



Welcome from VIC Branch Chair

Greetings and welcome to the first edition of The Order of Australia Association Ltd Victoria Branch E-newsletter for 2026.

As we commence the year, I again offer our thoughts, and best wishes to all members impacted by either the recent fires or flooding as you continue the journey to recovery.

I extend congratulations to the 178 Victorian recipients in the Australia Day Honours list. These recipients come from each of the 13 Regional Groups throughout Victoria. It is pleasing to see many have chosen to join OAA. We all look forward to meeting many of you over the coming year.

The next Vic Branch event is the *Paul Wheelton AM Inspiring Australians Oration* being held on Friday 20th March 2026 with Kathryn Fagg AC to deliver the Oration. In addition, OAA Foundation Scholarship recipient Chelsea Allen will provide an update on her journey following receipt of her Foundation scholarship. Light refreshments will be served following the Oration. There is no cost to attend, however bookings are required for catering purposes, via TryBooking link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/DHHUD> Bookings for the Oration close Friday 13 March 2026.

The Vic Branch Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 20th March commencing at 12:30pm following the Oration. The formal notices required for the AGM have been sent to all Vic Branch members and other documents are on the Vic Branch page of the OAA website.

There is no cost to attend the Annual General Meeting, however booking is required via TryBooking link: **<https://www.trybooking.com/DHHTW>** Bookings close Friday 13 March 2026.

Again, this year there are a number of Committee positions to be filled, particularly Merchandise Coordinator, Events Coordinator and Membership Secretary. For several years now the Vic Branch Committee has continued to operate despite these several vacancies. However that situation cannot continue, so I ask all members to consider nominating for a position on the Vic Branch Committee. This will ensure the Vic Branch Committee can continue to conduct an interesting and enjoyable program for all members. Nominations for these positions close on Friday 27th February 2026. The Nomination Form along with Position Descriptions and other AGM documentation can be found at the Order of

Australia website: **<https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/vic/vic-annual-general-meeting/>**

I look forward to meeting members, recipients and guests at these events.

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





THE
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
ASSOCIATION LTD
VICTORIA BRANCH

Invitation

Paul Wheelton AM Inspiring Australians Oration

Date: Friday 20 March 2026

Time: 10.30am

Venue: Angliss Conference Centre 555 Latrobe Street, Melbourne

The Oration will be delivered by **Kathryn Fagg AC**

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

King's Birthday 2025 Kathryn Fagg was elevated to Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) 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.



Kathryn Fagg AC is a current Non-Executive Director of the National Australia Bank; Djerriwarrh Investments and Medibank Private. 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

Chelsea Allen an OAA Foundation 2023 scholarship recipient donated by Paul Wheelton AM will update members and guests on her studies and community work.

Cost: There is no cost for Order of Australia Association members and Order of Australia 2026 Australia Day recipients to attend the Oration, one guest per member or recipient is allowed. Bookings are essential for seating and catering.

Booking: TryBooking link for **Oration** <https://www.trybooking.com/DHHUD> Bookings close Friday 13 March 2026.

Following the Oration and refreshments will be The Order of Australia Association Ltd Victoria Branch **Annual General Meeting** commencing at 12.30pm on Friday 20 March 2026. Refer to page 3 for further details including committee positions, access to position descriptions and Nomination Form.



The Order of Australia Association Ltd
Victoria Branch

Date: Friday 20 March 2026

Time: 12.30pm sign in

Venue: Angliss Conference Centre 555 Latrobe Street, Melbourne

There is no cost to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM), registration is required please.

Booking: TryBooking link for **Annual General Meeting** <https://www.trybooking.com/DHHTW>

Bookings close Friday 13 March 2026, the AGM link is separate to the Oration.

The OAA VIC Branch AGM agenda pack was emailed or mailed to all financial members last month.

