emma Gierschick OAM
Felicity Frederico OAM was elected as Chair replacing Jill Page OAM.

Committee 2025

Felicity Frederico OAM	Chairperson
Alan Samuel OAM	Treasurer
Graeme Woolacott OAM	Secretary
Cheryl Threadgold OAM	Minute Secretary
Jill Page OAM	Immediate Past Chairman
Colin Neave AM	Committee
Lesley McGurgan OAM	Committee
Roger Wilson OAM	Venue/Events Chairman
George Voyage OAM	Committee

Which medal to wear when?



Day Functions

The full-size insignia (Main Piece) is generally worn at day functions where decorations have been prescribed by the event, for example OAA Events or Anzac Day

Evening Functions

At events such as evening receptions and dinners where decorations have been prescribed, the miniature insignia is generally worn. The main exception to this is Neck Decorations (AC and AO), which are worn in full-size.

Every day Wear

A lapel pin may be worn on civilian clothes at any time. Only one badge should be worn at a given time and not when other insignia pieces are worn.

April 2025 celebrations in our multicultural communities

For the first time since 2017, Western and Orthodox Easter fall on the same day – Sunday 20 April – Easter is a multi-day religious event where Christians reflect on the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

The period leading up to Easter is called Lent, which started at the beginning of March with Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday.

While traditions may vary, the most significant days of the Easter festival are Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Western Easter revolves around faith, family and food. Good Friday is a solemn day of prayer, reflection and hot cross buns while Easter Sunday is celebrated with church services and a feast with loved ones. Tables are laden with fish, lamb and sweet treats. Easter egg hunts are popular for chocolate lovers of all ages.

During Easter or Pascha, there are some typical greetings that Greek Orthodox Christians say to one another. These greetings are said after the Saturday evening and early Sunday morning church service.

Undoubtedly, the most popular Easter Sunday meal is slow cooked lamb and tsoureki, sweet bread made with orange zest and spices and the fun of cracking red eggs with family and friends. These traditions unite the Orthodox community.

Our Jewish friends celebrated Passover, also called Pesach from sunset Saturday 12 April to nightfall Sunday 20 April, the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Based around the Seder (a symbolic meal) they eat unleavened bread which symbolizes the hurried departure from Egypt of the Israelites.



Other symbolic foods placed on the Seder plate include a roasted lamb bone to represent the Passover sacrifice, bitter herbs to remind them of the bitterness of slavery and charoset, a sweet apple mix, which represents the mortar used in the building of the pyramids.

A time usually spent with family; Passover is one of the most important festivals in the Jewish year.

Our multicultural communities enrich our culture, economy and society.



2025 Australia Day Order of Australia Investitures



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Order of Australia.

Successive Governors of Victoria have presented these honours, awards and medals to more than 10,000 Victorian recipients at official ceremonies.

Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC the Governor of Victoria hosted Investitures at Government House Victoria on Tuesday 1 April and Wednesday 2 April for 2025 Australia Day recipients.

Marie Sellstrom AM

Congratulations to Marie Sellstrom AM, following her investiture at Government House Victoria earlier this month.

Marie was recognised for significant service to the community through social welfare organisations as a Member of the Order of Australia.

She co-founded the Rural Australians for Refugees Mansfield Branch, and has worked with many community organisations including serving on the Board of the Mansfield District Hospital. Marie has also been President and member of the Mansfield Ambulance Auxiliary and Bindaree Auxiliary helping residents have a better life.

In 2023, she was recognised by her community as the Senior Citizen of the Year for Mansfield Shire Council.



Marie Sellstrom AM joined the Association in February; she is a member of the OAA Victoria Branch North East & Goulburn Valley Regional Group.

Photo Marie Sellstrom AM at her investiture with the Governor of Victoria



2025 Australia Day Order of Australia Investitures

Gaye Hamilton AM

Gaye Hamilton is a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the General Division recipient for significant service to tertiary education and to the community.

Gaye grew up on a dairy farm in Mardan, went to school in Mirboo North and went on to make an impact across the community. In fact, her contribution spans various sectors including education, government, Australian Rules Football and Jazz music.

