



Dated February/March 2026



Vision Impaired Accessible Document

The front cover this issue is a group photo taken on board a boat in Sydney Harbour as the New South Wales Branch of the Association celebrates Australia Day 2026.

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.

National Office – Email: oaasecretariat@theorderofaustralia.asn.au

National Secretary – Graham Hyde O.A.M Email: natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN A.C

On Australia Day, I was delighted to announce the 949 exceptional Australians who were recognised in the Australia Day 2026 Honours List. From the youngest recipient, at 32 years of age, to our two oldest recipients, who are just about to turn 100, this list is a celebration of the many Australians who inspire the best in all of us.

The list also represents an increase of more than 200 awards since last year, resulting from a growing number of nominations. I hope to see this trend continue, because nominations are such a visible and public acknowledgement of the enduring value Australians place on care, kindness and respect, excellence, service and contributing to the unity, stability, success and peace of modern Australia.

As the Honours list reveals, the challenge in establishing a gender balance in nominations and awards requires constant effort and attention. Encouraging nominations of outstanding women will remain a priority that we must all continue to understand, to ensure that all Australians deserving of recognition are nominated.

On Australia Day, in Canberra, I was honoured to participate in the National Flag Raising and Citizenship Ceremony, where our newest citizens, and others, gathered with joy, pride and optimism in reciting the Affirmation of Citizenship. In the afternoon, I was delighted to lead the affirmation at another citizenship ceremony, in Canterbury–Bankstown. Families and friends gathered from more than 150 nations to celebrate citizenship and the promise of Australia for those who have chosen to build homes here and braid their lives into the story of modern Australia.

My visit to Bankstown was also an opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Ahmed al Ahmed on receiving the Canterbury–Bankstown Key to the City. The room stood as one to recognise his extraordinary bravery during the Bondi Beach terrorist attack. He is regarded as the light of courage and compassion in a time of great

tragedy.

During the event, the audience was delighted and uplifted by Mayor Bilal El-Hayek's encouragement and optimism when he shared his migrant story, saying, "If a kid like me can come to this country at 12 with no English, and become mayor of this great city, there's no limit to what you can achieve."

I see the same energy and optimism in the remarkable Australians recognised in the Australia Day Honour's list. Their diversity of interest and expertise represents Australians who embody service, community, kindness, curiosity, tenacity, accomplishment and care. And, like all lists before, the 2026 Honours list shows that great Australians come from all over our magnificent country, and from all walks of life.

As members of the Order of Australia Association, you know so well the extraordinary depth of character and purpose that is the inspiration for our national honours system. As we enter the 51st year of the Order of Australia, I look forward to meeting many of you, and your newest members, in Canberra and throughout my programme of visits across the country.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

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

As I enter my final period as President of the Order of Australia Association, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude, pride and optimism for the future of our organisation. The journey we have travelled together has been marked by meaningful progress, renewed purpose, and a strengthening of values that unite us as recipients of Australia's highest civilian honour.

Over the past three years, we have continued to celebrate Australians whose service, leadership and quiet dedication shape our nation for the better. We have also expanded the ways in which we recognise and support these remarkable individuals: through enhanced member engagement, stronger state, territory and regional activities, and a more visible voice in the national conversation about service and citizenship.

As we approach June 2026 and the conclusion of my term, I am especially proud of our Association's ongoing commitment to renewal. We have invested in attracting a new generation of members, broadening our outreach through our Foundation and ensuring the Order of Australia remains both relevant and aspirational. Our efforts to increase diversity and representation within the Association and amongst recipients continue to bear fruit, reflecting the rich tapestry of modern Australia.

Equally, we've worked to strengthen our relationships with government, community organisations, the Honours and Awards Secretariat and one another. These collaborations have reinforced our mission: to support and celebrate those who make

enduring contributions to the Australian community.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our committees, Branches and the National Board led with distinction by Major General Barry Nunn A.O. I offer my sincere thanks. Your passion for service exemplifies the very spirit of the Order of Australia.

Until my final meeting, my focus remains steady, to ensure a smooth leadership transition to the Honourable Hieu Van Le A.C who I know will continue to promote the values of honour and service and support the Association as it steps confidently into its next chapter.

It has been an extraordinary privilege to serve as our President. I look forward to the months ahead -- and to celebrating together at our conference in Brisbane.

To Her Excellency Sam Mostyn A.C, our esteemed Patron, thank you for always making time to meet with me and for sharing our enthusiasm and commitment to continuous improvement. Your dedication to our Association and our endeavours is appreciated beyond words.

With gratitude and warm regards, go well.

MESSAGE FROM THE O.A.A CHAIR

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

I extend my warmest greetings to all members of our Association and offer my best wishes for 2026. The year has begun positively, with the 2026 Australia Day Honours list recognising 702 outstanding Australians for their contributions—an increase of approximately 50% over Australia Day 2025. I congratulate all recipients, as well as the families, colleagues and friends who have supported their achievements.

Through 2026 we have enjoyed the many benefits of being Australian. We have celebrated together when things have gone well and shown care and compassion when challenges have arisen. We enjoy the freedom to express our views responsibly, elect our leaders freely, and live in harmony in our diverse communities. Ours is a secular country in which every person is free to worship as they choose and where we all enjoy equal human rights and privileges. I encourage all members of our Association to reflect on the privilege of being Australian and to continue to demonstrate positive citizenship in their communities.

Our National President, the Hon Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, will be succeeded by the Hon Hieu Van Le A.C on 1 May 2026. President Vicki has made significant contributions during her three-year term, both within our Association and in the broader community. Her successor's résumé appears later in this issue.

Last year's member survey was highly successful, generating many thoughtful proposals for improvement. These ideas are now being translated into action at

National, Branch and Regional levels, and further announcements will follow.

Branches should by now have conducted, or be close to conducting, their A.G.Ms. I am sure all members join me in thanking outgoing committees for their dedication and in welcoming those taking up positions for the first time.

The 2026 National Conference in Brisbane, from 16 to 19 April, is fast approaching. I look forward to it with great enthusiasm, though with some sadness, as it will be my final conference as your National Chair. I will complete my permitted nine-year tenure and retire at the conclusion of the conference. My successor will be announced in due course.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your National Chair. I extend my sincere thanks to the many members who have served on the National Board, on Branch and Regional Committees, and as individual volunteers. Your efforts are the lifeblood of our Association.

My wife Margaret and I also thank the many members with whom we have formed friendships during my time in office. I look forward to meeting many of you in Brisbane in April and to thanking you personally.

Introducing The Honourable Hieu Van Le A.C.

The Honourable Hieu Van Le A.C was born in central Vietnam, where he attended school before studying Economics and Management at the Da Lat University in the Highlands. Mr Le and his wife, Lan, arrived in Darwin in 1977 as two boat people refugees from Vietnam. They settled in Adelaide.

Mr Le returned to study at the University of Adelaide, where he earned a degree in Economics and Accounting in 1989. In 2001, Mr Le's further study earned him a Master of Business Administration from the same university. Mr Le gained Certified Practising Accountant accreditation, and from 1991 worked at the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). He retired from ASIC in March 2009. During this time, Mr Le also served on many community boards and committees, in particular those relating to cultural and linguistic diversity, the arts and education.

In 1995, Mr Le was appointed a member of the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC) and was appointed Deputy Chairman in 2004. When Mr Le became Chair of SAMEAC in 2007, he was the first person of Asian background to be Chair of this organisation in South Australia.

In August 2007, Mr Le was sworn in as the Lieutenant Governor of South Australia. Over the next seven years in this role, Mr Le served as Patron or honorary member of more than 30 community-based, cultural, charitable and veterans' organisations.



Photo showing incoming President The Honourable Hieu Van Le A.C.

On 1 September 2014, Mr Le was sworn in as the 35th Governor of South Australia. He concluded his term on 31 August 2021. During seven years in this role, Mr Le served as Patron of more than 230 organisations. It is understood that Mr Le is the first Vietnam-born person who has ever been appointed to a Vice-Regal position in the world.

