



The Order of Australia Association NSW Branch Newsletter

December 2025

Patron: Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW

PO Box 561, Parramatta, NSW 2124 | www.theorderofaustralia.asn.au/nsw



From your NSW Chair John Gullotta AM



CONTENTS



Dear NSW Members,

I write this report at a very sad and tragic time in the history of our State of NSW and our Nation as a whole. The terrorist attack which occurred recently at Bondi Beach was an attack on us all and we stand united with all the Australian Jewish Community. We hope and Pray that we do not see anything like this ever again in Australia, a nation that we all love and are highly proud to be citizens of. In recent days, reporting and commentary have highlighted a consistent theme from national leaders about unity over division and the importance of light overcoming darkness.

I would like to also echo and reiterate the words of our National Chair, Barry Nunn AO:

"I am sure all members of the Order of Australia Association join me in expressing horror and disgust at the attack on Jewish Australians peacefully celebrating Hanukkah. This is not just an attack on our Jewish Australians, it is an attack on the diverse Australian community of which we can be so proud.

Our thoughts go out to those directly and indirectly affected and to the many who rendered assistance under potentially hazardous circumstances

We join with those who see this as a direct challenge to our tolerant and welcoming Australian way of life. We all have a duty to speak out against violence and intolerance in our community and to work towards a society where all can live and worship in harmony."

Over the past years, I have had the pleasure and the privilege of meeting and getting to know some of our fellow esteemed award recipients, who are incredible Human beings and often unsung individuals involved in charity, voluntary and community organisations.

From your NSW Branch Chair
From your NSW National Director
New Members
Upcoming NSW Branch Events
Paddington Art Prize Art and Opera Event - Art Leven Gallery
2025 New Recipients Lunch at NSW Parliament House
OAA NSW 45 th Anniversary Long Lunch
From your Regional Group Coordinator
Around the regions
In Memoriam 1

At Christmas time especially, it is truly heartening to know that there are so many people within our community who are giving their time and energy to help others who are less fortunate and to make where we live a better place, knowing that if you are alone, there are organisations like this to reach out to such as St Vincent de Paul, The Salvation Army, The Rev Bill Crews Foundation, Wayside Chapel and many other Community and Church groups. This is very important during the holiday season as some people are isolated, alone and have no family or friends around them. I urge you to reach out to anyone you know in this situation and include them in your family celebrations so they are not alone.

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year – offering the chance to catch up with friends, loved ones and our families. For me it is also a time to reflect on what has been a busy year for the NSW Branch.

It is pleasing to see that our membership is slowly increasing. There has been increased diversity in our new recipients as well as a close match now in gender. It is pleasing that our Governor General has recently streamlined the nominations process which should shorten the time from nomination to award and hopefully decrease the amount of posthumous awards given to family members which is very sad to witness.

Several of our regional groups have been very active in arranging local functions which are generally well attended. For groups that need some extra help we will be arranging meetings in our major regional hubs to assist them, as it is my aim as NSW Chair to visit as many regional groups as I can.

On the 22nd July 2025 the NSW Branch celebrated 45 years and we recently held a special celebratory Long Lunch on the 6th December 2025 to commemorate this milestone in conjunction with our Christmas event. It was a huge success and a full report is included.

Our Australia Day Harbour Cruise Luncheon will be held on the 26th January 2026. This is a very popular event and we have some tickets still available, so please book your tickets now! It is always a well enjoyed day on our beautiful Sydney Harbour and tickets sell fast so please book your tickets via the link. It includes a 3 course seated meal including soft and alcoholic drinks and front row seats of the festivities on Sydney Harbour, so it is very good value.

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

I would like to thank all the hardworking NSW Branch Committee members for their support and tireless dedication throughout the year and I look forward to a bigger and better 2026!

I hope to see you at our upcoming Australia Day Cruise Luncheon on 26th Jan 2026.

On behalf of the NSW Branch Committee, I would like to wish you all a happy, joyful and peaceful Christmas Holiday Season and a prosperous, healthy New Year!

