



Vision Impaired Accessible Document -- Dated May/June 2026



Cover photo: Government House W.A., where W.A. Branch members marked Anzac 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.

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MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN A.C



Autumn is a busy season for the Order of Australia. The past month has seen Investiture ceremonies in Government Houses across Australia, and, importantly, the announcement of a special Australian Bravery Decorations honours list to recognise the courage of eight remarkable individuals involved in the Bondi Junction incident in 2024. The list was announced on the second anniversary of that tragedy.

The National Conference of the Order of Australia Association was successfully held in Queensland, and I know many of you attended. The conference coincided with Investiture week, so I was unable to attend, but I was pleased, as Patron of the Association, to record video messages for the opening session, and for the conference dinner,

when the Foundation Scholarships were announced.

Both Council Chair Shelley Reys A.M and I said in our messages that the Council of the Order and the team in the Honours and Awards Secretariat are working hard to improve our honours system. This includes reducing the time between nomination and award and encouraging the nomination of more women. I am confident that, with Shelley and the Council's leadership, supported by the hard work of the Secretariat, our honours system will be strengthened in the year ahead. I also took the opportunity to thank Major General Barry Nunn A.O R.F.D E.D (Retd), who has concluded a nine-

year term as national Chair of the Association. Barry has been an exceptional Chair and will be missed. My congratulations to all new office holders in the Association.

While members of the Association were gathered in Brisbane, Canberra experienced the most beautiful autumn weather for our week of ceremonies. Recipients and their families gathered under blue skies and bright sunshine at Government House in Yarralumla. They were welcomed in the House by a series of paintings by George Petrou OAM, on loan to us from an exhibition titled *The Art of Humanity*. Each one depicts an Australian who made an extraordinary humanitarian contribution: Vivian Bullwinkel A.O M.B.E, Major General Sir Neville Howse V.C K.C.B K.C.M.G F.R.C.S, Albert Jacka V.C M.C & Bar, Sir Weary Dunlop A.C C.M.G O.BE., Keith Payne V.C A.M, and Cameron Baird V.C A.M. It was a delight to introduce the newest members of the Order to these visual celebrations of great Australians.

As always, each ceremony was profound and moving. There were lovely moments among family members, and the honourees were generous in sharing their stories, always with humility.

During our Investiture week, we also held two evening receptions, where we invited some representative honourees to be part of a panel discussion during the event. Both these evenings were immensely rewarding, and I wanted to share with you just one of many insights from our panellists.

I asked Commander Joshua Clifford R.A.N, who had just received his Conspicuous Service Medal, if he agreed there was a place for kindness in the modern defence force. He gave an emphatic yes. In fact, he described it as an ‘operational necessity.’ He reminded us that, without kindness, especially on board a ship, teams can’t function. Care and kindness, he reflected, create a cohesive, disciplined team that have each other’s backs.

Josh articulated what I have seen in our defence force, and in different ways across the Australian community. Care, kindness, and respect – which I have made the focus of my term – underpin our diverse, generous and unified community.

As the weather starts to get cold, I want to thank you for your ongoing contributions to our national and community life.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

VICKI O’HALLORAN, A.O, C.V.O

Members of the Order of Australia,

It is always a privilege to write to you on behalf of the Order and to reflect on the remarkable community that you represent. Across our nation and beyond, members of the Order of Australia continue to exemplify service, integrity and leadership in ways that strengthen our society and inspire others to contribute.

The Order of Australia is a living institution. It evolves as our nation evolves, and its relevance depends on our shared commitment to upholding its values and ensuring that recognition remains inclusive, fair and representative of contemporary Australia. In this regard, members play a vital role -- not only through continued service, but through advocacy, mentorship and encouragement of future nominations.

The Order Magazine provides an important forum for connection and reflection. It allows us to celebrate achievements, share stories of service and deepen our understanding of the many ways members contribute to the common good. I hope this edition reinforces the sense of pride and belonging that comes with membership and reminds us of the responsibility we carry as representatives of the Order.



Congratulations to the Queensland Order of Australia Association Conference Committee and the many dedicated volunteers on the outstanding delivery of The Order of Australia Association 38th National Conference recently held in Brisbane. The event was exceptionally well organised, and the quality of the presentations and associated events was of a very high standard, reflecting the professionalism and pride that went into every aspect of the conference. Work has already begun in Adelaide and beyond and we very much look forward to the 2027 conference hosted by South Australia.

The joy of attending our annual conferences is always enhanced by the wonderful opportunities to reconnect and engage fellow

members from across Australia. The chance to share experiences, ideas and fellowship in such a welcoming and inspiring setting is a privilege.

This is my last message as your National President as I conclude my three-year term in June. I am reminded of the quiet wisdom in the children's book *We're going on a bear hunt* -- that when we face rivers, mud, forests or storms we cannot go over, we cannot go under them, we must go through them. Together, as members of the Order of Australia Association, we have done just that. We have gone through challenges with purpose, through changes with resilience, and through moments of uncertainty with a shared commitment to service. And like the story's travellers returning home, we carry with us not just the memory of the journey, but the strength and understanding it has given us.