Mr Le was awarded the Australia Day Medal in 1996 for outstanding service to ASIC, and in 2001 he was awarded the Centenary of Federation Medal for service to the advancement of multiculturalism.

In 2010, Mr Le was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (A.O) for outstanding service to community, social inclusion and international engagements. In June 2016, he was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (A.C) for outstanding service

to the community and to the State of South Australia. Mr Le was made an Honorary Life Member of the Order of Australia Association in 2021 and on 1 June 2026 will become the Association's new President.

In December 2021, the Italian Government awarded Mr Le the title Cavaliere (Knight) of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic for his outstanding service and support to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in South Australia and in particular the Italian community. He was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Adelaide University in 2008, Flinders University in 2011 and the University of South Australia in 2023.

Currently, Mr Le is Chair of the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute and the Australian National Maritime Museum Council. He is also the Patron, Life Member, Honorary Member, Director and Ambassador for more than 20 community-based, not-for-profit organisations.

When it matters most

William Lye O.A.M K.C, Deputy Chair of the Association

This past year has tested us: events that shook our sense of safety; social media storms that turned neighbours into strangers; the kind of tension that makes people withdraw rather than reach out.

The Order of Australia exists for moments like these.

Not because we have answers to everything that divides us. Of course we do not. But when the ground feels unsteady, Australians need to see people who still believe in each other – people who refuse to let fear curdle into suspicion or disagreement harden into division.

Our Constitution sets out the purpose of the Honours system and, by extension, our role as an Association: to recognise and encourage outstanding service and Australian citizenship -- not as a closed chapter in someone's past, but as a living commitment, expressed in how we act when it is needed most.

In this term of office, the Governor-General has drawn national attention to the importance of care, kindness and respect in Australian life. She has reminded us that these are not sentimental extras, but part of a shared project to hold the country together even when debate is sharp and disagreement is real.

The Association's work makes those values concrete. We encourage nominations from every corner of Australian life, not just the usual suspects. We support young people building their careers through scholarships and mentoring. We maintain standards around discrimination, harassment and ethical conduct, because values do not mean much if they are only decorative.

The people who wear the pin come from everywhere. They have built businesses, saved lives, taught kids, fed communities, made art, defended rights. What they share is not ideology; it is a demonstrated willingness to do the work of caring for others, their communities and the institutions that serve them.

We can see what happens when institutions fail to keep pace with the Australia they serve. The Asian Australian Lawyers Association recently reported that, while 17% of Australians report Asian ancestry, only 2.9% of the judiciary are Asian Australian. More judges are named Michael than there are Asian Australian judges in total. Even where progress has been made, partnerships in major law firms have risen from 3% to just 8% Asian Australian representation over the past decade.

We are still a long way from reflecting the country we live in. The Order of Australia cannot afford complacency on this front. Every member who knows someone doing quiet, remarkable work in their community, someone whose background or story might not fit the traditional profile, should make a nomination. That is how we stay relevant.

In an age when so many platforms reward outrage and entrench division, that

willingness matters more than ever. The Order of Australia has standing in this country. It is real standing, conferred by the Crown and earned through decades of contributions that have actually improved lives. That standing is not about status; it is a trust that ought to be exercised.

The task ahead is clear. Keep nominating people who reflect modern Australia in all its depth and diversity. Keep telling fellow Australians that anyone can nominate anyone. It is not a closed shop. Keep supporting the next generation before they are fully established. Keep modelling the behaviour we want to see, including the capacity to disagree without forfeiting respect or belonging.

Honours are not an end point. They are an invitation to speak and act with greater responsibility, because more people are listening.

Australia is watching. Let us give them something worth paying attention to.

THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION LTD

ABN 40 008 612 664

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Fortieth Annual General Meeting of The Order of Australia Association Limited will be held at Rydges Hotel, 9 Glenelg Street, South Bank, QLD on Saturday 18 April 2026 at 9.00am (A.E.S.T).

DRAFT AGENDA

- 1 Opening.
- 2 Apologies.
- 3 Proxies.
- 4 To confirm the Minutes of 39th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 3 May 2025.
- 5 To receive and adopt a recommendation from the Executive Committee that the Constitution be updated to add Ltd where necessary and change the 44 occurrences of 'Chairman' to 'Chair'.
- 6 To receive, consider and adopt the Annual Report including Directors' Report, Financial Report and Auditor's Report for The Order of Australia Association Limited for the period ended 31 December 2025*.
- 7 To note the Directors' Report and the Financial Report including the Auditor's Report for The Order of Australia Association Foundation Limited for the period ended 30 June 2025.
- 8 Advise of the election of the National Chair, Deputy National Chair and National Treasurer and the membership of the National Board for the coming year.
- 9 Approve the appointment of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2027.

By Order of the Board

Graham Hyde O.A.M
National Secretary
12 January 2026

*(The Annual Report will be available on the Association's website under Governance-A.G.M from Friday 27 March 2026.)

Members requiring a hard copy should contact the National Secretary at natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au or Unit 191, 420 Queen Street, Brisbane City 4000.

NORTHER TERRITORY

CHAIR'S REPORT

Alan James O.A.M

As retiring Chair, I would like to say it has been a privilege to serve the N.T Branch and I extend my thanks to fellow committee members, past and present.

I am proud of what we have collectively accomplished over the past few years, including the reinstatement of the Annual Dinner, securing the Lord Mayoral Reception each November, the return of the A.G.M to Parliament House, and the institution of an annual tribute to distinguished Territorians who have made an enduring contribution to our community.

Our strength lies in the breadth and engagement of our membership, and in our shared commitment to recognising excellence and service in the Northern Territory.

The N.T Branch will hold its Annual General Meeting on 10 March 2026. Some executive positions will change, and a new committee will be elected.

EVENT

20 November: Lord Mayoral reception

The Lord Mayoral reception, now an annual event for the N.T Branch, was attended by about 50 of our members in the City of Darwin Chambers on 20 November. N.T Chair Alan James O.A.M officiated but invited the host, recently elected Lord Mayor the Hon. Peter Styles, to address the group. Peter focused initially on his personal knowledge of all the guests present from his attendance at numerous O.A.A events as husband of Linda Fazldeen A.M, our Secretary, then spoke of his enjoyment of mingling with many community groups, both socially and in civic service.

FEATURED MEMBER

VALE DR. TED EGAN A.O

the death of **Dr. Ted Egan A.O** in December 2025 is noted with deep sadness and respect. Dr Egan was not only Administrator of the Northern Territory from 2003 to 2007, but an icon in our community, and was accorded the status of Living National Treasure by the National Trust of Australia, an award that has always been limited to just 100 people at any one time.

Ted first came to the Northern Territory in 1949 at the age of 17. Between 1949 and 1973, he worked with the Native Affairs Branch in the outback as a Patrol Officer, a Superintendent on an Aboriginal Reserve, a schoolteacher and a school principal. He spent much time working in various Indigenous communities throughout the Territory, during which he gained valuable insight into the culture and challenges faced by Indigenous people in the N.T.



Photo shows the late Ted Egan A.O with N.T Chair Alan James O.A.M

Ted became active in the sporting realm and in 1952 was co-founder of one of the N.T's most successful football clubs: Saint Mary's. The club welcomed and trained many Indigenous footballers, especially from the Tiwi Islands, and Ted's legacy remains strong.

Ted was a renowned raconteur and singer and, in fact, learned at least two Indigenous languages through song. He became famous around the Territory for his performances, singing and drumming on an empty beer carton. His original songs included *Sayonara Nakamura*, *The Drover's Boy*, *Drinkers of the Territory*, *The Bangtail Muster*, *Poor Fellow My Country* and *Gurrindji Blues*, all included in his 25 Albums of Songs.

Ted was also a television presenter and author of several books. His most recent book *Justice All Their Own* has been very well received in legal circles. Ted has been described as one of the few people to have successfully bridged the gap between recording, writing and live performance. His books and original songs have contributed to a deeper understanding of the Northern Territory's history and culture.