I look forward to seeing you all and meeting new members at our upcoming events in 2026.
Kind regards



Dr John Gullotta AM

NSW Chair

Email: chairnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au | Mobile: 0418 233 069



From your NSW National Director David North OAM

The 2026 National Conference will be held at Rydges South Bank Brisbane in Brisbane from 16–19 April 2026, under the theme A Bridge to the Future. Hotel bookings are now open, and special conference rates are available at Rydges South Bank. This central venue places delegates in the heart of South Bank’s vibrant arts and cultural precinct, just steps from the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, South Bank Parklands, and major cultural attractions.

Nearby walkable accommodation includes:

- Novotel Brisbane South Bank – well-reviewed option close to the river and parklands.
- Mantra South Bank Brisbane – stylish hotel on Grey Street.
- Courtyard by Marriott Brisbane South Bank – comfortable choice near South Bank’s eateries.
- Hotel Diana South Brisbane – boutique stay close by.
- Riverside Hotel South Bank – budget-friendly option.

All are within about five minutes’ walk of the Rydges venue.

Conference highlights include the 2026 oration by Major General Emeritus Professor John Pearn AO, AM, GCStJ, RFD — a globally respected clinician, academic, philosopher, and author — alongside keynote presentations from Shelley Reys AO (Chair of the Council for the Order of Australia and Partner at KPMG and member of Chief Executive Women) and Andrew N. Liveris AO, distinguished international business leader and President of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Organising Committee.

Program at a glance:

Thursday 16 April – Registration from 9 am; Board/Branch Chairs Meeting; Welcome Reception at Government House Queensland (6–7.30 pm).

Friday 17 April – Official Opening (9 am) and Conference Day 1.

Saturday 18 April – AGM and Members Forum; optional activities; Conference Dinner & Foundation Scholarship Presentations (7 pm).

Sunday 19 April – Anzac Square Commemorative Service & Wreath Laying (10 am); Farewell Lunch and handover to the 2027 host.

Experience Brisbane’s culture with visits including the University of Queensland sculptures and the historic Anzac Square service.

Costs:

- Conference (member + guest): \$340 per person
- Saturday night Dinner: \$125 per person
- University of Queensland Sculpture Tour (bus transport only): \$20 (conflicts with Organ Recital & Evensong)
- Organ Recital & Evensong (bus transport only): \$20

Do not miss this opportunity to connect, celebrate, and be inspired in Brisbane’s dynamic South Bank.

August 2025 National Member Survey.

From Listening to Action: Turning Member Insight into Strategy

The August 2025 National Member Survey has given the Association one of its clearest pictures yet of who we are, how we engage, and where we can do better. Under the chair of Rosemary Callingham AM, the National Strategic Committee are now translating this rich body of member feedback into a practical, prioritised implementation plan.

Recognising the realities of an older, largely retired membership, the Committee is focusing on accessibility, affordability, and flexible participation—both in person and online. Digital engagement will be strengthened in ways that respect varied preferences, while communication channels such as The Order magazine will continue to be refined in response to the strong and thoughtful feedback received. Opportunities to better connect members with volunteering, merchandise, and the work of the OAA Foundation are also being explored.

Directors and Branch Chairs are working collaboratively to align national and local actions, with final decisions expected by early 2026. We look forward to many positive developments in 2026, shaped directly by the ideas, experience, and commitment of our members.

Over the past three years, it has been both a privilege and a genuine pleasure to represent the NSW Branch on the National Board of the Order of Australia Association.

As this year comes to a close, I would like to sincerely thank you all for your encouragement, support, and collegiality throughout 2025. It has been an honour to work alongside such dedicated members who so generously uphold the values and spirit of the Order.

I extend to you and your families my warmest seasonal greetings, with every good wish for a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year ahead.

With gratitude and best wishes,

Kind regards

David

David North OAM

NSW Branch Nominated Director

Email: dirnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au

New Members

The Order of Australia Association NSW Branch welcomes the following new members and we look forward to meeting you at our upcoming events.

