



Dated May/June 2025

Vision Impaired Accessible Document



On the front cover is a very interesting photo, taken on the last day of SYD25, the Association's annual national conference. The image is of a large group of conference delegates standing together and forming the shape of Australia, and it is taken on the flight deck of HMAS Adelaide, moored in Sydney Harbour. The Opera House and Harbour Bridge provide the backdrop and the water sparkles in the sunshine. The photos of the conference were taken by Carlos Velasco.

## 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 A.C

It has been a very busy time for us all since I last wrote. You came together for your national conference in Sydney earlier this month, which I hear was a wonderful gathering of members: like the Order itself, diverse and united by a common belief in the potential of every Australian to make a difference.

At the same time, the newest members of the Order have been invested in Canberra and Government Houses across Australia, 50 years after the first awards in 1975, the year the Order of Australia was established. As I shared with our honourees in Canberra, some of those first awards were for acts of bravery and dedication in Cyclone Tracy, which had devastated Darwin just a few months before. Our honours and awards have continued to be a recognition of individual care, kindness, respect and achievement, as well as a record of our national story. A story that often involves responding and rebuilding in the wake of disaster but also imagining a better future for our people and our place. A story that includes people who serve, in defence and civilian roles, to keep us safe and to care for our social fabric.

Most recently, I had the privilege of representing Australia on an official visit to Türkiye, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, with an unexpected visit to Rome for the funeral of Pope Francis. In Ankara, I had the honour of presenting the

Australian Police Medal to AFP Detective Superintendent and Senior Officer to Türkiye, Marie Andersson. Over more than 20 years, Marie's distinguished service has spanned regions, deepened collaboration and trust with international partners, supported local authorities and improved lives. It was very meaningful to spend time with her, and particularly to present her well-deserved medal. She represented so much of what we celebrate in the Awards.

I was in Türkiye to commemorate Anzac Day at Gallipoli, which was a profoundly moving ceremony, where I also met so many fellow Australians – many who had made the pilgrimage to Gallipoli for the dawn service, and many others who worked in our embassies and consulates across the region. It was affirming to see how they represent our modern, multicultural nation, and embody our Australian character of integrity, respect, service, kindness and care.

Having just spent time with Australians making us proud so far from home, it was especially encouraging to return to Australia and prepare immediately for the autumn investitures. Over multiple ceremonies, and among the 50th Anniversary exhibition curated by the Government House team, it was inspiring to meet yet another group of remarkable Australians. They were diverse, dedicated, deeply humble, and thoroughly deserving of the awards I was privileged to bestow on them. We have taken the opportunity to tell many more of the stories of those receiving awards using our social media platforms, to give a behind-the-scenes sense of the events and more information on how our honours and awards system works. I have seen similar communications across the country from the state governors. It says so much about how we can share stories and inspire nominations 50 years after their creation.

Performing these ceremonies remains among the most rewarding and uplifting parts of my role. I look forward to seeing more of the outstanding recipients, past and present, throughout this anniversary year.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION**

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

At the core of our work at The Order of Australia Association is the belief that recognition fosters a sense of belonging and encourages positive change in our communities. There are so many Australians that embody the values of selflessness, service and sacrifice. Their stories really do inspire us all to do more.

The 2025 Sydney Conference was a key opportunity to connect with inspirational individuals, reflect on past achievements, celebrate current contributions, and look forward with optimism. Together, let us continue to build a nation that recognizes the importance of each individual and supports those who work tirelessly; whether through volunteerism or innovation, these individuals embody The Order and contribute to a brighter tomorrow for all.

With any national conference we are creating memories, and this very well-organized conference offered many opportunities to do this. None more significant than presentation of the Order of Australia Foundation Scholarships that are designed to support talented individuals who show outstanding potential in their fields of study and their commitment to making a positive impact on society. These scholarships not only provide financial support but also serve as a platform to nurture the next generation of leaders, innovators and changemakers. By investing in the future of young Australians, the Foundation continues the legacy of those who have gone before us -- recognizing the importance of both individual achievement and the collective good.

Thank you to all Foundation Scholarship sponsors. Your generosity plays a critical role in empowering young people to pursue their passions, whether it be in the arts, science, community service or any number of disciplines. In doing so, we not only provide them with the tools to succeed but also encourage them to use their talents to create lasting change.

At the conclusion of the conference, I travelled to our capital city to attend the autumn investitures at Government House in Canberra. It is a privilege to witness the recognition of outstanding Australians by our dedicated Patron, the Governor-General of Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC. I extend my warm and heartfelt thanks to Her Excellency and the team at Government House for their kind and welcoming hospitality, as always.

Go well everyone.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE O.A.A NATIONAL CHAIR**

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

We are fortunate to be members of a community where we can have a national election, with all of us having a say, have heated but rational debate at all levels, and get on with life afterwards without rancour or civil unrest. We can be proud to be Australians.

The 2025 National Conference in Sydney was a great success and a credit to the NSW Branch hosts. A televised address by the Governor-General Her Excellency the Hon. Ms Sam Mostyn AC was followed by a challenging annual Oration, presented by General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC CVO MC. This was well received, as were the impressive band of speakers that followed. The annual dinner saw the presentation by the Governor of NSW Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley AC KC of five tertiary scholarships. The conference was brought to a 'grand finale', hosted by the Royal Australian Navy aboard HMAS Adelaide.



The overall impression was that feedback to those unable to attend would be “you should have been there!”

We completed our Annual General Meeting during the Sydney conference. The review of 2024 highlighted increased activity throughout the Association, underpinned by sound financial performance. The accompanying Members’ Forum was well attended and covered a wide range of matters of interest to members and to those formulating our future strategies. You can read more about the AGM and the Forum on pages 6 and 7 of this issue.

We now face the challenge of attracting more holders of Order of Australia awards to join us. We can all play a part in welcoming new award recipients at Branch and regional functions, and in continuing to offer opportunities for involvement in the life of the Association. We need also to ensure that we retain members by offering new and innovative opportunities both for fellowship and engagement with the community. We plan to gather members’ ideas on this during the year.

2025 to date is proving to be an encouraging year, with continuing activities throughout the Association and much work in progress for the 2026 National Conference in Brisbane.

### **CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST: VACANCY - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON THE NATIONAL BOARD**

Members are invited to consider nominating for the position of National Membership Director on the National Board. The appointment will be for a three-year term.

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 (A.E.S.T) 27 June 2025 as follows:

Mr David North O.A.M

Chairman Nominations Committee

The Order of Australia Association Ltd

18 Bushland Ave, Mt Pleasant, NSW 2579

Email: [dirnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:dirnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au)

Mobile: 0419 485 071

Note :

The Board Charter includes a Position Description and Application Form for Executive Director positions and is available from the National Secretary at: [natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au). Mobile: 0419 736 571

Intending nominees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the statutory and legal requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC): <https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/governance-standards%20>

Graham Hyde O.A.M

National Secretary

21 May 2025

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION A.G.M HELD ON 3 May 2025**

The National Secretary advised that there was a quorum. The National President, Hon. Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, welcomed 130 members and 25 guests to the meeting. The National Secretary advised that there were 46 apologies and 34 proxies received.

The National Chairman, MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O, R.F.D, E.D (Retd), presented the Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024, highlighting the following:

- The Association's Patron, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley A.C, C.V.O, D.S.C (Retd) retired as Governor-General in 2024; the incoming Governor-General, Her Excellency the Hon. Ms Sam Mostyn A.C, accepted patronage of the Association.
- A successful 2024 national conference was held in Perth in May with 192 delegates attending. All O.A.A Branches were represented. Conference funding was enhanced by several generous donations in cash and kind. A challenging and informative annual oration was presented by the Hon. Malcolm McCusker A.C, C.V.O, K.C. The annual dinner attracted 237 members and guests, with the guest of honour, the Governor of W.A, His Excellency the Hon. Chris Dawson A.C, A.P.M, presenting six O.A.A Foundation scholarships.
- Planning for the 2025 national conference in Sydney was completed with registrations well underway by year end. The 2026 national conference was relocated to Brisbane, with NT branch hosting deferred.
- Membership fees were reduced for 2024 and lifetime membership replaced with a 25-year option. A reduction in the number of awards in the General

Division (1,232 in 2024 compared to 1,655 in 2023) reduced potential membership. Approximately 41% of new awardees in 2024 joined. O.A.A membership at year end was 8,080, an increase of just 11, comprising 521 new members, 229 members deceased and 343 members not renewing.