During his lifetime Ted was honoured and awarded on many occasions: In 1991 he became a Member of the Order of Australia (A.M) and in 2003 was elevated to Officer of the Order of Australia (A.O). He was named a Living National Treasure in 2004 and in 2011 received an Honorary Doctorate (D.Lit) from Charles Darwin University.

Ted was the inaugural recipient of the Australia Folk Trust Award for being a major contributor to Australian Traditional Music. In 2023 the N.T Branch of the Order of Australia Association recognised Ted with a Lifetime of Service Award, with a spoken tribute by his friend and colleague Mr. Earl James A.M, which has been drawn on here.

QUEENSLAND BRANCH

CHAIR's Report

RONDA NIXON O.A.M

As I write this report, my thoughts turn to the imminent announcement of the recipients of awards in the 2026 Australia Day Honours. How excited they must be, and how proud their families will be. We look forward to congratulating them and meeting them either at their investitures or later in the year at the welcome function our Branch Committee will organise for them and their families and friends.

The diversity of the service each recipient gives never ceases to astound me. For instance, at our 2025 Branch Christmas Party, Pastor Linda Sivyer O.A.M was our Guest Speaker. Linda received her award *for service to local government, and to the remote community of Aurukun.* Aurukun Shire is on the western side of Cape York. It is the lands of the Wik, Wik Way and Kugu people, and Wik Mangan is the predominant language spoken. Linda arrived there from Brisbane as a very young woman, with just one small suitcase. As a city girl she went into an environment completely foreign to her where she didn't speak the language, and conditions were primitive: no mod cons. But she stayed until she retired. Many in her position would not have been so brave.

Preparations for the 2026 National Conference being held from 16-19 April at Rydges South Bank Hotel and Conference Centre have been front and centre of our Branch committee's focus since my last report. Registrations are now open via a link on the national website. The programme and list of speakers appear in this issue of the magazine. Please join us and experience our famous Queensland hospitality. You will have a wonderful time.

We thank the generous sponsors that have come on board to date for their generous support. We are still seeking more 'in kind' sponsors, so please contact me if you can assist.

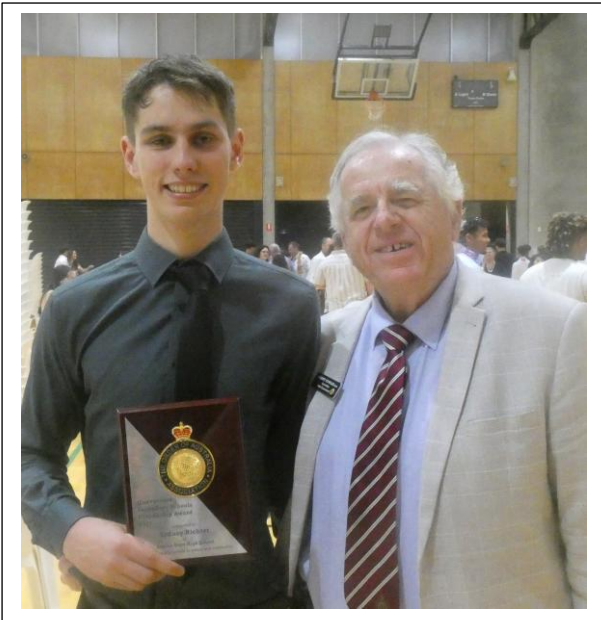
I look forward to catching up with many old friends and making new ones in April at Briz26.

EVENTS

Secondary Schools Citizenship Award presentation held in Cairns

A pleasing sequel to our successful 2025 Secondary Schools Citizenship Awards presentation took place in Cairns in tropical North Queensland on Friday 24 October 2025.

As reported in the previous edition of *The Order*, Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeannette Young A.C P.S.M, Governor of Queensland, presented these awards to 11 of 12 secondary school students from throughout Queensland at Parliament House, Brisbane on Friday 19 September. Unfortunately, Sydney Richter, a Year 12 student representing Cairns State High School, was unable to join the others at the Parliament House celebration.



Instead, Sydney received his award at the Year 12 2025 Valedictory and Awards Night at the Cairns State High School on Friday evening 24 October 2025. There to make the presentation was Geoff Cowles O.A.M, our Awards and Metro Events Coordinator, who also coordinates the Secondary Schools Citizenship Awards. Sydney and Geoff are shown in the photo.

Sydney is the seventh student from Cairns State High School to receive a Secondary Schools Citizenship Award since the programme began in 1999, and his success is richly deserved.

Geoff summed up his special visit to Cairns, “My visit to Cairns to meet this remarkable young man and his family, and to present Sydney with his Secondary Schools Citizenship Award in front of his peers, was an absolute privilege; one I will always remember with much fondness”.

Celebrating in style

Fifty-nine guests, including 36 Queensland Branch members, attended a most enjoyable festive Members’ Christmas Fellowship Lunch in the Sapphire Room at Wynnum Manly Leagues Club, at Manly West in Brisbane, on Wednesday 26 November 2025.

The lunch had a Christmas theme and there were Christmas crackers on the table.

Quite a few guests got into the Christmas spirit by wearing the coloured crepe paper hats extracted from the crackers. To add to the Christmas theme Geoff Cowles O.A.M, who was the M.C for the function, gave a special rendition of *T'was the Night Before Christmas*, written by Clement Clarke Moore in 1823, and an all-time favourite of many in the audience.

However, the 'star of the show' was Pastor Linda Sivyer O.A.M, a regular to our functions and a local from Manly West who accepted our invitation to be our guest speaker. Linda touched on her current experience as Chaplain at Hilltop, Carinity's aged care community at Kelvin Grove, as well as offering insights and interesting anecdotes from her 22 years until retirement in 2014 as the hard-working Executive Assistant to the Mayor of the Aurukun Shire Council at Cape York. Her stories about her work among our Indigenous communities struck a chord with the audience and it was a stirring and moving presentation. It was a privilege to be in the audience to share Linda's unique and valuable contribution to society which led to her receiving her Medal (O.A.M) in the 2016 Australia Day Honours.

PLEASE NOTE: FULL DETAILS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BRISBANE FROM 16 TO 19 APRIL IN BRISBANE ARE TO BE FOUND ON THE ASSOCIATION WEBSITE. PLEASE CHECK THESE AND USE THE LINKS TO REGISTER AND BOOK ACCOMMODATION.

NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH

Chair's Report

Dr John Gullotta A.M

On 22 July 2025, the NSW Branch celebrated 45 years, and we held a special celebratory Long Lunch on 6 December 2025 to commemorate this milestone in conjunction with our Christmas event. It was a huge success with a capacity crowd.

We also held our 2026 Annual Australia Day Harbour Cruise Luncheon aboard M.V Captain Cook III. It was a well enjoyed day on beautiful Sydney Harbour with more than 140 members and friends attending and enjoying the festivities in the air and on the water and foreshore.

The N.S.W Branch is attending as many regional events as possible and a sincere thank you to our Regional Director, David North O.A.M and our Secretary Dianne North O.A.M for representing the Branch in our regions, the lifeblood of our Association throughout regional and remote N.S.W. 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 major regional hubs to assist them, as it is my aim as N.S.W Chair to visit as many Regional Groups as I can.

I would like to thank all the hardworking N.S.W Branch committee members for their

support and tireless dedication throughout the year, and I look forward to a bigger and better 2026! I look forward to seeing you all at our upcoming events.

EVENTS

The NSW Branch marks 45 Years with a 'Long Lunch'

The NSW Branch marked the Association's 45th anniversary with a festive 'Long Lunch' at the Heritage Atrium at the Hyatt Regency in Sydney, bringing together more than 100 members, family and friends to honour the milestone and welcome the beginning of the holiday season.

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 N.S.W Branch, Dr John Gullotta A.M, 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 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 programme. 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 4 p.m, a fitting ending to a memorable "long lunch" and a proud celebration of 45 years of service by the N.S.W Branch of the Order of Australia Association to our community.