Mr Vivian Frederick Simpson OAM

Ms Marie Sullivan OAM

Dr Russell Clifford Lain OAM

Dr David S B Brownbill AM

Order of Australia Merchandise

To see the range of OAA Merchandise available for purchase please click on the link

[OAA MERCHANDISE SHOP](#)

A tip to save on postage and handling is for regional groups to place a “group order” to reduce and spread the postage and handling costs. Multiple items will be put in one postage pack where possible.

For any enquires please call Barb on 0413 008 571

OAA Merchandise is available for all to purchase

Enjoy a scarf, tie or cufflinks



Blue
Knit scarf
\$26.00



Grey
Knit scarf
\$25.00



Blue
Silk scarf
\$52.00



Tie **\$30.00**



Cufflinks
\$35.00



All items and others in the OAA range can be purchased at
www.theorderofaustralia.asn.au/shopping-cart



THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
ASSOCIATION NSW BRANCH

AUSTRALIA DAY 2026 CRUISE LUNCHEON

ABOARD MV CAPTAIN COOK III



FOR FRONT ROW SEATS ON PICTURESQUE
SYDNEY HARBOUR THIS AUSTRALIA DAY
MONDAY 26TH JANUARY 2026

EMBARKING AT 10.30 AM FOR VESSEL DEPARTURE AT 10.45 AM SHARP
RETURNING AT APPROXIMATELY 2.45 PM.

BOARDING IS AT CIRCULAR QUAY WHARF 6

PRE LUNCHEON DRINKS AND CANAPES WILL BE SERVED FOLLOWED BY A SEATED
THREE COURSE LUNCHEON WITH A SELECTION OF SOFT AND ALCOHOLIC
BEVERAGES ALL INCLUDED IN THE COST.

TICKET PRICES: ADULTS -\$190.00 PP (INC. GST)

CHILDREN AGED 5-14 - \$90 (INC GST) PLUS BOOKING FEE

DRESS: SMART CASUAL WITH LAPEL PIN/BROOCH

RSVP ESSENTIAL: NO LATER THAN 12TH JANUARY 2026

[CLICK TO BOOK NOW](#)

2026 OAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The 2026 National Conference will be held in Brisbane. There is an exciting program being developed with more details via the link below. I hope you can all attend and support our National Conference.



CLICK TO BOOK NOW

On the 26th October 2025 we held a special Art and Opera event at the Art Leven Gallery in conjunction with the 22nd Annual Paddington Art Prize. My thanks to Marlene Antico OAM, Founder of the Paddington Art Prize for her support and generosity. We raised close to \$2000 for the NSW 2025 OAA Foundation scholarship.

Members and guests viewed the national finalists for paintings inspired by the Australian Landscape. They were entertained by opera performers from the Conservatorium of Music, Sydney, Soprano Annalise McKewen, Tenor Louis Vinaguerra and Pianist Asia Movsovic. Guest of Honours were acclaimed Baritone, Dr Simon Lobelson, Coordinator for Diction in Opera and Voice, Lecturer in Voice and Opera & Conductor for Conservatorium Opera as well as Emily Ebbs winner of the \$30,000 2025 Paddington Art Prize.



PHOTOS

Above left (L-R) Dr Simon Lobelson, Louis Vinaguerra, Emily Ebbs, Marlene Antico OAM, Dr John Gullotta AM, Asia Movsovic and Annalise McKewen in front of the 2025 winning painting.

“Art and Opera”, Annalise and Louis entertaining the audience

2025 New Recipients Luncheon at NSW Parliament House

This year we held a combined luncheon for both Australia Day 2025 and Kings Birthday 2025 New Recipients at NSW Parliament House on Friday 19th September 2025 with 150 attendees including 67 new recipients. This was a great opportunity for new recipients to celebrate with their guests and family and meet fellow new recipients with great networking and camaraderie!

Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua MP, member for Drummoyne and temporary speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly was our Parliamentary Host and Ms Sally Loane AM, Chair Destination NSW & Ignition Advice and 2025 New Recipient was our guest speaker.

Mr John McCarthy AM KC, esteemed Barrister, former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See and a 2025 New recipient said Grace.