Trained as a teacher, Gaye's involvement in education took her from the classroom to a range of leadership roles. She was Council member of Victoria University. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Gaye became Co-Chancellor of Victoria University during the COVID pandemic. A time which saw the University close its doors and, like many, move to digital-based activities.



The western suburbs of Melbourne benefitted from Gaye's inclusive and visionary leadership over the years.

Gaye was the Director of Scienceworks which provides both informal and formal educational experiences to its many visitors. She was the inaugural Director and CEO of Werribee Zoo. She was also the Assistant Director of Melbourne Zoo and was part of commissioning the now famous butterfly house.

Gaye's love of sports saw her take on a role as the Director of Western Bulldogs (formerly Footscray Football Club) and then Chair of the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation for several years ensuring that it grew and opened its doors to the new and emerging communities which made the west of Melbourne their home.

Whilst many would have retired, Gaye's move to Inverloch in 2022 with her husband Roy

Hamilton provided an opportunity to support jazz music and she became secretary of the Inverloch Jazz Festival for three years.

Gaye has a list of roles which have contributed to community: she was the former Director of the Sports Centres Trust, Western Chances, People and Parks Foundation amongst others.

Adding to the accolades, Gaye was awarded Victorian Senior Australian of the year in 2022.

Photo: Gaye Hamilton AM at her investiture



2025 Australia Day Order of Australia Investitures

Bassilios (Basil) Morcos OAM

Fifty years of service to the community is quite an achievement. Basil came to Australia in 1971 as a young man from Egypt with his young wife and two children under three. A huge undertaking – and leap of faith. Basil's primary task was to navigate a new culture, education system and focus on settlement and survival with his family.

However, Basil saw a need – and responded. In 1973 he established the Australian Egyptian Association to support others who also found they required assistance. He quickly became an advocate for migrants and helped establish the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, an important peak body.

Basil is also a founding member of the 3ZZZ radio station which, till this day, provides programs in many languages to the community.

Basil faced several challenges, including finding a school for his children. Unable to enrol in a Catholic school, he worked tirelessly to gather support to finally establish St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College after ten years of effort. From 50 students he has seen it grow now to almost 1,100 students.

Education was always a passion. He took up two degrees at La Trobe University to add to the degree received from Alexandra University. He taught humanities and social science at Altona North Technical School for 21 years. His focus then, and now, is to inspire young people to rise to their potential and live full lives.

A Rotary member for over 45 years, Basil served as President and Vice President of Brimbank Central Rotary Club. He has a determined approach to supporting youth initiatives locally and internationally through sponsorships and fundraising.

Basil has received several acknowledgements for this community work, including from the Deserted Children Association of Victoria and a Centenary Medal as President of the Australian Egyptian Association – a role he held for 13 years. Through this role he helped countless migrants settle in Australia.

A dedicated family man, Basil was presented with his Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) at Government House at the age of 88. Present at the ceremony were his two sons, Albert and Jimmy, his daughter Rosetta, and his wife Amira – all of whom have been steadfast supporters of his community work and who expressed great pride in his accomplishments.



Basil is humbled, happy and honoured to be an Order of Australia recipient – and hopes that it will inspire others to also give to the community.

Photo: Bassilios (Basil) Morcos OAM third from left with wife, Amira and three children, Albert, Jimmy and Rosetta

Invite Order of Australia recipients to join the Association

At times our paths cross with other Order of Australia recipients who have not joined the Association for various reasons.

Perhaps the time is now right to have the conversation.

Since January 2025 the OAA VIC Branch has welcomed 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023 recipients as new members – thank you.

Please email a copy of this E-Newsletter to the recipient/s you know who have not joined and the online membership application link - www.theorderofaustralia.asn.au/membership-application

Working together we are able to build our future.

OAA Victoria Branch

The Order of Australia Association Ltd Victoria Branch Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 28 March 2025 at The Angliss Conference Centre.