A copy of the agenda pack including Nomination Form and 2025 AGM Minutes and 2025 financial year Reports can be found at:

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

Nominations for vacant VIC Branch committee positions close 5.00pm Friday 27 February 2026

Position Descriptions and 2026 VIC committee meeting dates and time are available at <https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/vic/vic-annual-general-meeting/>

Chair

Treasurer

Committee Member/Membership Secretary

Committee Member/Events Co-ordinator

Committee Member/Minute Secretary

Committee Member/Merchandise Co-ordinator

Vic Editor (incl Social Media)

Committee member (1)

For further information regarding the OAA VIC Branch Annual General Meeting please contact

Ms Jill Page OAM, VIC Branch Secretary Email: secvic@theorderofaustralia.asn.au OR

Mail: PO Box 18389 Collins Street East, Melbourne Vic 8003





2026 Victoria Branch **Regional Groups - Annual General Meeting dates**

Sunday 22 February – **Central Highlands & Wimmera** 12.30pm lunch, 1.30pm AGM. Ararat RSL

Thursday 26 February – **Eastern Suburbs** at Blackburn Lake Visitor Centre 10am Morning tea, 10.30am AGM. Speaker Deborah Nicolson, Community Engagement Adviser at Government House, Melbourne. As the Community Engagement Adviser for Government House Victoria, Deborah will be taking us on a virtual tour of Government House in this 150th year of our beautiful, heritage Victorian landmark. Along the way, she will share some of its history and provide an insight into the role of Governors past and present.

Sunday 15 February **Loddon Campaspe** – 11am AGM, 12 noon lunch (individuals order from the a la carte menu and pay the hotel directly) The Gold Mines Hotel 149 Marong Road, Golden Square. Guest Speaker Merlyn Quaife AM Renowned soprano

Monday 16 February **Melbourne Central** lunch and AGM. Kooyong Tennis Club 489 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong. 11.45am AGM followed by lunch 12.00 for 12.30pm Guest Speaker Prof. David Copolov AO – Professor of Psychiatry, Monash University and the University of Melbourne, Former Director of the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria and Pro Vice Chancellor Monash University. He will speak on: Victoria's Mental Health Reform Framework: progress is clear, but significant gaps demand decisive action. Cost for 2 course lunch \$90.00 (includes GST) booking close 12 February 2026 Book via Trybooking <https://www.trybooking.com/DIIFA>

Wednesday 11 March – **North Central Suburbs**, commencing at 11:00am at the Uniting Church Garden Room, 185 Burgundy St Heidelberg. Guest speaker at the AGM will be National Membership Director Dot Haynes OAM. The AGM will be followed by an informal lunch at the Sycamore Tree Café. Members can order from the menu and pay individually. Bookings for the lunch to Irene Harrington OAM at harri@techinfo.com.au

Sunday 1 March **North East Goulburn Valley** 12 noon AGM and luncheon Quality Hotel Wangaratta Gateway, 29-37 Ryley Street, Wangaratta, \$65.00 (incl GST)
Speaker Mr Garry Spencer AM Operation Grain Harvest Bookings www.trybooking.com/DJGBU

Sunday 22 February – **Western Suburbs** 12.30pm AGM Pascoe Vale Hotel, Railway Parade Pascoe Vale

2026 Victoria Branch Regional Groups - Annual General Meeting dates continued

Thursday 12 March – **South Central Suburbs** 11am Speaker David Shepherd OAM

Sunday 15 March – **Gippsland**, Traralgon

Thursday 19 March – **Frankston Mornington Peninsula** 12 for 12.30pm lunch and AGM at Rosebud RSL Speaker: Helen Cooper, CEO of Peninsula Health. Before the 2025 merger to create Bayside Health network, Helen was CEO of Peninsula Health, and will bring us all up to date with the many improvements to local health services and supports, including the newly opened \$1.1billion Peninsula University Hospital in Frankston.