- Financial performance was strong despite the 10% reduction in membership fees, with significant investment growth and dividend flows. The value of invested funds at year end was \$2,088,741, a 6.9% increase through the year.
- All Branches were active in 2024. A new Regional Group was established in S.A and the potential for an additional one in N.S.W identified. Procedures were established for confidential electronic/postal voting and conducted successfully in one Branch. National funding of Branches based on budgeted activity rather than membership was introduced.
- The National Board met nine times on-line, and face-to-face with Branch chairmen in May and on-line in September. National Deputy Chairman John Archer O.A.M was succeeded in the role by William Lye O.A.M, K.C. Graham Hyde O.A.M was reappointed as National Secretary and Alan Morrison A.M retired as a director, succeeded by Andrew Phelan A.M.
- Several new policies and procedures were adopted, existing ones updated and the Risk Management Framework, Business Continuity Plan and a Communication Plan reviewed.
- Marketing activity included planning and implementation of an O.A.A social media presence, a review of merchandise marketing and the inclusion of advertising in *The Order* magazine

The Annual Financial Report was presented by the National Treasurer. Highlights of the 2024 year included:

- Membership fees were reduced by an average of 10%
- Trading income increased by 11% including Branch, Regional Group and investment income
- There was a surplus of \$92,747 before investments value increase
- The average income per member was \$109.93 and the average expense per member was \$98.45
- National investment income increased by 98.6%
- Administrative grants to Branches totalled \$49,504
- Members equity (assets-less-liabilities) increased by 19.2%
- *The Order* magazine costs were \$76,368, an increase of 20%
- There were 521 new members and 62 who rejoined but regrettably 572 were lost through resignation or death, resulting in a net loss of 50 members.
- The Board set aside \$90,000 for two Foundation Scholarships to be awarded at a time to be decided by the Board.

All business requiring members approval was passed unanimously.

**AIDE-MEMOIRE OF THE ANNUAL MEMBERS' FORUM HELD ON 3 MAY 2025 AT**

## SYD25

The National Chairman welcomed 70 members to the Annual Members' Forum and reminded them that this was their meeting and a time to raise any issues of concern or suggestions for improvements. Here is a summary of Questions raised and Answers provided:

Q. Why is the time taken by the Honours Secretariat between an award nomination and the approval of the award so long?

A. Nominations have increased significantly and neither staff nor office systems meet current requirements. The Governor-General has processes in place to address this issue. A suggestion was made by an attending member that members could volunteer to assist. It was noted that, although this is a nice offer, it is not practical because of the possibility of conflict of interest.

Q. What can be done to address the lack of media coverage following each Australia Day and Kings Birthday awards announcement?

A. All members need to aim to raise the awareness of the Order within their community and with media contacts before the announcement.

Q. How many Indigenous Australians have been awarded a Foundation Scholarship?

A. Three out of 60 to date. Three have been set aside for the N.T Conference. Comment. The cost of functions sometimes inhibits members from attending.

A. All Branches have the same issue but are encouraged to consider what might be done. Members will be surveyed in 2024 and will have the opportunity to provide ideas to address the question. Several members advised how their Branch manages functions at a reasonable cost.

Q. What is being done to improve the conversion rate to membership of recipients?

A. Branches and members need to make prospective members feel welcome and promote the benefits of membership. Comments by attending members included: using emails, ongoing personal invitations to events, having a differential function rate for members and non-members.

Q. *The Order* is costly to produce; why don't we only issue an electronic copy?

A. We do. However some 41% of members prefer a hard copy and 5% of members do not have an email address.

Q. Will our medals be replaced to show the King's crown?

A. No. The crown on Australian insignia is not the late Queen's crown but the crown of Saint Edward, which is the crown used to crown the monarch.

Q. Why are so many functions held in metropolitan areas, not regional areas?

A. This a Branch matter to address. Some regional members spoke about how they conduct activities in their regions.

Q. The number of people nominated from a diverse or ethnic background does not seem to be very high. How can this be improved?

A. Comments from attending members indicated that this is a complex issue involving language, suspicion of government by some ethnic groups, and lack of



links to ethnic organisations (one Branch has established a multicultural officer position). Attendees agreed that all members have a role to play in promoting multicultural nominations.

Q. Why are Gold Medal Olympians given an OAM? We have an Australian Sports Medal. Surely this is more appropriate?

A. We have been advised that the Governor-General has received letters from community members expressing similar sentiments about a range of issues and she is proposing a review of the Australian honours and awards system during 2025.

Comment. One member congratulated the Board and Branches on what they do and the involvement of members at all levels of the Association. She noted the use of social media and would like to help in any way possible. She suggested that an officer be appointed in each Branch to manage social media. The younger demographic uses social media extensively and, used appropriately, it will benefit the Association.

A. A process has been started and discussions were held the previous day between the Board and Branch Chairs on improved action on social media.

Comment. The Foundation provides scholarships for tertiary students and some states provide a wide range of student citizenship awards, but there is no national system in place to implement an ongoing secondary school student mentorship programme.

A. The National Office does not conduct such programmes. This is seen as the role of the Foundation and the various Branches. The Board will review the suggestion to determine whether it is financially and practically possible.

Q. Why do we not see many AC and AO members attending the conference?

A. There are not many of them (847 or 10% of our membership), and there are four AOs at this conference. A high proportion of attendees are OAMs.

In closing, the National Chairman thanked members for attending and providing questions and comments that will further assist the Association in meeting its purpose.

Graham Hyde O.A.M  
National Secretary

## **THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

The Gala Dinner of the Order of Australia Association Annual Conference was indeed a night to remember. The speeches by the five awardees of the Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarship were one of the many highlights. Those speeches are largely replicated below. The Board of the Foundation thanks every donor, university and mentor for making this possible and contributing to

such a memorable evening.



Here there is a photo of the five Scholarship Awardees with Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beasley A.C, Governor of New South Wales

### **Jennifer Corderoy: University of New England**

"Tonight, I am a long way from home in Central West N.S.W. I grew up immersed in the joys and challenges of farming life, where I found success in gratitude and making the most of every opportunity. As a child, I tried hard to find solutions to any problems Dad had on the farm. Now, I am studying Rural Science at the University of New England. I am committed to delivering practical and sustainable solutions to farmers for improved food and fibre production, and advocating for strong farming communities.

With gratitude to the Order of Australia Association Foundation, and my donor and mentor, Mr Tim Fairfax A.C, this Scholarship has elevated the scope of my career to making a foundational contribution to Australia's national production and global food security.

May I have integrity, humility and generosity in all that I achieve to shine light on those supporting me. Thank you for this opportunity to represent and extend the work of the Foundation."

### **Jade Harrison: University of Technology Sydney**

As a third-year Bachelor of Midwifery student, it's an absolute honour to be standing here tonight. I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the Order of Australia Association N.S.W Branch for this incredible opportunity.

This scholarship is a powerful reminder of the importance of service, leadership and compassion in our communities. Values that are at the heart of both midwifery and civic life. It challenges me to think beyond the clinical setting and consider how I can contribute meaningfully to broader systems of care, equity and support. It's a call to action not only to serve others but to lead with purpose and integrity.

I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to be mentored by Professor Caroline Homer A.O, an inspiring leader whose work continues to shape global maternal health. I'm excited for what lies ahead and truly I cannot wait to see how this opportunity shapes my career and future.

**Paris Lay-Yee: University of Technology Sydney**

A wise man once said, “The best leaders are those who serve”.

As a law student, I’ve often found myself nodding in agreement reading judgements by “the Great Dissenter” who has often emphasised the importance of human rights. I am excited to receive pearls of wisdom from the brilliant mind of the wise man I just quoted, The Honourable Michael Kirby A.C, C.M.G. Thank you for generously agreeing to be my mentor.