The Order of Australia Association NSW Branch Marks 45 Years with a ‘Long Lunch’ Celebration

The Order of Australia Association NSW Branch marked its 45th anniversary with a festive “Long Lunch” in Sydney, bringing together more than 100 members, family and friends to honour the milestone and welcome the beginning of the Christmas season.

Established in July 1980, the NSW Branch chose the Heritage Atrium at the Hyatt Regency Sydney for its celebration. The setting was a striking, narrow space bridging the original heritage structure and the hotel’s modern extension which was transformed with a single elegant long table running the length of the atrium beneath a glass dome.

Guests gathered for pre-luncheon drinks before sitting down to a three-course menu beginning with buffalo burrata, followed by Ora king salmon and finishing with a limoncello deconstructed tiramisu.

Chair of the NSW Branch, Dr John Gullotta AM, welcomed members and guests by reflecting on the significance of the milestone. “Today is a celebration not only of our 45 years as a branch, but of the extraordinary community spirit represented in this room. Every person here has contributed in a unique and lasting way to Australian life, and the Order of Australia honours that commitment. Your achievements, whether in service, leadership, philanthropy, education, the arts, medicine, or community development have helped shape our nation for the better. We come together today to acknowledge those efforts with pride and gratitude. This anniversary marks 45 years of shared purpose and community service. Each one of you has received your Order of Australia because you chose to make a difference, not for recognition, but because you believed in helping others. That spirit of generosity defines who we are as Australians. Today, we celebrate your achievements, your service, and the friendships and connections that bind this Association together as well as celebrating the beginning of the Christmas season.”

A highlight was the unveiling and cutting of the 45th anniversary cake made by Café Etna at Horsley Park, accompanied by a performance of the “Brindisi” from La Traviata by tenor Gaetano Bonfante and soprano Camilla Wright. Diners joined the pair in raising their glasses to toast the Association’s milestone.

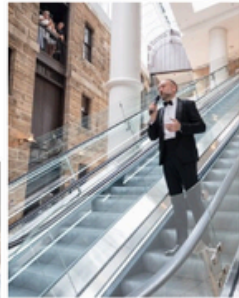
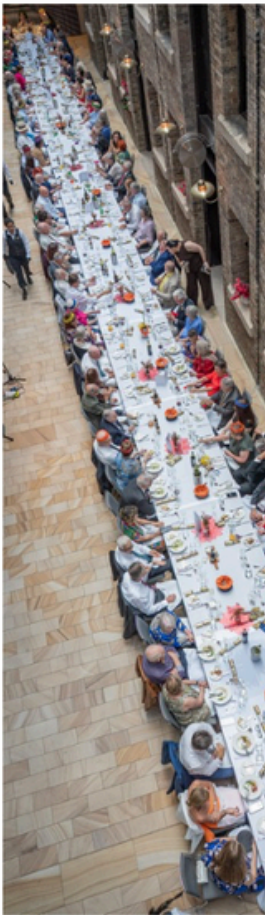
Entertainment continued throughout the afternoon with guitarist and singer Alex Partridge. Bonfante and Wright earlier made a dramatic entrance via the venue escalator to perform pieces from musical theatre, Christmas carols and light opera performances that earned multiple standing ovations and drew spectators from hotel balconies above.

The celebration also included a fundraising raffle to support the Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarship program. Sponsors including Bowerhaus, Harrigan’s at the Hunter Valley and the Hunter Valley Gardens contributed generously, offering jewellery, accommodation packages and family passes as prizes. Lucky door prizes were awarded to guests throughout the event.

The gathering continued well into the afternoon, with guests departing after 4pm, a fitting ending to a memorable “long lunch” and a proud celebration of 45 years of service by the NSW Branch of the Order of Australia Association to our Community.







From your Regional Group Co-ordinator David North OAM



Connecting Our Regions: Meetings, Calendars, and Collaboration.