Merchandise

Celebrate - purchase OAA items for yourself, family, friends

This is a selection of the Items (from \$7.00 - \$52.00) that can be purchased online or via phone

Key Ring in
Gift Box



\$12.00

Blue knit scarf



\$26.00

Cuff Links



\$35.00

Cap



\$21.00

Beanie \$18.00



Document Bag \$37.00



Socks \$11.00



Enquiries Barb 0413 008 571

All items in the OAA range can be purchased at

www.theorderofaustralia.asn.au/shopping-cart

Victoria Branch Events

Tuesday 28 July 12.15pm for 12.30pm
Victoria Branch Mid-Year Lunch
Stamford Plaza Melbourne
111 Little Collins Street Melbourne
Easily accessible by regional and metropolitan transport

Thursday 26 November 6.15pm
Victoria Branch End of Year Dinner
Stamford Plaza Melbourne 111 Little Collins Street
Melbourne
Easily accessible by regional and metropolitan transport



Regional Group Events

Eastern Suburbs Regional Group

Tuesday 17 March 7.30pm Webinar – Robert Bob Raaymakers APM, Victoria Police Legacy, Community Engagement Coordinator) **Robert Raaymakers APM** was a member of Victoria Police for 48 years. In 2022 he took up the role of Community Engagement Coordinator with Victoria Police Legacy, a position he held until his retirement in 2025. In this webinar, Bob will provide an overview of the origins and activities of Victoria Police Legacy, drawing on his wide experience with this organisation and, previously, with Victoria Police. To register visit the web page at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIXMY>

Tuesday 21 April Visit to **Sikh Gurdwara** Blackburn with lunch

Tuesday 16 June Webinar

Tuesday 15 September Webinar

Tuesday 17 November Webinar

Tuesday 24 November Event with lunch

Gippsland Regional Group

Wednesday 21 October. The **Annual Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet Oration and dinner** in Traralgon

Loddon Campaspe Regional Group

Coffee Morning on **Friday 13 March** at 10.30 at the Social Foundry Café, 86 Mollison Street, Kyneton

The Ellis family has invited OAA members and guests back to **Hanging Rock** for a wine tasting and lunch on **Friday 15 May**.

Australia Day Honours

The Governor-General, the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, announced the Australia Day 2026 Honours List including awards in the Order of Australia (General and Military Divisions). She emphasized that the honourees exemplify Australia's values of service, community and kindness.

There are four levels of award, The Companion of the Order of Australia (AC), Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), Member of the Order of Australia (AM), and Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

Anyone can nominate a member of the community for an award in the Order of Australia.

The OAA Victoria Branch acknowledges the outstanding contributions from community service, scientific research, to philanthropy, to sport, education, engineering, health and wellbeing, the arts, to industry, manufacturing, transport and beyond – thank you.

Paula Fox AC

Paula Fox was diagnosed with melanoma and treated at The Alfred Hospital.

A conversation with her surgeon led to a large donation and effort to create what has become the Paula Fox Melanoma and Cancer Centre, a partnership between The Alfred, Monash University and Minderoo Foundation.

Paula and her husband Lindsay Fox AC have also been major donors to the establishment of The Fox: NGV Contemporary, a contemporary art gallery in Melbourne.

2015 Queen's Birthday, Paula Fox was an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) recipient for distinguished service to the community through philanthropic contributions to, and committed fundraising support and advocacy for, a range of arts, cultural, youth, research and social welfare organisations.

2026 Australia Day Paula was elevated to a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for eminent service to the arts, to medical research, and to children and youth, through philanthropic giving, fundraising and governance.

Paula is a Board Member of the NGV Foundation and NGV Committee and Life Governor and Supporter since 1984 at Very Special Kids.

Photo: Portrait of Paula Fox was AO now AC and Lindsay Fox AC at the NGV Contemporary funding announcement at NGV International.

Photo: Josh Robenstone.



Distinguished Saeid Nahavandi AO

Distinguished Professor Saeid Nahavandi is Swinburne University of Technology's inaugural Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Chief of Defence Innovation. He is a globally recognised leader in defence technologies, specialising in robotics and haptics, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, and advanced modelling and simulation technologies. With an academic career spanning over three decades, he has secured over \$150 million of government, industry, and commercial funding, successfully translating his innovative research into real-world applications, including the establishment of three technology start-ups. He has published over 1300 scientific papers and has carried out industry-based research with several major international companies such as Airbus, Boeing, Bosch, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, General Dynamics, Holden and Lockheed Martin to name a few.