Celebrating unity and cultural diversity on Australia Day 2026

Australia Day is about so much more than the events of one day – it is about where we have come from, who we are as a nation and what we aspire to be. The date of January 26 is an important date in Australia's history that has evolved over time.

On our national day we can reflect on our complete and complex history and understand that acknowledging and reconciling our past helps lay a path to a stronger future. We respect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' survival, resilience and more than 65,000 years of continuous culture. It's also a day we can pay respect to the stories, histories and contributions of the Australians who lived, worked and fought for the values and freedoms we sometimes take for granted. It is a day that will mean different things to each of us. We are all shaped by our own experiences, and we celebrate living in a dynamic, multicultural nation where everyone's views, beliefs and contributions are valued.

Australians recognise the importance of celebrating our national day, an inclusive day where we acknowledge our traditional owners as well all the other nationalities that make our land so multicultural, so special to live in and be a part of, with its diverse and long-standing culture as we all unite as Australians. Australia Day is a day to reflect, respect and celebrate the Australian spirit and the best of this country: our mateship, our sense of community and our multicultural diversity.

This year a capacity crowd of N.S.W members and guests enjoyed the Australia Day Harbour cruise and luncheon, a longstanding annual event for our Branch. It was a most enjoyable, relaxed day on Sydney Harbour aboard the Captain Cook III on a glorious summer day. Everyone enjoyed the atmosphere with good food, drinks and importantly exchanging stories and life experiences with other Order of Australia recipients from all walks of life and different cultural backgrounds.

All aboard had front row seats to the tri-forces ceremony. This began with the Australian Army's 21 gun salute echoing across the water from North Sydney. H.M.A.S Canberra, the Royal Australian Navy's flagship, took centre stage as a seahawk helicopter swept overhead, proudly carrying the Australian national flag in a breathtaking aerial display. High above the Royal Australia Air Force joined the moment with a F-35 Fast-Jet flypast, timed to the final notes of the national anthem at

midday, followed by an exhilarating handling display, a testament to precision and skill. This was followed by the Australia Day Ferrython Race, Navy Seahawk Helicopter flag display, Maritime Mayhem water show, Australia Day Harbour Parade, the Tall Ships Race and the 190th Australia day Regatta.

N.S.W Branch Chair, Dr John Gullotta A.M, welcomed members and guests and highlighted the importance of The Order of Australia Awards in recognising the significant work and service of our fellow Australians, especially in rural and remote areas across our nation. He also highlighted the importance of unity and inclusivity of all cultures on Australia Day, especially after the events of recent months. He thanked everyone for attending and supporting this special day and acknowledged the tremendous contribution that Order of Australia recipients have made to our nation via their hard work, service and dedication.

It was a very successful and enjoyable day, and we look forward to reflecting, respecting and celebrating, with unity and cultural inclusivity, every day leading up to Australia Day 2027!

FEATURED MEMBER

Vale Dame Marie Bashir A.D C.V.O

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Professor the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir A.D C.V.O.

Dame Marie served as the 37th Governor of New South Wales from 2001 to 2014, tirelessly supported by her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie A.C O.B.E.

We all pay tribute and mourn the passing of this esteemed Australian who served the community of New South Wales in her many varied roles and in the highest office in the State and the oldest public office in Australia as Governor. She was the first woman and the first person of Lebanese descent to be appointed as governor of an Australian state.

Professor Bashir was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1988 for her services to child and adolescent health and subsequently made a Companion of the Order in 2001. She was later invested by Her Late Majesty The Queen, with the insignia of a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (C.V.O) in 2006. She was named Dame (A.D) in the General Division of the Order of Australia in the 2014 Queen's Birthday Honours.

N.S.W Branch Chair John Gullotta A.M knew her in her role as a fellow doctor, the 17th Chancellor of the University of Sydney and Governor of N.S.W. He said that Dame Marie was a kind, humble, caring, compassionate and very down-to-earth lady and that he felt so very fortunate to have known her.

Dame Marie exemplified the essence and spirit of being a true Australian and she will be truly missed! She was a much-loved and long-standing member of our community who made a remarkable contribution to Australian public life and mental health leadership.

On behalf of the N.S.W Branch Committee and The Order of Australia Association, we convey the deepest and heartfelt condolences to Dame Marie's three children, six grandchildren and all her extended family.



Photo of Dame Marie
Bashir A.D. C.V.O

TASMANIA BRANCH

Chair's Report

Alastair Douglas O.A.M

By the time this edition is distributed, the Tasmanian Branch and Regions will have conducted their annual general meetings at which it is expected that some new members will be appointed to various positions. Changes will be reported in the next edition.

The Branch Treasurer, Ron Blake O.A.M, retires this year having completed three consecutive terms. Ron has been a diligent treasurer, ensuring the accuracy of records for the Branch and in reporting nationally. I will miss the willing support, sound advice, service and friendship he has generously given me and the Association over the past nine years. Fortunately for the Association, Ron will continue as the North-West Region's treasurer.

The Branch unfortunately also loses Vicki Purnell O.A.M from the State committee. Vicki has been a valuable member, looking after the collation of Tasmania Branch

material for this magazine and her efforts will be sadly missed.

It was pleasing to see an increase in the number of Tasmanian Australia Day awardees this year from 15 last year to 21. We will look forward to meeting and congratulating them on their awards at future occasions.

EVENTS AROUND THE REGIONS

Northern Region

A pleasant Christmas Lunch was held at the historic Woolmers Estate, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, on the outskirts of Longford a short drive from Launceston. Many will know Woolmers as the site of the National Rose Garden and the collection of buildings, many dating back to the estate's foundation in 1817, that have been preserved in their 19th-century condition, including the main homestead, workers' cottages, a chapel, blacksmith shop, stables and, notably, one of the oldest intact woolsheds in Australia. Guest speaker at the lunch was Dr James Markos A.M who spoke about the detrimental impact of woodsmoke in the Tamar Valley, including Launceston. It can be particularly bad in winter with the smoke emanating from domestic wood heaters.

North-West Region

The Hellyers Road Distillery was the venue for a successful afternoon tea to celebrate and congratulate the 2025 Australia Day and King's Birthday awards recipients. Regional Convenor Rod Bramich O.A.M welcomed the 39 Regional members, friends and local council mayors who spoke of the achievements of their constituents who had received awards.

Southern Region

A small and relaxed Christmas Lunch was held at the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania. Attendees were treated to an enthusiastic and animated talk by Tony Coen O.A.M who spoke of the history and future of heritage railways throughout Tasmania and of Scottish Pipe Bands, particularly the Tasmania Police Pipe Band of which he is Drum Major. Tony, a man of many talents, started his career to become a train driver which today is a busy pastime with the Tasmanian Transport Museum.

FEATURED MEMBERS

Betty Laverty O.A.M

Betty Laverty O.A.M received her award in 2022, having started her life of volunteering at the age of 19 when she became secretary of the Northern Branch of the Youth Hostels Association, a worldwide organisation. With others she did many workshops improving the accommodation of these hostels in and around northern Tasmania.

Betty became involved in the Launceston Caledonian Society in the early 1960s and was Secretary for 12 years, having served on the committee from the early 70s. She

also ran the pre-ball socials from 1973 to the late 90s, usually three each year before the Caledonian Ball that was held annually in Launceston.

Betty joined the Scottish Country Dancing in 1958 and began assisting with the teaching and took over the class in 1982. She was Treasurer for the class for about 25 years, also becoming Secretary of the class. Betty was awarded a life membership at the 50th Anniversary of the class in 2004. She was also in the display/demonstration team for 40 years and was part of the Executive of the Tasmanian Caledonian Council in the 1980s and 1990s, which ran the Highland Games.

In 1997 she gained her Teachers Certificate and was the first Tasmanian to gain the Certificate through the Australian Teachers Alliance.