I’d also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Dr Helen Nugent A.C for your unwavering support and stewardship on this journey. Your guidance has been invaluable, and your belief in my potential has truly inspired me. I’m immensely grateful to the Order of Australia Association Foundation for this life-changing scholarship, which will help me pursue my lifelong dream of working with the United Nations.

If I can do half as much as my great jurist mentor has for the championship of international human rights, then I know I have served well. Thank you for giving me this incredible opportunity which will make a great difference in my life... so that one day I can make a difference for others.

**Ayman Miazzi: Monash University**

It is a privilege to stand here as a recipient of the Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarship. This opportunity will continue to shape my future and hopefully achieve my childhood dreams within the space industry, allowing me to focus on research and developing new technologies for the future of the Australian Space Industry. I am excited to learn as much as I can from my mentor Professor Alexander Smits A.O; his wealth of knowledge and experience will undoubtedly shape my career.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Victoria branch of the Order of Australia Association for providing the scholarship that I received. I would also like to thank everyone involved in running these scholarships. Thank you as well to the selection committee for choosing me, and to Monash University for their help throughout. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their continued support over the years. They have always been my first and most enthusiastic supporters, always encouraging me to reach my dreams, no matter how far they may have seemed. Now, with this scholarship in hand, I have made one big leap towards them.

**Matthew Selkrig: University of Sydney**

It’s an honour to be here tonight among such accomplished individuals. First, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Order of Australia Association Foundation and its generous supporters, particularly Paul Wheelton A.M K.S.J, for their unwavering commitment to fostering young talent.

As one of the youngest people in the room, it’s surreal to be surrounded by such experienced professionals—meanwhile, I’m still on my green P’s!

Receiving this scholarship has not only eased financial pressures but has also reinforced my belief in the power of leadership and service. Growing up in Hong

Kong and studying in Australia, I've learned that leadership isn't just about personal success—it's about creating opportunities for others. Whether in finance, sustainability or business, we all have a responsibility to contribute to something greater than ourselves.

Looking ahead, I'm inspired to use this opportunity to make a tangible impact, whether through championing sustainable investments, mentoring students or fostering innovation in Australia's future economy. And I know I speak for my fellow scholars when I say we are deeply committed to carrying forward the values that this scholarship represents. Thank you once again for your generosity and belief in us. We will make it count.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES**

### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

#### **Dr John Gullotta AM**

N.S.W Chair

Email: [chairnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:chairnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au)

As convenor, I am extremely happy and proud that SYD25, our National Conference in Sydney, was a huge success, very well attended with record numbers and thoroughly enjoyed by all present. I would like to thank the organising committee for their hard work and personal support to enable my vision for SYD25 to come to fruition. In the words of our National Chairman, MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O, R.F.D, E.D (Retd), "It was truly magnificent!"

The excellent line up of speakers was of the highest calibre and certainly captured the charisma of our conference theme of Celebrate | Motivate | Nominate , " Inspiring Australian Achievers!" Our thanks to all the volunteers for their hard work and to our sponsors for their kindness, generosity and support of our Association enabling us to deliver very special "once in a lifetime" experiences for our delegates. I would especially like to acknowledge and thank our Platinum sponsor ABAL Banking, Gold sponsors L.S.H Auto and H.S.B.C, Bronze sponsors Stanmore Mazda and De Lorenzo Haircare as well as all the other sponsors listed in the conference report (later in this issue).

A very special thank you to our Patron and NSW Governor, Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley A.C, K.C and Government House Sydney for hosting our Welcome Reception and to Rear Admiral Christopher Smith A.M, C.S.M, R.A.N, Commander of the Australian Fleet, Royal Australian Navy, for hosting us aboard H.M.A.S Adelaide for our handover lunch and also for the remembrance service and wreath laying at HMAS Parramatta/Bow Memorial at North Garden Island. It was certainly a very moving and special service to

remember all fallen and current Order of Australia award recipients who have served or are currently serving in our armed forces.

Our appreciation to Shentel Lee and Bowerhaus for producing and donating the unique 50 year commemorative pins, Gaetano Bonfante and Clarissa Spata for the musical performance which blew the audience away, and to Studio Deluca 1937 and Caffé Etna for the delicious cannoli, granita and birthday cake! It made the 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations unforgettable and very special. Thank you to AChaired Sound for the pre-Gala Dinner entertainment and to Maybelle and Mark for entertaining us for the evening.

My thanks to Margaret and Matt Eagers from MERS Events for all their help in the organisation of the conference and to make sure it ran like a well-oiled machine and of course to Carlos Velasco for his excellent photography and for capturing the highlights of the conference in his signature friendly and precise style.

We now pass the baton to Ronda Nix O.A.M and her committee and look forward to a successful national conference in Brisbane in 2026.

The NSW Branch held its AGM on 11 March 2025 at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. My thanks to outgoing committee member Harold Sharp O.A.M and welcome to our newly elected committee member David Stuart-Watt A.M. I congratulate the newly formed NSW Branch Committee and I am very excited to be working productively with such a dynamic and enthusiastic committee.

Post-SYD25, our Branch work continues, including arranging meetings in our major regional hubs and arranging no-cost member forums to enable events to be affordable and accessible to all our members. The 2025 King's Birthday Investitures are held at the end of May and we look forward to attending the Investiture ceremonies at Government House Sydney to represent and promote our Association. We will also hold the annual luncheon for the KB25 New Recipients and their guests at Parliament House in June.

On 22 July 2025 the Branch will celebrate 45 years and we will arrange a special celebration to commemorate this milestone. I look forward to seeing you all at our upcoming events.

## **EVENTS**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) AND LUNCHEON, 11 MARCH 2025**

The 2025 A.G.M was attended by more than 40 members and guests. NSW Branch Chair, Dr John Gullotta A. M, officially welcomed all members and guests and declared the meeting open and outlined his report for the previous year. The Hon. Secretary Dianne North O.A.M delivered her report followed by the Treasurer's report by Louise Paisley O.A.M who summarised the Branch's

financial status, which is in an excellent state.

After the AGM the luncheon included a presentation by guest speaker Janelle Craig from the Rotary Club of West Pennant Hills-Cherrybrook. Janelle is the District Chair for the Respectful Relationships Programme being run by Rotary District 9685. This involves raising awareness of domestic and family violence and promoting respectful relationships. This project provides 20 Safe Hand Bursaries worth \$500 each to school-aged children to keep them engaged with school. The funds can be used for such things as education resources, school excursions and after-school activities. The NSW Branch donated two Bursaries totalling \$1,000 to this worthy cause.



Here there is a photo of the 2025-6 New South Wales Branch Committee. (L-R): David North OAM, Branch Nominated Director; Romano Di Donato OAM, Committee Member; Martha Jabour OAM, Deputy Chair; John Gullotta AM, Chair; David Stuart-Watt AM, Committee Member; Dianne North OAM, Hon. Secretary; Louise Paisley OAM, Treasurer; Trish Wetton OAM, Committee Member; Geoffrey Glasscock AM, Membership Officer; Frank Kelleher OAM, Youth Community Services Award

## **REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE, SYD25: "A TRULY MAGNIFICENT CONFERENCE!"**

After two years of planning for SYD25, there was a massive buzz in the air starting from the Wednesday afternoon when the conference committee packed the welcome satchels and put the programmes together in readiness for the conference. Suddenly it hit us that the time had come and this was promising to be something big!

On Thursday afternoon, the Registration Desk was busy welcoming conference delegates, presenting their satchels and providing information. There was certainly an air of excitement and anticipation with a happy band of "orange sash" volunteers helping Margaret and Matt from MERS Events. The satchels wowed people with an Australia Post 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary First Day Cover, a special 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary lapel pin made and donated by Bowerhaus, chocolates recalling the invitation given at last year's Perth Conference, along with many other



goodies.

That night, delegates were transported to Government House Sydney for the Welcome Reception hosted by N.S.W Governor, Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley A.C, K.C. The Army Band provided music while we enjoyed our canapés and drinks.