Saeid was the recipient of the Ray Page Lifetime Simulation Achievement Award at the 2025 Australasian Simulation Congress in Adelaide, the Clunies Ross Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2022 from the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences & Engineering, Researcher of the Year for Australian Space Awards 2021, Australian Defence Industry Awards - Winner of Innovator of the year, The Essington Lewis Awards, and Australian Engineering Excellence Awards - Professional Engineer of the Year. Saeid is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (ATSE), Engineers Australia, the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). Additionally, he holds honorary and adjunct professorships at the University of Windsor (Canada) and is an Associate at Harvard University.

Before joining Swinburne, he served as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Defence Technologies) and Founding Director of the Institute for Intelligent Systems Research and Innovation at Deakin University.

Saeid actively advises governments and the defence and civilian industries across Australia, the USA, and Europe, and has previously consulted to NASA and NATO. His contributions to technology and innovation have earned him numerous accolades.

Distinguished Saeid Nahavandi is a 2026 Australia Day Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) recipient for distinguished service to tertiary education, to engineering, to robotics and haptics research and innovation, and to defence capability development.

Photo: Sourced from Deakin University Research News.



Gerard Ryan AO

ProVelo Super League Co-Founder Gerry Ryan was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the 2026 Australia Day Honours recognising his outstanding service to the community across tourism, hospitality, sport, governance and business.

A lifelong supporter and advocate of Australian sport; Gerard's impact has been felt across multiple codes, with cycling playing a central role in his contribution. Inducted into the Cycling Australia (now AusCycling) Hall of Fame in 2015, Gerard Ryan has been instrumental in the growth and professionalism of both road and track cycling, supporting athletes and events that have helped elevate Australian cycling on the global stage.

In 2024, Gerard was further recognised with his induction into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame for his significant contribution to sports administration, reflecting decades of leadership, vision and investment across the sporting landscape.

As a Co-Founder of the ProVelo Super League, Gerry made the vision for the PSL possible, providing necessary investment to fuel the development of the league which has commenced its second season with an impressive 30% uplift in teams and a growing commercial platform.

From starting Jayco in 1976 with a small loan and a big vision, Gerry has grown the business into Australia's largest and most trusted caravan manufacturer, while keeping manufacturing proudly based in Australia.



His belief in hard work, quality, and backing local industry continues to shape everything Jayco does from the way they build products, support dealers, customers, and communities.

Gerard Ryan was a 2000 Queen's Birthday Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) recipient for service to the community, particularly as a supporter of sporting and charitable organisations, and to the youth.

Australia Day 2026 Gerard Ryan was elevated to an Office of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to sports governance, to the tourism and hospitality industry, to business, and to the community through philanthropic contributions.

Photo: Sourced from LinkedIn

Andrea Coote AM

In 2021, Andrea Coote was appointed inaugural Chair of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Advisory Council, which advises the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner on how the Commissioner is performing and emerging risks.



Andrea Coote is the current Chair of The Jack Brockhoff Foundation; the Foundation exists to support the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

She was a member of the Aged Care Sector Committee, an advisory body set up by the Government to help shape aged care policy and reforms, between 2021 and 2023.

Andrea was a Victorian Member of Parliament for 16 years, from 1999 until she resigned in 2015. She served as Shadow Minister for Ageing and Carers between 2002 and 2006.

Andrea Coote is a 2026 Australia Day Member of the Order of Australia (AM) recipient for significant service to the people and Parliament of Victoria, and to the aged care sector.

Photo: The Weekly SOURCE.

Michael Betts AM

A 2026 Australia Day Member of the Order Australia (AM) recipient for significant service to the community of Geelong, most notably with organisations that tackle inequality.

Michael Betts AM is a retired Chartered Accountant with over 37 years of experience in public practice, including 26 years as a Principal. Michael maintains a consultancy role with several of his former accountancy clients.

He has 50 years of experience in not-for-profits serving as Chair and Director of the Barwon Regional Association for Alcohol and Drug Dependence, Committee for Geelong and inaugural Chair Northern Futures Ltd and as company Director of United Way (now Give Where You Live).

Among numerous other organisations, Michael was a member of three Rotary Clubs, presided over the Old Geelong Collegians Association, Chaired St Laurence Community Services (Barwon). Also a Director of The Geelong College Ltd and Director and President of The Geelong College Foundation Ltd.