The draft minutes of the AGM are on OAA national website under [2025 Vic Annual General Meeting Papers - The Order of Australia Association](#)

The OAA VIC Branch welcomed two new committee members at the 2025 Annual General Meeting:-

Jill Page OAM – Secretary

Luz Restrepo OAM - Treasurer

2025 Victoria Branch Office Bearers, Committee and Branch Nominated Director

Office Bearers

Chair	Fred Harrington OAM
Deputy Chair	Trevor Clark OAM
Secretary	Jill Page OAM
Treasurer	Luz Restrepo OAM

Committee

Editor	Dr Teresa De Fazio OAM
Events Co-ordinator	Vacant
General	Dr Helene Bender AM
General	Beverley Pinder OAM
Membership Secretary	Fred Harrington OAM
Merchandise Co-ordinator	Vacant
Minute Secretary	Vacant
Regional Groups Co-ordinator	Barb Brook OAM

Branch Nominated Director (Vic) Grahame Leonard AM



Profile OAA VIC Branch Secretary

Jill Page OAM

Jill Page OAM trained as a classical singer at Melba Conservatorium and with private teachers such as Etta Bernard and Madame Lucy Altman. She has sung many principal roles with The Southern Cross Light Opera Company.



Jill was invited to be involved with the former City of Springvale Arts Council, becoming the President. Because of her experience in theatre, she was approached by the council to form a Community Theatre Group which she named "Springboard Players". Jill was Director, Musical Director and managed the Creative Team consisting of Costumes, Scenery, Backstage, Lighting, and Front of House. With Victorian Council amalgamation, she was approached by the City of Kingston and Parks Victoria to produce Theatre in the Park at Braeside Park, reaching out to audiences from the wider Melbourne area to visit the park, bring a picnic and enjoy the performances.

Her creative skills and experience combined visual arts and performing arts. She has been President of Kingston Arts Network, City of Greater Dandenong Public Art Reference Group committee member, inaugural Chair of The City of Kingston Arts and Culture Advisory Committee and has been a committee member for many years. Jill was asked to direct a multicultural performance piece funded by the City of Kingston working with the community of Westall and a professional playwright, producing a two act play "Welcome Matt" featuring Maori, Philipino, Sri Lankan and Fijian cultures.

A trained primary school teacher with experience in classroom, drama and music teaching and as a Music Advisor, visiting 25 schools to assist with music programs.

Jill ran music and drama school holiday programs for Cities of Moorabbin, Casey, Greater Dandenong, and Kingston. She conducted theatre workshops for young adults and mature adults in Kingston and Greater Dandenong.

Facilitator for Arts Centre Melbourne Members Conversation Group Jill organised monthly meetings and planning the speaker's schedule.

She trained the Kingston U3A choir "Vivace Voices" for 14 years and currently trains Bayside U3A choir "Baytone Singers".

Jill is the President, Administrative Secretary and Senior Classical Vocal Convener of Eisteddfod by the Bay, formerly The Mordialloc Eisteddfod EST in 1955. The eisteddfod encourages and supports young singers, actors and pianists, offering performance in a theatre before an audience, and the opportunity to receive a critique from professional adjudicators. She is also a Creativity Australia and One Voice Board Director.

Jill is a passionate supporter of the performing arts and is a patron of Arts Centre Melbourne, Victorian Opera and was a Patron of The Production Company.

Jill Page was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) Australia Day 2017 for service to the performing arts and to the community.



Profile OAA VIC Branch Treasurer

Luz Restrepo OAM

Luz Restrepo OAM is a social entrepreneur dedicated to building inclusive, connected communities through small business. She founded *SisterWorks* and *Migrant Women in Business*, supporting thousands of migrant women to grow their skills and businesses.

Starting a business is always a challenge, but it can seem next to impossible for those new to Australia; particularly for those who are still trying to find their footing.



Founder of *SisterWorks*, Luz Restrepo, understands this problem all too well. When she came to Australia seven years ago from Colombia, as a political asylum seeker, she had no friends here and spoke no English.

'As a political refugee, with my life in tatters, I felt like a nobody: frightened, isolated and disempowered. I soon discovered that I was not alone.'

In 2011, along with a group of 25 women experiencing similar challenges, Luz began to make and sell crafts around Melbourne. The women in this circle understood that to support each other was also to strengthen each other.