It was truly a wonderful and special start to the conference in the beautiful surrounds of Government House Sydney.

Friday's activities began with a welcome from Conference Convenor and N.S.W Chair Dr John Gullotta A.M.

Uncle Lloyd Walker then gave the Welcome to Country. Lloyd is a former Australian Rugby Union player and gave us stories of his life and experiences growing up in the La Perouse mission.

The National Anthem was beautifully sung by Opera Australia star soprano Clarissa Spata.

The Governor General Her Excellency the Hon. Sam Mostyn A.C, and the NSW Governor were unable to be present, but sent their heartfelt videos of welcome. The President of the Association, The Hon. Vicki O'Halloran A.O, C.V.O then officially opened the 37<sup>th</sup> National Conference, SYD25.

General The Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove A.K, A.C (Mil,) C.V.O, M.C (Retd) delivered the oration with style and grace. He gave a very insightful perspective about The Order of Australia award system encapsulating our theme of CELEBRATE | MOTIVATE | NOMINATE - Inspiring Australian Achievers!"

The brilliant line up of guest speakers was headed by Dr Jordan Nguyen, assisted by his immensely proud father Prof Hung Nguyen A.M. Jordan spoke about his life, inspirations and future technology. His demonstration of his companion robot "Koobo" was absolutely amazing! His invention of a wheelchair controlled by the mind and a video of a mobility-challenged young man driving a car by simply using eye movements was eye-opening!

Following this was a Crime Time panel. Prof Kelvin Kong A.M then spoke about his life as the first Indigenous Surgeon. Then Ronda Nix O.A.M, Chair of the Brisbane Conference Committee, treated us to an inviting promotion of the 2026 National Conference to be held in the wonderful city of Brisbane.

There were more speakers after lunch and by the end of the day, delegates were on a feel-good high and left with a great sense of positivity and inspiration ready to celebrate, motivate and nominate other worthy recipients.

The conference then turned to an Italian celebratory theme with the serving of granita and cannoli by Studio De Luca 1937, while the ballroom was being set up for a preview of the Brightman-Bocelli musical show. This turned out to be the highlight of the day as tenor Gaetano Bonfante and soprano Clarissa Spata, both stars from Opera Australia, entertained us with excerpts from their show, while we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Order of Australia awards with champagne to the sounds of 'Brindisi' from *La Traviata* and *millefoglie* birthday cake by Caffé Etna. A wonderful end to the day.

Saturday began with the Association A.G.M and the Members' Forum where

many interesting issues were raised.

In the afternoon there was a special choral evensong at the historic St James' Church to celebrate 50 years of the Order.

In the evening renowned choir, AChaired Sound entertained everyone at the pre-Gala Dinner drinks. The Gala Dinner MC was television news and radio presenter Ron Wilson. During the evening, five brilliant young university students received OAA Foundation Scholarships worth \$40,000 each so they can continue with their studies. Our guests of honour were N.S.W Governor, Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley A.C K.C and Mr Dennis Wilson. The evening was a great success with more than 330 people attending. Singer Maybelle with guitarist Mark provided the evening's entertainment.

On Sunday morning, buses took us to the Garden Island Naval Base for a wreath-laying ceremony at the HMAS Parramatta/Bow memorial. Afterwards we took a short walk to HMAS Adelaide, where Rear Admiral Christopher Smith A.M C.S.M, R.A.N, Commander of the Australian Fleet, welcomed us aboard for our farewell lunch. The Navy Band entertained us with their jazzy upbeat tunes. The conference baton was passed to the 2026 Brisbane Conference organising committee with the ceremonial handing over of the "orange sashes" worn by NSW volunteers by the NSW Conference Committee. In his closing, National Chairman MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O called it, "a truly magnificent conference!"

After lunch, we were all asked to take the lift to the flight deck. This was no ordinary lift. It took 50 people at a time. It is usually used to move aircraft and heavy vehicles, so this was a great experience for everyone.

Our friendly photographer, Carlos Velasco, painstakingly moved people around so that he could take a group photo with a view of Sydney in the background. The photo showed our group in the shape of Australia with the Opera House and Harbour Bridge as backdrop. What an iconic photo!

After bidding farewell to all our old and new friends made over the duration of the conference and promising to meet up again in Brisbane next year, we returned to the Sofitel Wentworth Hotel and went our separate ways.

The organisers wish to thank all delegates for attending and for sending positive feedback for the conference and for their many messages of congratulation.

## **QUEENSLAND**

### **Chair's Report**

**Ronda Nix OAM**

**Branch Chair**

**[chairqld@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:chairqld@theorderofaustralia.asn.au)**

On 29 April, we welcomed our 2025 Australia Day awardees at a dinner for recipients and their family members and guests. Currently, we are looking forward to celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Order of Australia and the

King's Birthday and with a Black-Tie Dinner on 14 June in the presence of the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeannette Young A.C P.S.M. At our AGM we welcomed two new committee members: Kate Copeland A.M, who replaced our long-serving Sunshine Coast Convenor and Protocol Officer Marjorie Voss O.A.M; and Jenny Gregory O.A.M, who replaced Peter McMurtrie A.O K.St.J our Governance/Policy Review Officer.

A large cohort of Queensland Branch committee members along with a number of other members of the Queensland Branch travelled to Sydney to enjoy the recent national conference, New South Wales-style. Congratulations to N.S.W Chairman Dr John Gullotta A.M and his team on a most memorable event. Now it is up to our Branch to deliver a great conference in Brisbane next year, Queensland-style. We are looking forward to the challenge. The theme of our BRIZ26 Conference is *A Bridge to the Future*.

## **FEATURED RECIPIENTS**

### **SHINING EXAMPLES OF 'TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY' AT THE AWARD RECIPIENTS' DINNER**

On Tuesday 29 April, the Queensland Branch hosted a Welcome Celebratory Dinner in Brisbane to welcome 18 of this year's Australia Day Award recipients. One hundred and fifty-five guests attended including 31 OAAQ members.

All 18 award recipients introduced during the evening were highly deserving of their awards, being recognised for their wonderful achievements to their communities and their outstanding support and encouragement to others.

This article focuses on five of these award recipients for their fine examples of tackling adversity head on and their passion, commitment and strong desire to want to turn negatives into very strong positives.

**MELISSA MCGUINNESS OAM** from the Gold Coast received her award *for service to the community, particularly youth*.

A road crash which took four innocent lives, including her son's, prompted Melissa to draw on her tragic experience by founding YOU CHOOSE Youth Road Safety, an organisation that changes driving behaviours and prevents youth road trauma.

Through YOU CHOOSE, Melissa has become a road trauma and harm prevention advocate and presenter sharing her grief, guilt and lessons from her son's passing. In this way she believes her efforts are worthwhile if at least one life is saved.

The YOU CHOOSE programme takes an innovative, shared social-project approach to wellbeing and pastoral care for teens, which focuses on peer advocacy skills as integral to changing behaviours and attitudes.

**WENDY PATERSON O.A.M** from The City of Moreton Bay has been recognised *for services to community health*.

Wendy is a breast cancer survivor who, having experienced first-hand the pain, challenges and struggles associated with living with the disease, decided she

wanted to draw on her personal experience by providing an avenue for breast cancer victims to better understand and cope with their situation.

She co-founded Be Uplifted Inc in 2009 as a volunteer-run, not-for-profit breast cancer charity providing practical care and financial assistance during breast cancer treatment. Through her passion and commitment, Wendy exemplifies the values of leadership, generosity and service, improving the lives of so many women and men affected by breast cancer in our community.

**LLOYD CLARKE O.A.M** and **SUZANNE CLARKE O.A.M** from Brisbane received their awards *for service to domestic violence support and welfare*.

Lloyd and Suzanne have become prominent advocates for domestic violence awareness and the criminalization of coercive control after their daughter Hannah and her three children were tragically killed in a domestic violence incident.

To honour Hannah and her children and to ensure that no family should endure this pain again, Lloyd and Suzanne and their family started a movement for change: SMALL STEPS 4 HANNAH

Through SMALL STEPS 4 HANNAH, Suzanne and Lloyd want to empower victims to speak up, help family members to be aware of those who may be in an unsafe environment, and create a safe place for those who need it most.