Michael currently Chairs Geelong Community Foundation, the Foundation is on a mission to create a lasting difference to the people in the Geelong Region

Photo: Sourced from Ocean Grove Voice

Maggie Toko AM

A 2026 Australia Day Member of the Order of Australia (AM) recognises significant service to mental health governance and awareness.

[The content of this profile contains reference to themes around mental health, abuse and self-harm which may be distressing for some readers].

Ms Toko is the Chair Commissioner at Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and a former board member of Mental Health Victoria. She was also CEO of the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council from 2016-2023 as well as other boards and councils. In fact, the breadth of her work has spanned grassroots social work to the boardroom and councils.

Commissioner Toko came to Australia from New Zealand in 1989. She took her first step into the sector in Australia working with young people who were survivors of incest.

Her early days of working with young people cemented her determination to make a difference in the mental health sector. For a number of years, she worked with young people as they struggled with drug and alcohol issues as well as dealing with trauma. She found that she was able to engage with them deeply, by taking the time to listen to them, identify and connect them to support systems to ensure they felt safe. Also, to re-engage them with families and community members when safe. She recalls "those were the exciting times" of her working life.



She has seen the impact of her work as many of the young people she has worked with have gone on to be parents, own their homes and take on community roles. Commissioner Toko has also been to the baptisms of the children of her former clients.

She states that "living beyond adolescence is such a major feat for desperate and vulnerable young people. All they want is to be heard and recognised. Young people in dangerous situations are often wrapped up in silence and anger and speak of how important it is to break through this to provide them with skills and aspirations to move forward."

Commissioner Toko's determination has led to her role as a sector leader. She has her own lived experience to ground her in the work and fuel her passion. As a young person she was a victim of family violence, homelessness, poverty and racism. She attempted suicide numerous times as a result of the desperation and hopelessness she felt.

Commissioner Toko shares that she had a breakthrough moment at her last attempt: "If I was going to live I figured I needed to do something to make it worth it. I decided I would make a difference for other kids."

Toko speaks authentically and honestly about her struggle with mental illness and the condition itself, breaking through barriers of silence and stigma.

Maggie Toko AM continued

She suffers from paranoid schizophrenia which manifests as hearing voices all day, every day. She also has violent visions throughout the day. She manages her condition through, what she calls, her "4 Ps", her physician, psychiatrist, psychotherapist and her partner.

The role of lived experience practitioners is something that the Commissioner feels has been a game changer in transforming the system and applauds the government in providing an opportunity for a voice. She knows how her own input has been particularly important on boards and other roles where change is shaped.

Being recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) is a way of validating Commissioner Toko's remarkable work, going above and beyond. She states she is "deeply honoured, humbled and mindful that I am one person. The recognition belongs to many who supported me to support others."

Photo: Supplied: Maggie Toko

Ralph Plarre OAM

Baking institution Ferguson Plarre's Bakehouse co-founder Ralph Plarre was recognised in the 2026 Australia Day Order of Australia Honours for his dedication to the industry with a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).



Ralph a third generation baker is the grandson of a baker, who first started a bakery in Moonee Ponds – a business Ralph's father inherited. It was in 1941 those post-war years Ralph began to tag along with his father to the bakery in the morning, where he'd watch on as the staff, in particular refugee women, worked.

Ralph's commitment to environmental responsibility saw him drive initiatives like carbon-offset tree planting and the creation of one of Australia's most sustainable bakery facilities.

His belief in people has created thousands of jobs, supported new small business owners and built a workplace culture defined by care, generosity and community impact. Ralph Plarre OAM also devoted his skills to charitable and humanitarian work, including travelling to communities in East Timor and Uganda to help local nuns establish bakeries and build long-term capability where it was needed most.

Ralph's work has left a lasting mark on the industry and our country, elevating standards, inspiring future leaders and proving that doing the right thing can be good business.

Photo: Sourced from LinkedIn

Roxie Bennett OAM

A 2026 Australia Day Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) acknowledges outstanding service to the community.