'Our thinking was the same: Don't give us fish. Teach us how to fish and we will fish for our own food in Australia,' says Luz.

In 2013, with the support from a committee of legal, fundraising and marketing volunteers, Luz formalised the business and *SisterWorks* was born.

Today, the not-for-profit social enterprise supports women with migrant, asylum seeker or refugee backgrounds to become financially independent, while also helping them to become happily settled in Australia.

'When you grow up in Australia, you know how Australia works and you have friends and family that give you capacity,' Luz says.

Now based in Maldon, Luz leads *Village Business*, connecting small-town entrepreneurs, councils, and business associations to strengthen regional economies. Since 2022 she is a member of the Regional Advisory Committee Loddon Mallee - Victorian Multicultural Commission.

She believes that when people can access meaningful work and earn a decent living, they feel included—and inclusion is the foundation of a thriving community. In towns without big employers, small and micro businesses keep main streets alive and create local jobs. Luz works to ensure they are heard, supported, and connected.

Luz Restrepo was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) King's Birthday 2024 for service to the multicultural community of Victoria.



Deakin University acknowledges an OAA VIC Branch member

One of the 2025 Deakin University Alumni Award recipients earlier this month included OAA VIC Branch member **Diana Taylor AM** lawyer, AFL pioneer and Deakin donor.

Diana is a respected lawyer and business and community leader who was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2024 for her service to Australian Rules football and to Geelong. She is the Chair of the Geelong Authority, Chair of Anam Cara House Geelong, past Vice President of the Geelong Football Club and a Deakin University advisor, donor and mentor.

In her interview Diana said "Deakin University is an incredibly important institution with local, national and international impact. I am very proud to be a Deakin Alumni and law and arts graduate.

Over the years, I have loved continuing my involvement with Deakin as a member of the Deakin Law School Advisory Board, an employer of Deakin law students and as a donor.

A special thanks to Chancellor John Stanhope AM, Vice-Chancellor Professor Iain Martin, Distinguished Professor Rachel Huxley, Jimmy Buck and team for this recognition and an evening that was enjoyed by so many Deakin Alumni and their families. The Deakin family is a special one which comprises over 360,000 Alumni worldwide, and I am very thankful that so many years ago I chose Deakin University for my tertiary education."



As Chair of Anam Cara Geelong, Diana also recognised the world-leading role and leadership of Deakin University in support of the amazing community palliative care hospital and the community at Waurin Ponds Deakin University.

Deakin University Chancellor John Stanhope AM is also an OAA VIC Branch member.

The Late Adam Glen McKay OAM

Adam McKay left an indelible mark on many in his sphere. In recognition of his service to basketball and to the community, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. It was received by his wife Yuki McKay. Sadly Adam passed last year after a short battle with stage 4 brain cancer aged 43.

Adam was the Founder of Helping Hoops in 2009 after noticing that there was no charitable organisation which focussed solely on running free programs for children who didn't have access to basketball. In fact, his initial motivation was to volunteer for such a program – instead 13 years ago he founded what has become a pivotal organisation in the community.

Adam knew that whilst gaining basketball skills, having an opportunity to engage in a sport without financial and other barriers was important for young people. Being able to play basketball in the community is also about personal participation, community connection,



The Late Adam Glen McKay OAM continued

developing social skills and belonging. His vision to break down barriers for young people has touched many over the years.

Adam ran the first program on October 5, 2012. From that initial day, programs continued to grow in number. Adam led his team of volunteers across Melbourne to places where he knew young people needed such programs. This included, for example, Melbourne's west, Dandenong, Prahran and at Fitzroy's housing estate. The programs have now evolved but continue to focus on engaging young people whose circumstances would otherwise not allow them to engage in sport, for instance, migrants who have limited connections as part of their settlement process, young people with limited financial means and those with special needs.



As a result of a desperate need for funds, the first 24-hour Charity Shootout was launched in 2012. The aim was to shoot as many free throws as possible in 15 minutes. The funds raised not only supported the continuing viability of Helping Hoops, the Shootout became so popular it continues as a highly anticipated annual event.