It has been a privilege to walk this path with you.

Go well, be grateful for what we share, and stay kind to one another.

Vicki

PS: Thank you to my wonderful husband Craig and beautiful daughter Coco for their support and encouragement always. You are simply the best!

MESSAGE FROM THE O.A.A CHAIR
WILLIAM LYE O.A.M. K.C.



When I first received news of my award of the Order of Australia Medal, my mind went not to the ceremony, but to the people who had quietly opened doors, given me a chance to serve and lead, and encouraged me to keep going when the path was not clear. Like many of you, I know that no one arrives in The Order alone. Every citation rests on a community that has nurtured, stretched and sometimes challenged us, and it is that community spirit that I now hope to foster as National Chair.

In Brisbane, at our 2026 'Bridge to the Future' conference, I was reminded how powerful that spirit can be. I met members from across Australia whose stories could not have been more different, yet who

shared the same instinct to serve something larger than themselves. Those conversations strengthened my conviction that the Association is at its best when it is not simply celebrating past achievements but helping members to keep growing and contributing.

Stepping into this role as your National Chair, I carry with me my experience as a barrister and as someone who has spent much of his professional life working alongside people from very different backgrounds and perspectives. That work has taught me the value of listening carefully, of asking hard questions respectfully, and of building cooperation around shared purpose rather than personalities. These are habits I hope to bring to our Board table and to my interactions with members in every Branch.

I am also shaped by the mentors who invested in me long before I had any formal title or responsibility. They modelled what it looks like to lead without fanfare, to prepare thoroughly, to give credit freely, and to make room for others to step up. As National Chair, I would like us to look intentionally for those emerging leaders in our own ranks

and to back them with trust, encouragement and opportunities. Our partnership with organisations such as the Menzies Leadership Foundation gives us one avenue for this, but so does every decision to invite a member to join the Association, chair a meeting, lead a project or speak at an event.

I know that many of you give countless hours to the Association on top of demanding professional, family and community commitments. I do not take that for granted. My aim is to ensure that the time you invest feels worthwhile: that our Strategic Plan helps, rather than hinders your work on the ground, and that our national direction is informed by the realities you see in your own communities. I want Branches and Regions to feel free to be creative and innovative within our shared framework, shaping activities that reflect local needs and strengths.

I also come to this role with deep gratitude for those who have led us to this point. I acknowledge the contribution of our retiring President, the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO and our long-serving National Chair, Major General Barry Nunn AO RFD ED (Retd), who have both provided steady, principled leadership in demanding times, and have left us with a stronger, more resilient Association.

I look forward to working closely with the Honourable Hieu Van Le AC as he assumes the role of National President and brings his own distinguished experience and perspective to our shared task.

My hope during my term as National Chair is simple. I would like every member, wherever they live and however they contribute, to feel that the Association sees them, values them, and offers them meaningful ways to continue serving. If, together, we can nurture new leaders, live out the values our honours represent, and keep our focus on solutions rather than criticisms, then our Association will not only honour the past, it will help to shape a future worthy of the Order we are privileged to wear.

INTRODUCING THE NEW DEPUTY CHAIR, DAVID NORTH O.A.M. F.P.S.



David North O.A.M F.P.S became Deputy Chair of the Association following the 2026 A.G.M. David is a registered pharmacist with a Bachelor of Pharmacy and Master of Pharmacy (Clinical) from the University of Sydney. He was admitted as a Fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia in 2025, the same year receiving its N.S.W Lifetime Achievement Award.

David was awarded the O.A.M in 2019 and joined the Association the following year. He brings to the Deputy

Chair position a distinguished record of governance, strategic leadership and community service. He has been a Board member for three years as the Branch Nominated Director for New South Wales, contributing to the Audit & Risk, Strategy, and Investment Committees, and chairing both the Board Nomination and Marketing Committees.

David believes strongly in service to the community. He was recognised as Wollongong Senior Citizen of the Year in 2018, and contributes to community in a number of ways. He serves as Regional Executive Chair and President within Scouts Australia (South Coast and Tablelands Region) and has received the Silver Wattle, Silver Koala and Silver Emu for outstanding service. He is the Public Officer for the Port Kembla Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Illawarra Pharmacists' Association, a professional member and performance assessor with the Pharmacy Council of N.S.W and an N.CAT professional (Pharmacy) member. He is also a Life Member of Basketball Illawarra, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, I.P.A and P.G.A.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL BARRY NUNN A.O, R.F.D, E.D (RETD)

It is not every day you come across someone who can serve with distinction, lead with integrity and still manage to keep a sense of humour intact. But then again Major General Barry Nunn has never really been an 'every day' kind of person.

For nine years as National Chair of the Order of Australia Association, Barry has been a steady hand on the tiller – guiding, shaping, and strengthening the Association with quiet authority. Under his leadership, the Association hasn't just functioned, it has flourished. And somehow, he made it all look effortless... which we now realise was

highly misleading.