The final Region Convenors' Meeting scheduled for Friday, 5 December 2025 was, unfortunately, abandoned due to an unexpected Microsoft Teams failure. Who ever said lightning never strikes twice in the same spot? While the technical issue was promptly resolved and thoroughly tested, a second attempt at convening the meeting was unable to achieve a quorum and has therefore been postponed until early 2026. Although disappointing, this experience has reinforced the importance of persistence, flexibility, and clear communication across our statewide network. Looking ahead, one of the key priorities is the release of the NSW Branch calendar in early January 2026. The response from regions has been outstanding, with Hastings, Hunter, Illawarra, and Far South already submitting confirmed and tentative dates for AD26 and KB26 events. Publishing these dates together is more than an administrative exercise—it is a strategic opportunity. By sharing each region's program, we encourage neighbouring regions to support one another's activities and enable members who are travelling to engage with events beyond their home region.

This approach reflects the spirit of the Australian Honours system itself. The awards are national in character and significance, uniting us whether we gather in Bega or Ballina, Broken Hill, or Balgownie. The August member survey strongly reinforced this message, highlighting both the value of regional activity and the importance of supporting members wherever they are located. A visible, coordinated calendar is one practical way we can strengthen those connections. Investing in Future Leaders: Youth Community Service Award 2026.

The NSW Branch Youth Community Service Award (YCSA) 2026 remains one of the Association's most respected and enduring statewide programs. For many years, the Award has recognised exceptional Year 11 and 12 students who demonstrate sustained community service, outstanding leadership, and a genuine commitment to civic responsibility. Delivered in partnership with NSW schools and community organisations, the YCSA reflects the core values of service, integrity, and contribution that underpin the Order of Australia. Each year, nominees are carefully assessed on the depth and impact of their service, their initiative in responding to community needs, and their ability to inspire others. In doing so, the Award not only celebrates individual achievement but also invests in the development of future leaders who embody the ethos of service to the Australian community.

|

I would like to offer my sincere apologies to Gary Smith AM for previously announcing, in error, that he had accepted the role of Convenor for the Award. Gary has, in fact, generously agreed to lead the judging process. The overall management of the 2026 NSW Branch Youth Community Service Award will be led by Martha Jabour OAM (Branch Vice Chair), Dianne North OAM (Branch Secretary), and Rev. Dr Geoffrey Glassock AM (Branch Membership Convenor).

All regions will receive YCSA 2026 materials early in the new year. Early planning, proactive engagement with schools, and strong promotion through regional networks will be vital to ensuring a diverse and high-quality field of nominees. Your involvement at the regional level is key to the continued success of this flagship program.

Celebrating Service: Order of Australia Association Merchandise.

Order of Australia Association merchandise continues to be a meaningful way to celebrate service and achievement. These items make thoughtful Christmas gifts and are also ideal as congratulatory presents for recipients of honours in 2026. A selection of merchandise is featured in this newsletter, with the full range available online through the Association's website.

All merchandise purchases are managed through the Association's online platform, with efficient fulfilment and excellent customer support provided by Barbara Brook OAM. Members can also explore the full range through each edition of The Order magazine. In addition, merchandise will be available for direct viewing during NSW Branch Region Coordinator visits, giving members the opportunity to engage with the collection firsthand.

As we approach the end of the year, Dianne North OAM, NSW Branch Secretary, and I extend our warmest season's greetings to all members and regions. We thank you for your commitment, energy, and support throughout 2025, and we very much look forward to working closely with you across NSW in 2026. May the festive season be a time of rest, reflection, and renewed enthusiasm for the year ahead.

Kind regards

David

David North OAM
NSW Regional Group Coordinator
Email: dirnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au

AROUND THE REGIONS

We look forward to invigorated engagement in all our regional groups in 2026!

The NSW Branch is able to assist in coordinating events if required via our Regional Group Coordinator, David North OAM.

In Memoriam

We remember our members that have recently passed as well as their selfless service and the significant contribution they made to our community.



“Forever in our hearts”



**Fr John Briffa OAM
Mrs Lorna Morris OAM
Mr Patrick Sheehy AM
Mr James Walter Maitland OAM
Mr John Harold Albert Lang OAM
CAPT J J. Doyle AM
Mr John Leonard Fry OAM**

On behalf of our Chairman and the NSW Branch Committee

Thank you for reading!