**NATASHA JOHNSTON O.A.M** from Chinchilla received her award *for service to the community through drought relief*.

In January 2014, Natasha and a fellow co-worker from Chinchilla, on hearing stories of struggling farmers unable to afford to put food on their tables due to the ongoing drought, decided they would do something to alleviate the situation. They organised some fundraising to help a family in need and from this simple act of kindness Natasha founded DROUGHT ANGELS (now known as FARM ANGELS), a service which offered care packages and financial assistance to drought-stricken farming families across Australia but which now extends its assistance for all natural disasters.

Natasha's strong commitment and passion uplifts our farmers in hard times, helping to reduce rates of depression and suicide, and keep farmers on their land.

All five award recipients are shining examples of the great Australian ideal of offering support and encouragement to fellow Australians through their respective causes. They represent the very essence of the type of quiet achievers that deserve recognition through an award in the Order of Australia. Indeed, the nation is richer for the collective contribution of all award recipients recognised in the Order.

## **NORTHERN TERRITORY**

## **THERE IS NO REPORT FROM THE CHAIR THIS ISSUE**

### **EVENTS**

#### **NT Annual General Meeting**

The A.G.M of the N.T Branch of the Association was held on 11 March in Parliament House, with 45 members in attendance, including OAA National President Vicki O'Halloran A.O,C.V.O. The A.G.M was privileged to have Dr Tanzil Rahman, Parliamentary Member for the Northern Territory electorate of Fong Lim and Assistant Minister for International Students, Migration and Population, as our guest speaker. Tanzil grew up in Darwin, attended the University of Sydney where he graduated with a Bachelor of Music as well as an L.L.B, then spread his wings overseas, earning a doctorate from Oxford University in Applied Economic Geography. Wearing his grandfather's O.A.M insignia, he made connections with all in the room by sharing personal experiences and reflecting on the honour of doing service for the community.

The AGM learned of the departure of The Hon. Jane Aagaard A.M from our committee, farewelling her with appreciation for her distinguished service. Three new members were elected: Helen Summers O.A.M, Jaya Srinivas O.A.M, and Marie-Louise Pearson O.A.M. We congratulate these members on their honours and willingness to serve.

#### **N.T Branch representation at SYD25**

Marie-Louise Pearson OAM and Linda Fazldeen A.M represented the N.T Branch at the Order of Australia Association National Conference held in Sydney in May. As a first-time attendee, Marie-Louise expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to connect with fellow members of the Association and praised the exceptional quality of the speakers. Having attended several conferences before, Linda noted how each conference consistently reflects the nature of the host community. She remarked that, once again, the presentations were thought-provoking and highly relevant to contemporary issues.

At the A.G.M, Marie-Louise and Linda engaged in discussions formally and informally, focusing on key topics, including increasing the number and diversity of Association members, addressing the challenges of engaging members in regional and remote areas, and improving the speed of nomination processing.



Here there is a photo of (L-R) O.A.A President Hon. Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, General The Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove A.K A.C (Mil) C..VO M.C (Retd), Linda Fazldeen A.M and Marie-Louise Pearson O.A.M

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **Chair's Report**

**Judy Hogben A.M**  
**W.A Chair**

The last few months have been very busy for the W.A Branch, and particularly busy for me as I take over the leadership reins from Bettine Heathcote A.M. But with the help of all at both the Branch and national levels, and particularly Bettine, we are progressing our agenda through an active calendar of events to promote the Order, celebrating outstanding service and of course, encourage nominations.

In pursuit of this, the Branch was part of a very successful Open Day (12-13 April) at Government House. This annual event is an opportunity to visit Government House and its gardens. Many thousands of people attended over the weekend, with hundreds visiting our table and chatting about the Order and the nomination process. Our newly printed bookmarks celebrating 50 years of The Order of Australia were extremely popular, with approximately 300 distributed.

WA sent 23 delegates to the national conference in Sydney and all were inspired by the wonderful range of speakers, events and welcoming effort by the NSW team. Congratulations and thank you!

Two investitures at Government House are to be held in the week commencing 12 May. These will be for the Australia Day recipients and are always much anticipated events.

Our next events include the annual church service at St George's Cathedral (15 June) and a NAIDOC week event which is yet to be organised in July.

## **EVENTS**



### **O.A.A.W.A Annual General Meeting, 2 February**

Members and guests met on 22 February in the upper room of the Matilda Bay Restaurant overlooking the Swan River for the Branch's Annual General Meeting. This was the last meeting as Chairman for Bettine Heathcote A.M, a member of the Committee for nine years, who has led the W.A Branch for the past six years. We are very grateful for her leadership, especially in organising a very successful national conference in Perth in 2024.

Bill Hassell A.M,J.P has completed nine years on the committee, and we are grateful for his wise counselling and work. There was no election of members for the committee as nominations covered the required posts.

National Chair MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O R.F.D E.D (Retd) acknowledged Bettine's three terms on the committee and two terms as chair. Following closing of the meeting, a delicious brunch was served.

### **Australia Day Honours Reception, 12 March**

A reception to welcome Australia Day Honours awardees held at R.A.A.F.A hosted 79 awardees, members and guests in a very convivial atmosphere.

Chair Judy Hogben A.M welcomed everyone and congratulated the awardees on their honours. As their citations were read out, all were amazed at the variety of the work and commitment of these awardees.

Peter John Kennedy A.M responded on behalf of the recipients of the Australia Day Honours. Peter had been overwhelmed with the response to the announcement of the awards. He commented that the W.A component was drawn from a broad section of the community from all over the state, from the East Kimberley Region in the north to Leonora in the Goldfields and the agricultural areas in the south.

Peter also reminded us that it is 50 years since the Order of Australia Awards were introduced by the Whitlam Government in 1975. He concluded with, "the Awards have become firmly entrenched in our national life ... But we know with that privilege goes certain responsibilities as well ... we won't forget that". Peter thanked the Branch, on behalf of the awardees, for their hospitality and making everyone feel welcome.

### **Government House Open Days in April**

During the Boorloo Heritage Festival, Government House and gardens were open to the public. The Order of Australia Association WA was invited to attend to encourage nominations. Our table was strategically placed near the door as the public who toured the House left. Over the weekend we were able to talk to many participants including Fat Cat and encourage them to nominate suitable individuals.

### **W.A at SYD25 national conference, 1-4 May**

Twenty-three members from the WA Branch attended this very special conference. The whole programme was thoroughly enjoyed by the delegates, and

it truly celebrated 50 years since the inauguration of The Order of Australia awards in 1975.



Here is a photo of six Western Australia delegates to SYD25: (L-R): Clive Robartson A.M, John Harland A.M, Judy Hogben A.M, Bettine Heathcote A.M, John McKay and Claire Britain O.A.M

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

### **Chair's Report**

**Tony Metcalf O.A.M**

**S.A Branch Chair**

[chairsa@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:chairsa@theorderofaustralia.asn.au)

This has been a period of commemoration, with our members marking Air Force's 104th Anniversary on 31 March, through to their participation in Anzac events and a special commemoration to mark the 75th Anniversary of the start of Australia's involvement in the Malayan Emergency on 31 May 1950. At the same time, we are celebrating the creation of the Order of Australia 50 years ago by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Our Regional Groups and Honours Fellowship Group have held their scheduled events, and nominations for our Student Citizenship Awards programme are being submitted. Amy Wallace from Scotch College, our 2024 Student Citizen of the Year, was Guest Speaker at our AGM on Saturday 8 March.

On the topic of the Student Citizenship Awards, I am pleased to announce that this programme has received a much appreciated offer of support from the Hon. Blair Boyer MP, Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The Minister has agreed to provide the SA Branch with a grant of \$4,500 over three years, which will allow us to present an engraved and cased Student Citizenship Awards medallion to every successful nominee in 2025, 2026 and 2027.