For decades, Roxie Bennett OAM has served the Geelong community with heart, integrity and purpose.



From her time behind the microphone at Bay 93.9 and K-Rock, to her leadership and advocacy across organisations including the Barwon Health Foundation as a current Director, Lifeline Australia, Geelong Connected Communities and GAWS - Geelong Animal Welfare Society, Roxie has consistently used her voice, skills and relationships to make a positive difference.

With a background spanning media, communications, events, marketing and the disability sector, Roxie brings people together in a way few can.

After stepping away from radio and the corporate world to follow her passion for equity and inclusion, Roxie joined Leisure Networks as head of Strategic Partnerships and Special Projects at the disability service provider.

Photo: Sourced from Ocean Grove Voice

Marcus Crook OAM and Nicholas Pearce OAM

A 2026 Australia Day Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to the community through the not-for-profit sector

It is not often that a streetwear business leads to an OAM. However, for business partners, Marcus Crook and Nicholas Pearce, their co-founding of HoMIE, amongst their other remarkable achievements in the community sector, have led to their Medal of the Order of Australia for services to the community through the not-for-profit sector.

HoMIE is a social enterprise borne out of a vision, determined mindset and passion to make a difference to young people who are caught in vicious circle of homelessness, poverty, unemployment and hardship.

HoMIE's nucleus started when Marcus and Nicholas met on a bike ride in 2013 where they cycled from Vietnam to Cambodia raising funds against anti-child trafficking. Nicholas, a former youth worker, and Marcus, a former advisor to the Prime Minister and Cabinet and photographer, bonded over a shared vision of making a difference back in Melbourne.

There were two areas which stood out for them both: the rise in youth homelessness and the need for ethical fashion as a means to drive social change and sustainability.

They admit they started small with a pop-up for donations at Federation Square. This venture was to go for a month. However, the need was there and it was a success. To support the enterprise, they printed t-shirts so that profits would go back into the organisation. They then moved firmly into ethical fashion as a social enterprise – always with the same clear purpose:

Marcus Crook OAM and Nicholas Pearce OAM continued

disrupting youth homelessness and hardship in a way that created sustainable solutions to transformative change. They focussed on young people aged between 18-25, a critical period of vulnerability.

The HoMIE co-founders drew on their previous experience around social change and barriers to understand that a disruptive solution lies in a strengths-based, unconditional positive-regard approach which ensures that dignity and respect form a strong platform for their work.

The colleagues developed a Pathways Alliance program in which the participants are paid to study a Certificate III in Business whilst undertaking personal and professional development to support them take on a new direction in life.

Another component of the program is Retail Ready. The group of annual interns have the opportunity to take up an eight-month paid work position in a retail store, either HoMIE or a HoMIE trained Alliance partner.

The HoMIE VIP Program is another offering. This provides an opportunity for young people experiencing hardship and homelessness to come to the store and select new items of clothing from the store's range. They also receive food, a free haircut and beauty service – drawing on dignity and empowerment to interrupt marginalisation for young people.



HoMIE's success and vision have inspired others organisations to sign up. Partners include Champion, Nike, and Sportsgirl which also take on HoMIE clients to provide paid retail work. The AFL has now come on board and has a dedicated range of clothing for fans.

Further partnerships are expected this year.

The impact has been remarkable with 84% of graduates of the Pathway Alliance program employed in meaningful work and/or enrolled in a further 12-month study stream. Over 4,000 people have taken part in the VIP program. Also, participants of the program have already notched up nearly 25,000 hours of paid retail employment.

When Marcus presented his family with news of his new venture with Nicholas, his father warned him "it will consume you".

Marcus agrees it has consumed them both, but this doesn't slow them down. In fact, in 2024 Marcus received a Fellowship with the Winston Churchill Trust to continue his interests in sustainable and ethical fashion which is guiding next steps. Whilst Nicholas has taken fatherhood as part amongst his "portfolio."

The Australia Day 2026 Honours recipients are now intent on moving forward with their not-for-profit work, "homelessness and associated problems are not just a Victorian problem. We are currently investigating opportunities in NSW."