Teaching and the arts in various forms have all featured strongly in Betty's life. She was invited to join the Launceston School for Seniors in 1989 'Singing for Pleasure Class' of which she is now the coordinator. She teaches Scottish Country Dance Class for older people, became Secretary of the Launceston School for Seniors Committee in 1997 and served in that position for 21 years, having served on the committee for more than 23 years, being awarded life membership in 2015.

For some 15 years Betty was the secretary of various pipe bands. Liking to keep herself busy, she has been a volunteer radio operator in the control room of the Northern Ambulance Service, a Founding Member of the Northern Tasmanian Mini Car Club, an original Festival Committee member when it first started in Launceston, and Secretary to the Board of Management responsible for building the Launceston Dowling Street Sports Centre.

While continuing to enjoy and contribute in many different spheres, Betty Laverty O.A.M is also currently the O.A.A Tasmania Branch's Northern Regional Group's secretary.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA BRANCH

Chair's Report

Judy Hogben AM

As the A.G.M for the W.A Branch is set to be held on 25 February, with nominations called for a number of committee members as well as Branch Nominated Director, a list of current committee members has not been included in this report. Results of election will be posted on the web after the A.G.M. The focus for the new committee will be on both reflecting on the successes (or otherwise) of previous years and implementing initiatives and directions foreshadowed in the 2025 National Survey. Some of these changes were initiated in 2025, including what many believe was an outstanding and emotional visit to the *Once Known* Exhibition at the Old Perth Boys School, a part of the John Curtin Gallery, during NAIDOC Week.

In line with members' requests for a wider range of events and settings, the Branch's first Sundowner featured Professor Kingsley Dixon A.O F.T.S.E. His talk on biodiversity, held at the Cottesloe Golf Course in October, received great feedback. Professor Dixon has been recently awarded the honour of 2026 Senior Australian of the Year W.A, and the Branch's 2026 calendar will feature a visit to his property in Waroona for a special guided tour of his nationally acclaimed Cypress Farm and Gardens.

The importance of regional events and the connections that they enable was also highlighted during the year. The recent lunch organised by the South-West Regional Group at Busselton attracted more than 70 people at the newly finished Hilton. The Mandurah lunch was another example of the importance of regional connections.

One programme that is unique to W.A is the Branch's Police Patron Scheme. In this Branch members have the opportunity to become a Patron of squads of up-and-coming police officers undergoing training at the Police Academy. 2025 was a year of significant anniversaries for the Order and the Association and so it was for the Police Patron Scheme as it marked 25 years of operation and, through this, ongoing service to the W.A community.

Another highlight was our visit in November to the Perth Hebrew Congregation. In the past our multi-faith-based events have been held in the Anglican Cathedral of Perth. To acknowledge the wider faith base of our membership and to reflect this in our activities, we were delighted to accept an invitation from Rabbi Lieberman and the Perth Hebrew Congregation Board of Management to a prayer service. The visit was generous in the sharing of information about the holy books and the service format. It was followed by dinner at Rabbi Lieberman's home prepared by his wife Liat. The W.A Branch thanks the Perth Hebrew Congregation for organising this and will continue with its multi-faith outreach, as well as the continuation of events at Saint George's Cathedral.

Going back to the National Survey and how the new committee in the W.A Branch will be responding: one of the central findings was that a diverse range of events and offerings, both formal and more informal, would be most welcome. In short, "mix it up a bit", but keep a combination of socialising, interesting speakers, good food along with a variety of venues and event timing. The committee will, I'm sure, look forward to delivering on that request. One of the most pleasing survey results was that W.A responses showed that satisfaction with membership is high and such feedback is always warmly received.

Forthcoming events

18 March: Reception for New Australian Day Honours Recipients at City of Stirling

Council Offices

1 April at 7pm: An Evening with Gilbert and Sullivan at St Louis Estate. Claremont

Police Patron Scheme

The Police Patron Scheme was inaugurated in October 2000, an initiative between W.A Police and the Association's W.A Branch that has proved very successful for the police and all the members of the W.A Branch who have participated. Kevin Campbell A.M was the first Patron at Maylands under the command of Police Superintendent, Chris Dawson, now our Governor. The commitment requires 28 weeks of involvement with a squad of new police recruits. At their graduation awards ceremony, the Patron of the W.A Branch presents an award that is decided by the squad members. It was previously called the Good Samaritan Award and was awarded by the family of a long-serving and dedicated padre.

The W.A Branch was given the privilege of presenting this award and in 2026 it has been renamed the Cassandra Chapman Courage and Integrity award. In 2024 Cassandra unfortunately died in a diving accident. As a junior officer she intervened in a domestic violence situation when a senior officer, her partner at the time, was abusing his police powers. Going against police culture, she reported the incident.

The current award criteria are: 'unselfish behaviour among peers; caring and compassionate; a recruit who will 'walk the extra mile' without question; one who supports the squad and maintains discipline and harmony within it. Proposed additional criteria: a recruit that demonstrates moral courage and integrity, therefore less about physical acts of bravery/courage but rather about ethical decision making when times are tough and the chips are down; facing diversity and not going with the flow, but with what is right and just.'

The W.A Branch is always looking for members to participate. Those interested should email: [wabbranch@theorderofaustralia.asn.au](mailto:wabranch@theorderofaustralia.asn.au) attention Michael Bleus O.A.M.

EVENTS

Christmas Lunch 2025

On 3 December, 110 members met at the Fremantle Sailing Club, a lovely venue overlooking a sea of beautiful yachts and boats with the Indian Ocean in the distance. Many of us were delighted to return and thank Bettine Heathcote A.M for arranging such an excellent occasion. The welcome from Judy Hogben A.M and National Chairman, Barry Nunn A.O were informative and not too long! Clive Robartson A.M discussed the Members' Survey and results.

Our members are interesting people with varied interests, and conversation rarely lags. The Christmas spirit was in the air as we pulled crackers, wore the usual hats and

read the gags and riddles. It was an excellent meal, a good start to the festive season.

FEATURED MEMBER

Music, not words: Dr Margaret Pride O.A.M

Dr Margaret Pride O.A.M was born in Perth, Western Australia, where in 1972 she obtained a B.A (Mus) at the University of Western Australia. Margaret says that she expresses herself through music, not words.

Dr Pride began her professional life as a pianist and moved into teaching to earn enough money to study in England. She loved teaching so much that the England trip did not eventuate! She did, however, study choral music and conducting for five years in the US, gaining her performance doctorate under Rodney Eichenberger at the prestigious University of Southern California. She is known worldwide and has conducted concerts and choirs in Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia, the U.S and across Australia.

Margaret continues to be a committed teacher, involved at times in schools and helping individual students at university and professional levels.

She developed a large orchestral and choral programme as Musical Director for Methodist Ladies College (1974 -1985). For nine years at the University of Western Australia, she was Senior Lecturer in Music, and Musical Director of Choral Studies. She was also Senior Lecturer at Edith Cowan University, and Music Director for the West Australian Symphony Orchestra Chorus for eight years. She has been state and national president of the Australian National Choral Association.

For more than 25 years, Margaret conducted the Perth Symphonic Chorus, Perth Baroque and Philharmonic Orchestras and Perth Collegium Musicum Choir. In recognition of her work as founding Music Director of the Perth Symphonic Chorus, and for initiating so many choirs and young singers, the Perth Symphonic Chorus set up the Margaret Pride Scholarship Fund to 'continue the ethos instilled by their founding director, by formally starting an avenue of supporting and providing mentorship and performance opportunities for singers in the difficult transition phase from tertiary study to professional work'.

From 2024 to 2025, Margaret lived in England, where she gave workshops and conducted concerts with professionals. In May 2025, she conducted an International Choir on Memorial Day Weekend in Carnegie Hall, New York.

The WA Branch is very grateful to Margaret who has arranged singers and orchestral players for several of our functions.

VICTORIA BRANCH

Chair's Report

Fred Harrington O.A.M

Greetings and welcome to 2026.