Once again, on behalf of all SA Branch members, I would like to congratulate everyone who received an award in the 2025 Australia Day Honours List, several

of whom we acknowledged personally at our recent New Recipients' Reception. Finally, I thank Her Excellency the Hon. Frances Adamson A.C, Governor of South Australia, for agreeing to be the Guest Speaker for our King's Birthday Luncheon. Her Excellency's support as Branch Patron is greatly appreciated.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 8 March**

The S.A Branch held its 39th A.G.M in the Victoria Room of the Edinburgh Hotel on Saturday 8 March. The Guest Speaker was Amy Wallace from Scotch College who, as a Year 11 student last year, was selected as the 2024 South Australian Student Citizen of the Year. Amy's citation states that she is: *"an extraordinarily gifted and inspirational young person"*. In an address titled 'Active Citizenship', Amy described the myriad of high-value service activities and initiatives that have led to her various accomplishments. In particular, she gave us an insightful and interesting summary of her accomplishments and spoke of her passion for volunteering:

*"Volunteering is about finding purpose, building connections and making a real difference, one small act of kindness at a time. As active citizens, we have the power to shape our communities and create positive change right here, right now. That's why I love volunteering – it's where passion meets purpose."*

Our members present all agreed that, with emerging leaders like Amy, the country is in good hands.



Here is a photo of A.G.M Guest Speaker Amy Wallace from Scotch College

We congratulate Branch Committee member Don Clark O.A.M, who has been re-elected for a second term, as well as Cathy Chong A.M J.P, Deborah DeWilliams A.M and Toni Cocchiaro O.A.M who had each filled casual vacancies throughout

2024-25 and have now been elected as Branch Committee members.

Branch Chair Tony Metcalf O.A.M said in his report: “On behalf of the Branch and personally, I thank all of our committee members and Regional Group convenors for the work that they have done for the Association during the last year, and in particular Ken Coventry O.A.M, our co-opted Regional Group Coordinator, for the time he has put in assisting our Regional Groups. I also record our thanks to other member volunteers and partners of our committee members who have assisted at our functions over the year”.

### **STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARDS UPDATE**

The S.A Branch website is now live, calling for nominations for the 2025 Student Citizenship Awards. An innovation for this year is the naming of the primary trophy of the Award programme, which is awarded to the South Australian Student Citizen of the Year, as “The Keith ‘Chook’ Fowler O.A.M Award for the Student Citizen of the Year”. This trophy will be funded through a generous donation from the family of the late Keith ‘Chook’ Fowler O.A.M (1920-2023).

In past years, the Top 10 recipients of Student Citizenship Awards (‘With Distinction’) received a certificate signed by Her Excellency the Governor and the S.A Branch Chair, as well as a medallion mounted on a wooden trophy. Those who were ‘Highly Commended’ received a certificate and a cased medallion. Other recipients of the Award received just a signed certificate. An initiative the S.A Branch was able to introduce was the expansion of the programme to see the inclusion of a cased medallion for all successful nominees in 2023 and 2024.

This was made possible through two generous donations by Branch member Keith ‘Chook’ Fowler O.A.M. Fortunately, Chook was able to see this initiative enacted before he passed away on 30 November 2023 at the age of 103, and we now honour his legacy through “The Keith ‘Chook’ Fowler OAM Award”.

Further to this progress, in January 2024 we received a letter of support for the Student Citizenship Awards programme from the Hon.Blair Boyer M.P, Minister for Education, Training and Skills. The Minister praised the exceptional work carried out by the S.A Branch in organising these awards, and said that he, “greatly valued the work of the Association to promote and celebrate student citizenship through these prestigious awards”.

The Minister acknowledged the generous contribution from the late ‘Chook’ Fowler O.A.M, and indicated that his Department would be pleased to offer similar support to ensure the continuation of the practice of presenting a medallion to all awardees.

Subsequently, the Minister has announced that a grant of \$4,500 would be paid to the S.A Branch at a rate of \$1,500 per year over the three-year period 2025 to 2027 inclusive. This allows us to present an engraved and cased Student Citizenship Awards medallion to every successful nominee during this period. To ensure the perpetuity of this initiative beyond 2027, the Branch Committee intends to develop a strategy to advocate for the cost of the medallions to be shared across the public and private education authorities.

## **VICTORIA**

### **Chair's Report**

#### **Fred Harrington OAM**

##### **Chair, Victoria Branch**

In this, my first report as Victoria Branch Chair following the Victoria Branch 2025 Annual General Meeting, I thank members for the opportunity to serve as your Victoria Branch Chair and Dr Helene Bender A.M for her commitment as Branch Chair over the past seven years. I also thank those committee members who retired from the committee.

I am looking forward to working with the new committee including Jill Page O.A.M as the new Victoria Branch Secretary and Dr Luz Restrepo O.A.M as the new Victoria Branch Treasurer.

I look forward to working with the Victoria Branch committee and our Regional Groups this year to provide a focus on three areas: membership growth, membership retention and membership participation.

The Inspiring Australians Oration preceded the A.G.M on Friday 28 March. The Oration was delivered by John Wylie A.C, and O.A.A Foundation 2004 scholarship recipient Dr Felicia Eng provided an update on her studies, employment and community involvement.

The next Victoria Branch event will be our mid-year lunch on Tuesday 22 July at the Stamford Plaza Melbourne. Our guest speaker will be 2024 Australia Day Honours and Awards recipient Dr Jenny Gowan A.M, speaking on the topic "Safe use of medicines". There will also be a presentation from a recipient of an Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarship. Details of this event including booking details are noted below.

The Branch is fortunate to have 13 Regional Groups throughout Victoria with each providing an annual programme of activities and events for their members, to complement the programmes undertaken by the Branch. I thank our Regional Groups Coordinator Barb Brook OAM for the work she does in liaising with and supporting Regional Groups and their programmes.

## **EVENTS**

### **Inspiring Australians Oration, 28 March**

The 2025 Inspiring Australians Oration was delivered by John Wylie A.C at The Angliss Conference Centre on Friday 28 March 2025. John Wylie A.C is C.E.O and Founder of leading Australian alternative asset investment firm Tanarra. John and his wife Myriam through their Foundation support education, sport, disadvantage, well-being, indigenous and community programmes.

John was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2007 and elevated to a Companion of the Order in 2022.

2004 Order of Australia Association Foundation inaugural scholarship recipient Dr Felicia Eng gave Association members, guests and students from St Catherine's School and Strathcona Girls Grammar an update on her employment and community commitments over the past 21 years. Felicia graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) and Bachelor of Science in 2007 from the University of Melbourne, majoring in Economics and Computer Science.

To pay tribute to the contribution of Paul Wheelton A.M to this annual event, the Victorian Branch will rename the event as the Paul Wheelton A.M Inspiring Australians Oration from 2026.

Rowan, a Year 10 student from Strathcona Girls Grammar, was among a group of students invited to the Oration by Paul Wheelton A.M, a past parent and significant supporter in the *Strathy* community.

Rowan described the 2025 Oration as reflecting on the country we live in today, its beauty, its strengths, its improvements, and the importance of educating and empowering the next generation. John Wylie mentioned Australian pride and the progress we've made while mentioning forthcoming concerns especially in economics including the growth of our economy, funding and other issues and their lack of progress. He also provided pointers and solutions to these problems, in which one stood out: the role of young people. John emphasised how important it is to "embrace the possibility of failure" and listen to the voice of the younger generation. His realistic yet hopeful and inspiring speech allowed those present to consider their own position in the world and understand his concerns for the future.

The second speech delivered by Dr Felicia Eng, a recipient of a scholarship from the Order of Australia Association Foundation, talked about how taking even the smallest chances can get you places you've never dreamed of being. She told her story of "taking every opportunity with two hands" and how with persistence and resilience, we can all achieve great things. As a student, Rowan believed this made her reflect on her own academic journey and how every opportunity she had taken along the way had given her the knowledge and experience she has today.

## **AROUND THE REGIONS**

### **Gippsland Regional Group – ANZAC Day 2025**

Marking 110 years since the landing at Gallipoli, an estimated crowd of more than 1,000 members of the community gathered at Traralgon's Cenotaph in the Kay Street Gardens to commemorate ANZAC Day this year.