Photo: StreetSmartAustralia L-R Nicholas Pearce OAM and Marcus Crook OAM

Order of Australia Nominations via the online Portal

The Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat implemented changes to the way nominations for the Order of Australia are submitted. These changes have been designed to increase efficiency.

The revised nomination form requires the nominator to include the name and email address of three referees who can comment on the nomination they have prepared.

Referees will receive an email generated by the portal, seeking their comments.

Nominators will not have access to the comments provided by referees.



The nominator will be alerted by email when each referee has responded and, once all referees have responded, the nominator is required to log back into the portal to submit their nomination.

Further information and guidance is available on the Office of the OFFICIAL SECRETARY to the GOVERNOR-GENERAL website:

Please visit <https://www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards/order-australia>

If you need help to complete your nomination form, call (02) 6283 3604 (business hours) or email honours@gg.gov.au.

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

Approximately 4,500 OAA members receive an e-copy of *The Order* national magazine making it easy to forward to family, friends and acquaintances including non-member recipients.

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

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

If interested in making a change please email The Order of Australia Association National Membership Officer (Heather) oaanatmbrofficer@theorderofaustralia.asn.au asking to be transferred to the e-copy national distribution database.

Thank you in advance for making a difference.



OAA VIC members making a difference in the community

Andrew Fairley AM

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Steve Dimopoulos and Victorian Convention and Event Trust (VCET) Chair The Hon. John Brumby AO, announced the appointment last month of Andrew Fairley AM to the Trust.



Andrew Fairley AM is a 2015 Member of the Order of Australia recipient for significant service to the community through contributions to, and support for, a range of organisations, to the law, and to philanthropy. He has a long association in the tourism sector and has held senior leadership positions as a Director of Tourism Victoria, Deputy Chair of Tourism Australia, Chair of Parks Victoria and Zoos Victoria. He is a practising commercial and equity lawyer and is Chair of Qualitas Limited and a director of Goulburn Valley Water. With long involvement in the philanthropic sector, Andrew is Deputy Chair of the Mornington Peninsula Foundation and Emeritus Chair of the Sir Andrew Fairley Foundation.

As VCET prepares for the opening of Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre in mid-2026, the appointment strengthens the focus on sustainable growth and sound decision-making, supporting the delivery of world-class events across two iconic Victorian venues.

Photo from LinkedIn Andrew Fairley AM VIC Branch Melbourne Central Regional Group member

Distinguished Professor Emeritus Frances Separovic AO

The Premier's Award for Victorian Senior of the Year last December included a highly commended award presented to Distinguished Professor Emeritus Frances Separovic AO noting she has dedicated her retirement years to tireless volunteer service. She empowers others to step into leadership and builds bridges between cultures.

Frances is a strong advocate for migrant women and under-represented voices. She has mentored dozens of early-career researchers, many women, migrants or first-generation scholars. Her mentees influence their own communities, teach others and have become leaders themselves.



Frances Separovic AO a 2019 Officer of the Order of Australia recipient for distinguished service to science education, particularly to biophysical chemistry, as an academic, and to young women scientists plays a vital role on the Advisory Board of Australian New Zealand Croatian Women in Leadership. She also supports science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) programs through the Victorian Croatian Chamber of Commerce.

Frances is driven to advance science diplomacy and inclusion. She leads with courage, compassion and an infectious belief that age is an asset. As Foreign Secretary of the Australian Academy of Science, Frances has represented Australia at many global scientific forums. She also volunteers for over 15 national and international boards, councils and programs. Her leadership benefits thousands of local students, researchers and businesses.

Photo: Sourced from Premier's Victoria Awards site.

Dr Teresa De Fazio OAM

Annually the Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll recognises champions of diversity who have played a significant role in strengthening multiculturalism for everyone to experience and enjoy.

VIC Branch Editor Dr Teresa De Fazio was an Honour Roll inductee as part of the Victorian Multicultural Awards at Government House last December.

Words and photos sourced from Teresa's LinkedIn article.

"Humbled and honoured to be inducted into Victoria's Multicultural Honour Roll.