As I was pondering the words to say to the members, their families and friends impacted by the recent bushfires here in Victoria, news is just coming through regarding the flooding around the Lorne/Wye River and Great Ocean Road area. All I can say to those affected by either of these disasters is that the thoughts and good wishes of all Victorians are with you as you face the task of rebuilding your lives and livelihoods.

On a positive note, it is great to see so many community members coming together to provide significant levels of support in so many ways following these devastating events.

Congratulations are extended to all 2026 Australia Day Honours recipients and, particularly, to the 178 within Victoria who all have been recognised for contribution to their communities.

Congratulatory letters have been sent to all Victorian recipients further highlighting the invitation from the National Chair to join the Association.

I look forward to meeting members at 2026 events.

Forthcoming VIC Branch Events

Friday 20 March: VIC Branch Paul Wheelton AM Inspiring Australians Oration at the Angliss Conference Centre commencing 10.30am. The Oration will be delivered by Kathryn Fagg A.C.

Bookings via TryBooking <https://www.trybooking.com/DHHUD> close Friday 13 March.

Friday 20 March: VIC Branch Annual General Meeting. 12.30pm following the Oration and refreshments at the Angliss Conference Centre 555 Latrobe Street, Melbourne

Bookings via TryBooking <https://www.trybooking.com/DHHTW> close Friday 13 March.

Tuesday 28 July 12 noon VIC Branch Mid-Year Luncheon at Stamford Plaza Melbourne
111 Little Collins Street Melbourne

Thursday 26 November 6pm VIC Branch End of Year Dinner at Stamford Plaza
Melbourne 111 Little Collins Street Melbourne

2026 events including Annual General Meetings are on the VIC Branch Events website page <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/vic/upcoming-events/>

FEATURED MEMBERS

GEORGINA GUBBINS O.A.M: For every child growing up on the land

“Career coaches talk about having a plan - a roadmap to your dream role. But my journey has been anything but linear. I never set out to be a leader. And there was never a plan.”

The only plan that seemed to shape Georgina’s Gubbins’ early life was a career in nursing. Georgina’s professional life started as a remote area nurse. However, life had other plans. She became an ‘accidental farmer’ a few years later. As life’s journey proceeded, Georgina found herself striving to build a productive modern farm and raising her daughters as a single mother.

Georgina’s learning curve was considerable and so too was the challenge of stepping into a man’s world: cattle and sheep farming.

Georgina points out that the system never made it easy, in fact, it was only in 1994 that women were even legally recognised as farmers in their own right. Before that, they were ‘non-productive sleeping partners’, ‘helpmates’, or simply ‘domestics’.

Georgina says that she became acutely aware that, to build a successful farm, she needed to balance science, data and stay in step with innovation. She learnt from undertaking research and formal studies, as well as through ‘pub talk’ and tapping into the farming community around her, despite the initial obstacles of being accepted.

“Farming is not just about watching the grass grow. It's about understanding pasture systems, climate cycles, genetics, animal welfare, biosecurity and most importantly, business strategy.”

Georgina may not have planned to be a farmer, but she certainly proved she has all that it takes to carve out a remarkable journey in the sector. In addition to establishing herself as a successful farmer, Georgina took on various roles such as panel advisory member for Meat and Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, and State Government bodies.

The ability to be strategic, responsive and resilient has ensured a life journey full of opportunities, alongside the hard work.

Georgina was awarded a Corporate Governance Scholarship from Meat and Livestock Australia to attend the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course. “At the time I was undertaking a Masters of Agriculture and things were a bit hectic, but I have a habit of grasping opportunities when they present themselves -- and sometimes the timing isn't great!”

Georgina not only forged a path for herself, but for women in farming and agriculture. “It's been deeply rewarding to help shape research and innovation, to be at the forefront of innovation and to ensure that women's voices are heard in agriculture,” she says. “Agriculture is not just about food. It's about community, resilience, and innovation. It's about feeding and clothing a nation, and doing it with care, science and pride. My honour is not just for myself, but for every woman who's been underestimated, every farmer who's faced hardship, and every child growing up on

the land wondering what's possible.”

Elevated Member Kathryn Fagg A.C

Kathryn Fagg was an Officer of the Order (A.O) recipient Queen’s Birthday 2019 for distinguished service to business and finance, to the central banking, logistics and manufacturing sectors, and to women.

In the King’s Birthday Honours 2025, Kathryn was elevated to Companion of the Order of Australia (A.C) for eminent service to business governance, to the banking, finance and investment industry, to public administration, to the not-for-profit sector, and to women.



Photo of Kathryn Fagg A.O

Kathryn started her career as an engineer and has gone on to hold a range of Executive and Board roles. She has more than 25 years of senior commercial and operational leadership experience in a range of industries. Kathryn was appointed Chair of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research

Organisation (C.S.I.R.O) in 2021; she had served on the Board since 2018 and was Deputy Chair in 2020.

Kathryn Fagg A.C is a current Non-Executive Director of the National Australia Bank; Djerriwarrh Investments and Medibank Private. She is an Executive Mentor at Merryck & Co Australia and New Zealand since 2016, Inaugural Chair Watertrust Australia, Board Member The Myer Foundation, Chair Breast Cancer Network Australia, Board Member Champions of Change Coalition and Grattan Institute, since 2018

Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll Recipients

The Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll inductees were presented as part of the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence at Government House on 4 December 2025.

The Honour Roll is overseen by the Victorian Multicultural Commission, and it recognises champions of diversity and community building who have played a significant role in strengthening multiculturalism for all to enjoy.

The Honour Roll is part of the Victorian Multicultural Awards, which have been held

for 24 years and are conferred by the Governor of Victoria and Premier. The recent Honour Roll included four O.A.A members, each drawing on their expertise, lived experience and connections across the broader Victorian community to ensure inclusive services, equitable access and building of community cohesion.

Vivienne Nguyen A.M, Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, says that the “Honour Roll acts as a recognition on the importance of, and the obligation to contribute to community service, whether it be in our own cultural knowledge, or our lived experienced lens, for the betterment and harmonious society we want to nurture”.

She adds that, “As a modern country in an ever more connected world, it is an absolute necessity to champion contribution from all peoples, in all different ways, shapes and sizes which bring out the best from people.”

Vivienne notes that the Honour Roll inductees all contribute to creating a flourishing society for all to benefit from -- economically, socially, intellectually and culturally.

Dr Teresa De Fazio O.A.M

Dr. Teresa De Fazio O.A.M is a nationally respected leader advancing multiculturalism, social cohesion and intercultural inclusion across Victoria – from school rooms to executive board rooms. Starting as a pioneer in community languages education, she went on to develop a range of inclusion initiatives, such as workplace leadership strategy development and mentoring, anti-racism initiatives and supporting youth leadership. Her work has empowered diverse communities and inspired future generations to embrace equity and cultural pride. Through her strategic vision and mentorship, Dr De Fazio has created a lasting legacy of inclusion, cultural confidence as well intergenerational empowerment.

Vedran Drakulić O.A.M

Vedran Drakulić O.A.M is a visionary leader, humanitarian and advocate, who has dedicated 20 years to advancing multiculturalism, social cohesion and refugee support across Victoria. Vedran’s contribution to the multicultural community includes creating opportunities, strengthening communities, and amplifying the voices of migrants, refugees and young people. His commitment to leading by example inspires future generations to embrace diversity, inclusion and civic responsibility.

Eugenia Mitrakas O.A.M

Eugenia Mitrakas is a pioneering leader and advocate from a refugee background, whose work has transformed Victoria’s multicultural and legal landscape. As the first Greek female lawyer in Victoria and the first woman on the Legal Admission Board, she has championed women, migrants and emerging communities. Through her advocacy, mentorship and leadership in legal, welfare and educational initiatives,

Eugenia has expanded access to justice, preserved cultural identity and inspired generations.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

CHAIR's Report

ANDREW PHELAN A.M

The A.C.T Branch ended 2025 with two significant signature events helping to raise the profile of our Association: On 22 October, Emeritus Professor Mark Howden A.C delivered the 2025 O.A.A-A.N.U Lecture; and on 25 November, Chief of Defence Force Admiral David Johnston A.C R.A.N gave the 2025 O.A.A-A.D.F Oration. Both events, which recognise the outstanding contributions of academic and military members of the Order to Australian society, now have dedicated pages on our website featuring their complete histories with links to transcripts and videos where available. The year fittingly also concluded with a 50th Anniversary of the Australian Honours and Awards Celebratory Lunch on 27 November, featuring Branch Patron Dr Sue Packer A.O and GPCAPT Phil Morrall A.M C.S.C, followed by our End of Year Celebration and Picnic on 4 December.