The main service was presided over by the Chair of the Gippsland Regional Group of the Order of Australia Association, Lieutenant Colonel Doug Caulfield O.A.M R.F.D (Retd) who has for many years acted as Master of Ceremonies for the event. The Traralgon R.S.L sub-branch committee opted to have a young person from the community deliver the ANZAC Day address this year and was fortunate to have local teenager, Amelia van Vliet, talk to the assembled audience about her



quest to walk the Kokoda Track and what it meant to her.

Amelia, who was the recipient of the inaugural Marsh/Tierney Scholarship, told how she responded to a call for submissions by a local M.P and lodged an essay about her quest to walk Kokoda. Following the successful submission of her essay she was granted a face-to-face interview with ex-service representatives from the Traralgon R.S.L who deemed her to be a suitable applicant to take out the award. As a local secondary school student from Kurnai College, Amelia impressed the selection panel with the standard of her application and was offered the scholarship, worth \$6,300.

The scholarship is an opportunity for a year 11 student from the Morwell electorate to participate in a Kokoda Trek during the July school holidays. This once-in-a-lifetime chance is offered by the local Member for Morwell, Martin Cameron M.L.A. The selected student has the opportunity to join him and other parliamentarians on this epic trip.

Amelia talked about her motivation to submit her application in her ANZAC Day address, which truly touched many in the crowd. She shared that the reason behind her quest to walk the track was to honour a commitment her father, Ewan, had made some 15 years earlier to walk the track in memory of his grandfather who fought in the New Guinea campaign. Unfortunately, the plane in which her father and 12 others were travelling crashed into a mountain *en route* to the start point of the trek, and there were no survivors.

"I got the chance last year to trek the Kokoda Trail in honour of my father, Ewan, and great-grandfather Ted Holiday and soldiers who fought for us," she told the crowd. "I share with my great-grandfather the experience of lifelong camaraderie through Kokoda. I now have lifelong friends that I call family. It has expanded my social network, which I will take into my future".

The wreath laying ceremony associated with the service also provided an opportunity for the President of the City of Traralgon Band, Alan Wilson O.A.M, to place a floral tribute on behalf of the Gippsland Regional Group of the O.A.A, a gesture that has been adopted by the Regional Group in recent years.

White doves were also released as part of the solemn programme of remembrance at the Cenotaph which was surrounded by school children, scouts, guides and families from across the surrounding district.

Lest we forget



Here is a photo of Lieutenant Colonel Doug Caulfield O.A.M R.F.D (Retd) and Amelia van Vliet, the Marsh/Tierney Scholarship recipient, following the ANZAC Day service at Traralgon

## **TASMANIA**

### **Alastair Douglas O.A.M Branch Chair**

At the Branch Annual General Meeting we said farewell to Dr Peter Holm O.A.M who retired from the Branch Committee due to ill health. Peter served the Branch for five years and brought many different and valuable perspectives on matters for consideration. Peter and his wife Libby live on the North West Coast near Burnie and would regularly travel to Hobart to support various Branch events. On behalf of the Committee, I thank Peter and Libby for their support of the Association and wish them both all the best for what their future might bring. On a sad note, I report that the Association's oldest member Brian Winspear A.M passed away on 26 April 2025 aged 104. I was privileged to talk with Brian on several occasions in recent years and he was always a bright and happy conversationalist. A special obituary of Brian appears in this issue of the magazine.

The Branch committee welcomes two new members to its ranks for the next three years, Anthony (Tony) Coen O.A.M and Dr Nicholas Chantler A.M. Tony has a broad background in key roles with many varied organisations and Nicholas returns to Branch Committee following a year away. It will be nice to have Nicholas back in our ranks to benefit from his wide-ranging experience in work pursuits and his knowledge of the operations of the Association.

The three Regional Groups have continued to be active with varied activities including morning teas, lunches, guest speakers and visits to places of interest.

Newly elected member of the Branch Committee, Tony Coen O.A.M, again led the Tasmanian Police Pipe Band in the Hobart Anzac Day march. A larger than usual crowd watched the march at which Her Excellency the Hon. Barbara Baker A.C, Governor of Tasmania took the salute, then delivered the address at the Hobart Cenotaph. Tony looked resplendent along with his fellow band members in his full Pipe Major uniform at the head of the band. In the north Branch committee member Major Dr Nicholas Chantler A.M laid a wreath on behalf of the Association at the Launceston Cenotaph at the 11.00am service.

My wife Jenny and I were very pleased to have attended another excellent national conference. The N.S.W Branch put together an exciting and stimulating event, one we will remember for so many good reasons. I am sure more detail will be printed elsewhere about the speakers, the dinner and the Foundation awardees and the memorial service including the visit to H.M.A.S Adelaide, all of which were excellent.

In early May, two ceremonies for the Australia Day recipients of awards were conducted at Government House. Between the ceremonies, the Branch congratulated awardees at a lunch at the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania. This is an important occasion where members can meet the new awardees, their families and friends and hear about some of their background and contributions to society that no doubt led to their consideration for an award. Seventy-five members and guests enjoyed this happy occasion to recognise their achievements.

## **FEATURED MEMBER**

*“Jazz! What a splendid art and also what a beautiful hobby.”* (Viktor Zappner)

Dr Viktor Zappner O.A.M, accompanied by his wife Eva and two daughters finally arrived in Australia on 24 March 1979 after fleeing Czechoslovakia and being in a refugee camp in Germany for eight months. Viktor, 39 years old at the time, a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist by profession, settled with his family in Burnie on the North West Coast of Tasmania.

Viktor began working as a Guidance Officer in schools for the Education Department, a position he held for 27 years before retiring in 2006. Before fleeing to Australia, Viktor had been a member of the International Group for Music Therapy based in East Germany and was also a co-leader of the Working Group for Music Therapy attached to the Section for Psychotherapy of the Psychiatric Society in Prague.

Born in 1936, Viktor began his lifelong involvement with music from a very young age and was just 13 years old when he formed his own band. In the late 1950s he began a professional career in the swing and jazz scene and was able to travel the world as a musician onboard cruise ships around Europe and North and South America playing several genres of music.

With his passion for music, it came as no surprise that, once Viktor and his family had settled in Tasmania, he immersed himself in everything jazz, not only playing

but also promoting and organizing events and festivals. Dismayed at the lack of a jazz scene in the region, he founded the local Jazz Action Society in the early 1980s and was President until 2011. Viktor was the driving force behind the inception of the Devonport Jazz Festival in 2002 both as its co-founder and musical director.

Viktor remained the festival's musical director until 2016, and its success is ongoing to this day. Designed to get people out and about during the colder winter months, the Devonport Jazz Festival was the first of many mid-winter festivals which have since developed in various regions of Tasmania, contributing significantly to the cultural and economic landscape of the state.

For more than 75 years Viktor, a "living Legend" and stalwart of the Tasmanian jazz community, has played alongside many local and international artists in thousands of performances both in Tasmania and internationally. During that time, he has received many accolades including being named the 2012 Tasmanian Local Hero in the Australian of the Year Awards and the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division (O.A.M) in 2013 *for service to the arts through the introduction and promotion of jazz in North West Tasmania.*



Here is a photo taken of Dr Viktor Zappner (second from left) with his band of musicians in New York in 1969

## **OBITUARY OF BRIAN WINSPEAR A.M.**

### **Darwin Bombing Veteran Brian Winspear A.M gave his all to Australia**

Obituary by Tom Lewis

One of the last veterans who experienced the first World War Two air raid on

Darwin has died. Brian Winspear AM, a Hobart resident, was 104.

Brian signed up for the war from Tasmania in 1939. He said later he was sure the blue uniform of the Royal Australian Air Force would impress his girlfriends, a comment typical of a man who went through life with a sense of humour that carried him through some very dark hours. For Brian was a gunner in bombers, an extremely hazardous profession that saw the personnel of many Australian squadrons die in their hundreds. Brian kept a long list of those who died in his units, and he was later tireless in having a memorial plaque placed on Darwin's Esplanade to his fallen comrades.