Adam's determination was instrumental in leading the charity work. He brought together coaches, volunteers, partners and of course, participants. There are now 11 programs running, many in housing estates which run after school hours, weekends and during holiday periods for over 1,000 young people.

Yuki collected the Order of Australia Medals earlier this month with much pride – and fond recollections were Andrew coming home with ideas to share with her and their two young daughters. And, of course, Yuki was always there to assist and support each endeavour. The McKay family, friends and the basketball community are delighted that Andrew received the recognition.

Andrew's citation for service to basketball, and to the community also acknowledged he was a documentary filmmaker - *Sidelined: The Fight for Equality in Women's Basketball*, 2021-2022. And Head of Brand and Digital, Melbourne Boomers, Women's National Basketball League, 2022-2024.

It is pleasing to know Helping Hoops is still servicing the community.



THE
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
ASSOCIATION LTD
VICTORIA BRANCH

Nominate someone for the Order of Australia



Anyone can nominate someone to be recognised through the Order of Australia. Nominations can be submitted at any time during the year.

To nominate go to the [online portal](#).

Before beginning you will need to gather some key information:

- The contact details of the person you are nominating
 - A short case of why/who you are nominating; including
 - Examples of how they have demonstrated outstanding qualities
 - What they have done to make things better for others
 - The role(s) or area(s) in which they have excelled
 - The period of time, or dates of service (if known)
 - Evidence of other awards or recognition received by the nominee
 - Up to four referees (including contact details)
-

Order of Australia Lapel pin and Medals

If your Order of Australia lapel pin or medals needs to be **repaired** please contact:

Andrew Cohen, Solomon Brothers
466 Spencer Street
West Melbourne
Telephone: 93266822

For **additional** Order of Australia lapel pins or medals or **replacements** please contact the Honours Secretariat via phone or email.

Tel: 02 6283 3533

E: honours@gg.gov.au

Arrange payment over the phone.



OAA logo name badges

A template on the **Name Badges Australia** webpage allows OAA members to order name badges.



NAME HERE
Title Here

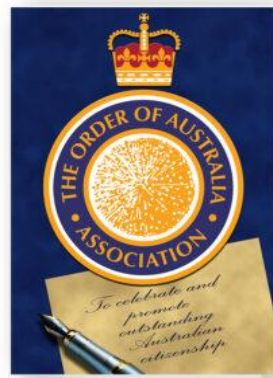
To order name badges, please follow the instructions found on the document that you can download from [here](#).

Merchandise Shop

Online shopping: <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/shopping-cart/>

NEW

Blue silk scarf
extended to
150cm in length



Above is a range of OAA Merchandise available from the Merchandise Shop online for members, family and friends to buy.

Online shopping: <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/shopping-cart/>

L-R: **New** blue silk scarf, **now extended to 150cm** in length \$52
Blank greeting card with envelope pack of 5 for \$10
Compact navy 53cm auto opening & closing umbrella \$30
Loop scarf (unisex) \$26 – other scarf options available
Roll up beanie (unisex) \$18 – other hat/cap options available
Ties \$30, aqua and white striped and charcoal grey also available
Above costs are GST included

Plus postage & handling noted on merchandise shop online website

OAA VIC Branch Regional Group Chairs

Barwon	Wayne Myers OAM
Central Highlands Wimmera	John Burt OAM
Eastern Suburbs	Geoffrey Grinton OAM
Frankston Mornington Peninsula	Heather Barton AM
Gippsland	Doug Caulfield OAM RFD
Loddon-Campaspe	Alex Stoneman OAM
Mallee	VIC Branch committee
Melbourne Central	Trevor Clark OAM
North Central Suburbs	Fred Harrington OAM
NE & Goulburn Valley	Mary-Lou Davis OAM
South Central Suburbs	Felicity Frederico OAM
South West Vic	Georgina Gubbins OAM
Western Suburbs	June Kane AM





THIS YEAR MARKS THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
AUSTRALIAN HONOURS SYSTEM

Australia's unique and distinctive system of honours and awards recognises those who make a significant contribution or provide worthy service to the community.