Our 2026 programme began with a well-attended Australia Day Breakfast on Tuesday 27 January, at which Dr Joseph Johnson C.S.C O.A.M A.A.M spoke eloquently on his remarkable service to Australia's Antarctic programme, leading winter expeditions and relief voyages in one of the world's most challenging environments, reminding us of the dedication and resilience that characterise the best of Australian endeavour. The breakfast provided a wonderful opportunity for members to gather in celebration of Australia Day and to reflect on the values of citizenship and service that underpin the Order.

On behalf of the A.C.T Branch, I extend warmest congratulations to all recipients of honours and awards in the Order of Australia announced in the 2026 Australia Day list. We look forward to welcoming new A.C.T recipients at our Autumn Reception, scheduled for 29 April 2026, and to continuing our tradition of celebrating outstanding Australian citizenship throughout the year.

Looking ahead, we are delighted that Her Excellency the Governor-General, following her attendance at our 2025 Student Citizenship Awards evening, has graciously suggested that Government House could host this important event in future. I have formally requested that the 2026 Student Citizenship Awards be held at Government House in October 2026.

The Branch A.G.M is scheduled for 11 February 2026, and once again I thank all our committee members for their dedicated volunteer efforts in making possible the range of activities and initiatives that enrich our Branch community.

EVENTS

25 November 2025: THE O.A.A – AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE ORATION

The annual Order of Australia Association – Australian Defence Force Oration, established in 2011, is an initiative of the A.C.T Branch of the Association. To contribute to the Association's purpose and objects, the Oration has the dual aims of recognising the contribution made by military members of the Order of Australia to the fabric of Australian society; and promoting community awareness of the strategies, ways and means through which the A.D.F seeks to achieve its mission and purpose 'to defend Australia and its national interests in order to advance Australia's security and prosperity'.

This year we were very grateful to Admiral David Johnston A.C R.A.N, Chief of the Australian Defence Force, for giving the 2025 Oration on *National Defence Strategy, Transformation of Capabilities and Defence Culture*. Admiral Johnston's thoughtful examination of the National Defence Strategy has given us his eminent perspective on the strategic challenges and opportunities facing Australia, provided insights into the transformation of defence capabilities, and offered a compelling vision of how the A.D.F is adapting to meet the demands of an evolving security environment. Michael Crane D.S.C & Bar A.M introduced Admiral Johnston and gave a vote of thanks.

27 NOVEMBER 2025: 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF HONOURS & AWARDS CELEBRATORY

Fifty members and guests met for lunch at the Canberra Southern Cross Yacht Club to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Australian Honours and Awards system and the achievements of everyday Australians who have contributed to our nation and its communities. Our Branch Patron Dr Sue Packer A.O spoke and highlighted the Order's role and impact, giving a personal insight into her appreciation of the Honours system as it is structured and how it rewards Australian citizens for community work and exceptional contributions to society. Branch Treasurer Phil Morrall A.M C.S.C gave an amusing and cryptic outline of links among many honours awardees.

27 JANUARY 2026: AUSTRALIA DAY BREAKFAST

Eighty members attended our annual Australia Day Breakfast and celebrated the achievements of Australia Day awardees from the A.C.T and region. The guest speaker was Branch Committee member Dr Joe Johnson C.S.C O.A.M A.A.M, who had a long

history of involvement with the Australian Antarctic Programme and spoke about some of the challenges of polar leadership and of the Antarctic and the Southern Ocean.

Guests enjoyed hearing the personal anecdotes of issues that arose over Joe's time as Station Leader at Casey and Davis Bases, including relationships with Chinese and Russian stations. His leadership resulted in his receiving the Antarctic Medal in 2001 and the 2022 Phillip Law medal in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Antarctic affairs and the wider Antarctic Community, particularly for his station and voyage leadership; as Antarctic Names and Medal Committee Chairman and work in relation to the Antarctic Air link and service to the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions Club. Dr Johnson was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2020 *for service to veterans, and to the community.*

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Chair's Report

Tony Metcalfe O.A.M.

In looking back over the last year, I reflected on the many activities that the Branch has organised for our members, both in Adelaide and in our country regions. We have held Fellowship Lunches, New Recipient Receptions, celebrations of Australia Day and the King's Birthday, our A.G.M, a Christmas Morning Tea, and a Student Citizenship Award presentation ceremony.

At each of these events, we paused to reflect on the day 50 years ago that the Order of Australia was instituted by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia. We particularly thank our Branch Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson A.C, Governor of South Australia, and Mr Rod Buntten, for hosting a special reception at Government House for the Student Citizenship Awards 'With Distinction' recipients (the 'Top Ten') and attending our earlier King's Birthday lunch.

We pay tribute to one of our Branch Committee members, Pamela Rajkowski O.A.M, who has received a unique award from the international Afghan association, the 'Ghulam Muhammad Ghobaar' History Award, acknowledging her 40 plus years of research and writing on the Afghan cameleers of Australia between 1860 and the 1920s.

I would also like to acknowledge a special honour conferred upon one of our members, Judith Leeson A.M, who has been appointed a Companion of Flinders University based on her 70-year career in early childhood education, disability services and career development and transition services for disadvantaged groups. The award recognises her generous contribution of time and expertise to the university and the community as an advocate for the quality care of our older citizens, and improving the lives of

older Australians and their families. Judith is a former S.A Branch Committee member and is a member of our Student Citizenship Awards Selection and Assessment Panel. South Australia has agreed to host the 2027 Conference in Adelaide from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 May. A preliminary planning committee has been established to begin developing this event. In particular, I have had discussions with various members, both local and national, about the format of this conference, primarily regarding the structure so we can arrange interesting discretionary site visits on the Friday afternoon when most businesses/sites would be open. We look forward to welcoming you to Adelaide in 2027!

On behalf of the Branch Committee and members of the S.A Branch, I send you our best wishes for 2026.

EVENTS

STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARDS 2025

In an award ceremony held at Government House Adelaide, Her Excellency the Hon. Frances Adamson A.C, Governor of South Australia and S.A Branch Patron, presented 'With Distinction' plaques to the Top 10 students in the Order of Australia Association S.A Branch Student Citizenship Awards.

Her Excellency then presented Callum McIntyre-Gregory, a year 12 student from Mount Gambier High School, with a special trophy in recognition of his outstanding achievement: the Keith 'Chook' Fowler O.A.M Award for the Student Citizen of the Year. Callum is the inaugural recipient of this award under this title.

Respected as School Captain, Callum is a standout leader of the Student Representative Council and founder of a regional student advisory network linking schools across south-east South Australia. He also volunteers as a coach, referee and mentor, supporting students of all backgrounds. Callum has championed several equity initiatives, including creating the regional Student Cultural Advisory Group, giving culturally and linguistically diverse students a platform to share experiences and shape school culture.

The Keith 'Chook' Fowler O.A.M Award celebrates young leaders who embody citizenship and service. Callum's achievement highlights the strength of youth leadership in regional South Australia and the transformative impact of student voice. We congratulate Callum on this wonderful achievement.

Senior students are nominated by their schools and selected from submissions assessed against four criteria: leadership, contributions to the school and/or community, contributions to the environment and/or community development, as well as pride in Australian citizenship. For 2025, 47 submissions were received for consideration, from 33 schools and colleges.

For three years starting 2025, the S.A Branch is continuing the tradition of presenting all Award recipients with a special medallion. These medallions are provided through the generous support of the Government of South Australia.