Serving in twin-engined Hudsons, Beauforts, and later in Vultee Vengeance dive-bombers, Brian Winspear was in one of the last aircraft to fly into Darwin on that fateful day the Imperial Japanese Navy arrived. The war that had spread to the Pacific with the Pearl Harbour raids of December 1941 was being fiercely resisted by the Allies as the Japanese war machine swept south. It was far more efficient than had been anticipated: the extremely capable navy and army of the enemy drove the Americans out of the Philippines, the Dutch out of South-East Asia, and conquered Singapore in a matter of weeks. The Allies had resisted but were steadily pushed back and Brian's Hudson, with him manning the machineguns in the rear turret, was packed with troops as it flew into Darwin.

One hundred and eighty-eight Zeroes, Val dive-bombers and Kate vertical bombers struck Darwin at 10 on the morning of 19 February. They were excellent aircrews, experienced from China as well as Pearl Harbour, and they sunk 11 ships that day, destroyed 30 aircraft, and killed 236 people. A second raid targeted the RAAF base, and Brian saw it all from a trench with his steel helmet on. It was not his first brush with death. He had seen many men die already in aircraft accidents, and he later wrote about it all in *Tasmanians in the Air*, which he co-edited, and *My Back-Seat War*.

Following the raid, one of Brian's duties was to guard Hajime Toyoshima, a Zero pilot who had been captured by a local Indigenous man, Matthias, and handed over to the Forces. Toyoshima, the first prisoner taken on Australian soil, was soon sent south to Cowra Prisoner of War Camp, where he became one of the leaders of the massive breakout in 1944.

Brian was recommended for officer training, and to be retrained as a navigator. The rest of the war saw him flying out of New Guinea as well as on coastal anti-submarine patrols around Australia's coasts. He was demobbed in November 1945 as a flight-lieutenant.

Post-war Brian went into business with the same determination that had filled him in the war. He acquired a service-station in Bicheno, on Tasmania's east coast, and then a hotel, which was the start of Innkeepers, a chain of hotels which spread to the mainland, eventually becoming 20 establishments in five states. He married Shirley, later a successful painter, and was awarded an Order of Australia in 1993 *for services to the tourism industry and the community*. A regular and much-loved attendee at the 19 February commemoration every year in Darwin, Brian wore his old uniform with pride, and spoke readily to the media about his

service. Shirley predeceased him. He leaves behind six children, a host of their descendants, and a most grateful nation.

*Dr Tom Lewis O.A.M is a military historian. Brian Winspear's stories featured in several of his 23 books.*



Photo taken of Brian saluting the memory of fallen comrades at Adelaide River War Cemetery, as he journeyed to Darwin on the Anzac Ghan in 2012 (Photo credit: Great Southern Rail)

**A.C.T.**

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

**Andrew Phelan A.M**

**Chair, A.C.T Branch**

The A.C.T Branch 2025 AGM was held on 12 February 2025 at the Royal Canberra Golf Club. I congratulate Professor Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt A.O, Mr Greg Hood A.O and Ms Julie Long O.A.M on their election to the Branch Committee and Dr Joe Johnson C.S.C O.A.M A.A.M on his re-election. I also congratulate MAJGEN (Retd) Michael Crane D.S.C and Bar, A.M on his election as the new Branch Nominated Director.

Committee member Group Captain (Retd) Phil Morrall A.M, C.S.C gave an entertaining and comprehensive presentation on the history of the Order at the Branch A.G.M. At a morning tea in March, committee member Mainul Haque O.A.M presented on 'How the Order of Australia Award has acknowledged the services of multicultural Australia'. These important, thoughtful contributions to the history of The Order and the Association are available on the A.C.T Events page on the Association's website.

Monica and I thoroughly enjoyed attending the national conference in Sydney in May. Congratulations to N.S.W Chair and Convenor Dr John Gullotta A.M and his team for their outstanding organisational efforts.

On behalf of all members, I congratulate all honours recipients announced in the



2025 Australia Day Honours List, in particular the recipients from the ACT and region. Branch Committee members had the pleasure of attending the Investiture ceremonies at Government House in May, and the Branch held a reception to honour local recipients on Wednesday 21 May 2025.

Our King's Birthday Luncheon is to be held on 11 June and planning for our Student Citizenship Awards evening on 20 August 2025 is well underway. The annual O.A.A-Australian National University Lecture and O.A.A-Australian Defence Force Oration will be held later in the year.

Warm Regards

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 12 FEBRUARY 2025**

More than 50 members and guests attended our 2025 A.G.M at the Royal Canberra Golf Club in February, and nominations to the Branch Committee for 2025/26 were approved. Three new members were elected. Retiring members Brian Babbington A.M, Narelle Hargreaves AM and Dr Bill Maiden P.S.M O.A.M were thanked for their contribution. Former Branch Chair Michael Crane D.S.C and Bar, AM was nominated to replace Dr Alan Morrison A.M as Branch Nominated Director.

#### **New Branch Committee members:**

Professor Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt A.O was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia in 2023 *for distinguished service to natural resource management research and innovation, to gender equality, and to tertiary education*. She delivered the 2024 O.A.A-Australian National University lecture *A Possible World: Transforming Gender Relations for Sustainability*.

Gregory Hood A.O is a former Chief Commissioner and C.E.O of the Air Transport Safety Bureau. Greg was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in January 2023 *for distinguished service to the national transportation and aviation industries, and to the not-for-profit sector* and was guest speaker at our 2023 mid-year luncheon.

Julie Long O.A.M is A.C.T Branch President of the Children's Book Council of Australia and had a long association with the A.C.T Branch of Scouts Australia. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1999 *for service to youth in the Australian Capital Territory, particularly through the Children's Book Council of Australia and the scouting movement*.

Following the A.G.M, guest speaker Phil Morrall A.M C.S.C, a longstanding Branch member and current Branch Treasurer gave an insightful and topical address on the background to the creation of The Order of Australia honours system, drawing both on a presentation to our Branch by Sir David Smith K.C.V.O A.O in 2004 and his own personal reflections on the Canberra milieu of 1971–78. Phil was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1987 *for service to the Royal Australian Air Force as a staff officer with the Directorate General of Personnel Services, Air Force Office*.

## FEATURED MEMBER

### PROFESSOR ANDREW BLAKERS A.O – A SOLAR POWER PIONEER

Andrew Blakers A.O F.A.A F.T.S.E F.R.S.N is Professor of Engineering at the Australian National University and a solar power pioneer. He has been working on solar energy solutions since 1979. He thought then that solar energy would ultimately be the major source of energy for the world. This has come true: solar power capacity is now being installed twice as fast around the world as everything else combined (wind + hydro + coal + gas + nuclear + etc).

In the 2024 Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (A.T.S.E) awards, he was winner of the 2024 Clunies Ross Technology Innovation Award for transformational contributions to the renewable energy transition. Andrew was instrumental in designing and creating silicon solar cells in the 1980s. Alongside colleagues, he developed the PERC (Passivated Emitter and Rear Contact) solar photovoltaic cells that are at the heart of the worldwide solar industry. PERC solar panels comprise half of all solar panels ever made; have cumulative panel sales of US\$180 billion; and are mitigating three percent of global greenhouse gas emissions through displacement of coal generation.

For developing this technology, Andrew and his co-inventors were awarded the 2023 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering (the top global prize for engineering and innovation) by King Charles III at Buckingham Palace.

Andrew also led the creation of a comprehensive global atlas of 0.8 million potential sites for off-river pumped hydro energy storage with combined storage potential equivalent to about two trillion electric vehicle batteries. Andrew's record of entrepreneurship, innovation and outreach is exemplary. He is one of Australia's top renewable energy researchers.

Andrew has authored around 500 papers and publications, and his many memberships of professional associations include Fellowship of the Australian Academy of Science, the Academy of Technological Sciences & Engineering and the Royal Society of NSW.

Professor Blakers was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in January 2025 *for distinguished service to science in the field of solar cell development, and as an advocate for energy storage and renewable technologies.*



Here is a photo of Andrew Blakers at A.N.U sliver array

**-ENDS-**