The work that is done is spurred by lived experience - watching and experiencing how



multicultural members of the community help shape a thriving Victorian community when doors are opened. However, being perplexed and vexed when doors are kept firmly closed.

The Recognition, as always, is dedicated to my parents. It gives voice to the times they were not provided with one, and to the values they instilled in me: respect for all (no labels), inclusion and humanity.

I am pleased to have stood amongst so many worthy recipients last night -

all doing our part in ensuring that lessons are learned, that doors remain open and that systems are challenged when they are not inclusive of all.

The fact that the government recognises such contributions speaks loudly of community values. I look forward to celebrating the achievements of others as these awards continue.

My appreciation to all who have backed me and supported me – especially through the challenging times. I am deeply grateful. As always, I will find you and I will hug you.

In the meantime, the work continues."

Teresa De Fazio is a 2021 Medal of the Order of Australia recipient for tertiary education. Teresa is a VIC Branch Western Suburbs Regional Group member.

Photo sourced from Premier's Victoria Awards site.

Photo 1: L-R Dr. Teresa De Fazio OAM, accompanied by her mother, Maria De Fazio, Jill Morgan AM.

Photo 2 L-R Iwan Walters MP (representing Premier Allen) Dr. Teresa De Fazio OAM, Prof. Margaret Gardner, Governor of Victoria

Fred Alale AM

The Help Himalayan Youth Foundation organised a wonderful evening celebrating culture, community and contribution at the 118th National Day of Bhutan Gala Dinner.

Fred Alale AM received a recognition award in appreciation for visionary leadership, acknowledging his role as Co-Founder and Chair of the African Music and Cultural Festival (AMCF), and recognising the journey of transforming the festival into Australia's largest African cultural celebration at Fed Square last December.

Fred was bringing African music, arts and culture to life in Australia as a model for other multicultural communities and his national contribution across arts and music boards and committees.

For Fred, this was a humbling acknowledgement that speaks to the power of collaboration and shared purpose. His wife Claire joined him together with his brother Stephen Alale and sister-in-law Yana, visiting from London for Christmas and New Year — a special occasion made even more meaningful by sharing it with family. Also at the Gala Dinner were OAA VIC Branch members Shillar Sibanda OAM and Gary Lee OAM.

Evenings like this are a powerful reminder of what's possible when communities come together with respect, generosity and a shared commitment to building a more inclusive Australia.



Fred Alale AM is a 2023 Member of the Order of Australia recipient for significant service to the African communities of Victoria. Fred is a VIC Branch South Central Suburbs Regional Group member.

Photo: L-R. Fred Alale AM, Parsu Sharma Luital JP, Ingrid Stitt MP and Pandit Ojaraj Upadhyaya Lohani



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VICTORIA BRANCH



2026 **Lunar New Year** (February 17) marks the Year of the Fire Horse, a time symbolising rapid change, energy, and freedom. As we celebrate the Lunar New Year, may this auspicious occasion bring you abundant opportunities and success in your career and personal and professional aspirations.

Ramadan is a holy month for over 2 billion Muslims around the world. It is a significant time for reflection, purity of thought and deed, charity and setting good intentions. Prayer is important. Fasting occurs between sunrise and sunset. After sunset, the evening meal or *iftar* is an opportunity to gather with friends and family. The meal usually starts with a date and water.



Ramadan starts on the sighting of the crescent moon. In 2026 in Australia it will start February 18.

Islamic traditions indicate that divine revelations to prophets occurred during Ramadan. For some, festive lanterns are lit. Followers attend various prayers at their local mosques.

Ramadan Mubarak! (Wishing you peace this Ramadan) to all those who are observing the Holy Month.

Thank You SecondBite

When the Boxing Day Test finished early, a huge amount of freshly prepared food at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) was suddenly at risk of going to waste.

Thanks to quick action from the SecondBite team and the incredible support of the MCC, two of their largest refrigerated trucks rescued 6,910kg of quality surplus food in a single pickup and delivered to three hub agencies. The surplus food equated to 13,820 people receiving meals.



Every box of rescued produce helps SecondBite deliver good food to people doing it tough



OAA VIC Branch Regional Group Chairs

Current Monday 2 February 2026

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