FOURTH-QUARTER EVENTS

At an Open Day held at Government House Adelaide on Sunday 12 October, two Branch Committee members were on duty at the Australian Honours medal display. They offered our Branch information brochure, which is directed at existing recipients of the Order of Australia, to give an overview of the S.A Branch and the benefits of membership of the Association. We also had on hand an insert informing members of the public about the Order of Australia and the nomination process.

On Wednesday 12 November, Her Excellency The Governor and Mr Bunten hosted representatives of their patronage organisations at the annual Government House Patronage Garden Reception, an event that acknowledges the endeavours of these various organisations and the benefits they bring to the South Australian community. The SA Branch was represented by Chair Tony Metcalf O.A.M and Cheryl Metcalf, and Deputy Chairman Noel Hender O.A.M B.E.M and Jill Hender. Other Branch members were also in attendance, representing other associations with which they are affiliated. We held our annual Christmas Morning Tea on Friday 12 December, with Rachel Zaltron OAM, the Founder and General Manager of *Back Packs 4 S.A Kids* as Guest Speaker. Rachel received the O.A.M, *for service to children and young people* (QB20). *Backpacks 4 S.A Kids* exists to provide resources to contribute to the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people during periods of dislocation from home and routine care.

FEATURED MEMBER

PAMELA RAJKOWSKI OAM: A UNIQUE AWARD

The international Afghan association '8 A M MEDIA', based in Canada, held its 2025 annual international awards ceremony in Melbourne on 7 December 2025, honouring individuals whose contributions have significantly shaped Afghanistan's arts, culture, human rights and innovation. The event is held to recognise the contributions of Afghans in Afghanistan and worldwide.

The 8 A M Committee extraordinarily selected Pamela Rajkowski O A M to be the recipient of their 'Ghulam Muhammad Ghobaar' History Award, acknowledging more than 40 years of research and writing on the Afghan cameleers of Australia between 1860 and the 1920s.

The award is named after Ghulam Muhammad Ghobaar who was an academic, journalist, historical author and activist in Afghanistan from the 1910s to the 1930s,

imprisoned for his views.

Pamela was presented with a statuette and certificate for her significant contribution *from pen to thought to paper* among the diverse creative Afghans in Australia and internationally. Pamela said, “It was such an honour for me on the day to be the only non-Afghan recipient among about 20 prominent Afghans coming up on stage to receive awards”.



Photo of Pamela Rajkowski OAM with her Award

An S A Branch Committee member since 2020, Pamela is a South Australian research author, specialising in the history, heritage and contribution of the Australian Afghan cameleers. She has collaborated widely with Afghan cameleer descendants and has been a consultant to several state and national bodies, including the S A Museum, Adelaide City Council, Adelaide Cemeteries Authority, the Adelaide City Mosque and the National A B C Coasts series.

Pamela is the author of three published books. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2008 Queen’s Birthday Honours List, *for service to the community through research into the history of the Afghan and*

Aboriginal cameleers in Australia.

THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION

Report from Foundation Chair Dr Helen Nugent A.C

REFLECTING ON PROGRESS

Three years after the Foundation Board refreshed its strategy, and with the start of a new year, it is timely to report on progress that has been made.

Our purpose, reaffirmed in 2023, is “to support the next generation of leaders by helping promising young Australians achieve their potential for the benefit of future generations of Australians”.

Fundamental to the achievement of that purpose is the identification of exceptional second-year university students who have excelled academically, who have a strong track record of giving back to the community, who have a vision as to where they want to make a difference, and who will benefit from the financial support provided by a Foundation Scholarship. The selection process involves working with the relevant universities in a consistent and rigorous way to identify worthy awardees and then supporting them with a mentor from the Order of Australia who can provide guidance

to maximise their career potential.

Over the past three years, 17 such extraordinary individuals have been identified. Full profiles of these individuals have been provided in past issues of *The Order* magazine. They include Ms Jennifer Corderoy from the University of New England, who wants to give back to the agricultural community from which she comes by helping improve sustainability, both through research and advocacy; Mr Ayman Miazzi, from Monash University, who is specializing in aerospace engineering and who, after undertaking a Doctorate at MIT, wants to start a successful company that develops reusable rocket systems for interplanetary missions; and Mr Ockert Visser from the University of Western Australia, who is focused on a career in quantum computing where he wants to push boundaries. This is just a snapshot of the amazing individuals who have been selected as awardees.

The mentors for these and other awardees have been truly exceptional. They include Mr Tim Fairfax A.C, The Hon. Michael Kirby A.C C.M.G, Mr Nicholas Moore A.O, The Hon Robert French A.C, and the late Professor Emma Johnston A.O. Attracting mentors of this quality has been integral to the Foundation's efforts to ensure the potential of each awardee is fulfilled. We acknowledge and thank all mentors who have so willingly given of their energy and wisdom. The quality of their input is a guiding star to the mentees, with every effort being made to provide the best fit possible. From the awardees' perspective, they describe the mentorship provided as being life-changing. Over the past three years, the Foundation has also worked assiduously with its partner universities to lift the rigour and consistency of the assessment process to attract and then select awardees. This has involved greater standardization of the process, as well as much greater engagement with each university. The strategic decision to increase the geographic diversity of states and universities from which scholars are drawn made this an imperative.

The change in profile reflects the profile of donors, the Foundation Board's desire to minimize travelling costs to attend the presentation dinner by increasing the proportion of awardees coming from the state where the Order of Australia Association Conference is being held, as well as a desire for greater geographic diversity. It is encouraging to see this increased diversification, while recognizing that more can still be done.

Despite there being no shift in the number of awardees coming from South Australia, the University of Adelaide remains the university with the highest number of awardees (10), followed by the University of Melbourne, University of Western Australia and Charles Darwin University (all with 5), and then the University of Sydney, University of N.S.W, Queensland University and University of Tasmania (all with 4).

Another significant change over the past three years has been the introduction of the Round Table Conference with the Governor-General at the time of the announcement of the awardees for that year. In 2023, it was held at Admiralty House in Sydney with

His Excellency, the Hon. David Hurley A.C and in 2024 with Her Excellency, the Hon. Sam Mostyn A.C. In 2025, Her Excellency hosted the awardees at Government House in Canberra. The strong support of Their Excellencies for the Scholarship programme has immeasurably enhanced the prestige of the Scholarship. It provides a truly life-defining experience for the Scholars, helps attract broader national media coverage, as well as helping create a bond among each cohort of scholars. They have a real sense of sharing a lived common experience and the ideals of the Order of Australia. The Foundation is immensely grateful for the patronage and support of Their Excellencies. Another strategic decision made in 2025 was to increase the value of the Scholarship to the awardee from \$40,000 to \$45,000, while holding funding for travel and other costs for each scholar constant at \$5,000. This decision by the Foundation Board was not taken lightly. It was consistent with the Board's desire to maintain the prestige of the Scholarship against the backdrop of significant increases in the cost of living. The value of the Scholarship had not changed since the Scholarship was established in 2004.

The average number of Scholarships offered each year has more than doubled over the past three years from 2.57 Scholarships from 2004 to 2022 to 5.67 Scholarships from 2023 to 2025. As a result, the total average value of Scholarships funded each year has increased by 130 percent from \$102,800 to \$236,666. None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our donors.

The support, not just of Foundation Board members, but also of the Order of Australia Association and the Branches, along with external individuals, has made a real difference.

Another indication of the growing strength of the Foundation is the increase in its reserves. Although, over the period 2023 to 2025, an all-time record of \$710,000 has been allocated to Scholarships, the Foundation's corpus has grown by 94 percent from \$2.58 million to just over \$5 million. This allowed us in 2025 to fund the first Scholarship from the Foundation's corpus. We plan to do more in future.

In summary, the Foundation is going from strength to strength with a view to offering life-transformative Scholarships to exceptional individuals who have a real ability to make a difference to the future of Australia. This is a noble cause. We thank all our supporters, and we look forward to building on this momentum.

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