Barry brought to the role not only a lifetime of service, but a deep respect for the values the Order represents: Recognition, Community and Contribution. It is fitting that his own service was recognised when he was invested as an Officer of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 1998 – an honour that reflects the standards he has held ever since.

His commitment to the Association has been long-standing and far-



reaching. He served as a member - often with committee responsibilities – in Victoria and Queensland, before becoming Chair of the Western Australia Branch in 2011. In every role, he demonstrated dedication, thoughtfulness and a willingness to lead when it mattered most.

A defining feature of Barry's leadership has been his unwavering commitment to good governance. Through careful and considered reviews of the Board Charter, the By-laws, and numerous policies, he ensured the Association remained strong, contemporary and fit for purpose. This is work that often happens behind the scenes, but it is vital, and Barry did it exceptionally well.

Under his stewardship, the financial performance of the Association has remained consistently positive. That reflects discipline, foresight and a deep sense of responsibility to members and to the future of our Association.

Barry understood that behind every medal is a story and behind every story is a person worth celebrating. He ensured those stories were honoured and that the Association remained a place of pride and connection.

And of course, Barry brought not just leadership, but humour.

Meetings were always more productive – and far more enjoyable – when Barry was in the chair. He knew when to keep things moving, when to listen, and when a well-timed remark could lighten the moment.

Nine years is a long time to give to any role. Barry has given it generously, thoughtfully, and with unwavering commitment.

His legacy is not only in what he has achieved but in the tone he has set: respect, congeniality and genuine care.

Barry, thank you for your leadership, your service, and your good humour.

You leave very large shoes to fill – comfortable, well worn, and highly dependable.

We wish you every happiness in your retirement – filled with new adventures, fewer meetings and absolutely no agendas unless of course you choose them.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2026

The National Secretary advised that 100 members were present and that, there being more than 50 members present or by proxy, there was a Quorum.

The National President Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O opened the meeting and welcomed all members, especially those five attending for the first time.

The National Secretary advised that 39 apologies and 55 valid proxies had been received.

The National Chair MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O R.F.D E.D (Retd) presented the Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2025, highlighting the following:

- The number of The Order of Australia honours and awards was lower than in previous years, influenced in part by the Honours Secretariat nomination-

processing workload. Procedural changes introduced by the Secretariat at year-end are expected to improve processing efficiency in the coming years. Effective engagement by Branches with new awardees ensured that a commendable recipients recruitment rate of 38 percent was achieved.

- Membership declined from 8,080 in January 2025 to 7,958 at year end. Many new members chose one- or three-year membership options and Branches responded well to the challenge of providing welcoming experiences and encouraging membership renewal.
- The 2025 National Conference, hosted by the N.S.W Branch and held in Sydney, was a notable success. Attendance was strong, with 281 conference attendees and 327 at the annual dinner. A challenging keynote address by General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove A.K A.C (Mil) C.V.O M.C (Retd) set the tone for inspiring presentations and visits to iconic Sydney locations. The conference was a great success in terms of content, fellowship and entertainment, and the N.S.W Branch organising committee is congratulated.
- Planning for the 2026 National Conference, to be held in Brisbane, was well advanced at year-end.
- Branches were active throughout the year and continued to operate under budget-based funding rather than the former Branch Administrative Grants model. All Branches held A.G.Ms during the year, with new members joining Branch and Regional Group committees. National Board directors met with Branch Chairs at the National Conference in Sydney, and an additional online meeting between the Executive Committee and Branch Chairs was held in September. These valuable meetings supported policy implementation and necessary procedure changes.
- Branches were involved in the use of social media to inform both members and the community of our activities, with an increasing presence on LinkedIn, X and Facebook.
- The National Board met on nine occasions online during the year and once face-to-face together with Branch Chairs at the National Conference.
- Board committees were active, updating committee charters and reviewing a range of policies including those related to risk management, health and safety, privacy, discrimination and harassment, conflict of Interest, complaints and whistleblowing.
- The Board conducted its annual director skills review and performance assessment in accordance with the Board Charter.

- During the year the National Board welcomed MAJGEN Michael Crane D.S.C & Bar A.M (Retd) as the A.C.T Branch Nominated Director; farewelled Mrs Kathy Wooldridge O.A.M at the completion of her three-year appointment as National Membership Director; and welcomed Ms Dorothy (Dot) Haynes O.A.M as her replacement.
- A major Member Survey was conducted during the year, seeking member views on a wide range of issues. The response far exceeded expectations, both in the number of replies and the worth of the responses to the questions seeking commentary. 1,742 members participated, providing several thousand text comments. By year-end, plans were developed for implementation of survey-related proposals at both National and Branch levels.

The **Annual Financial Report** was presented by the National Treasurer. Highlights of the 2025 year included:

- The Association has a healthy Balance Sheet with net assets of \$1,671,811; working capital of current assets over current liabilities is \$385,588.
- There has been a positive cash flow of \$21,057 which is a bit narrow but an improvement on 2024 which had a negative cash flow of \$53,263.
- The Association made an operating profit of \$29,296, a very fine margin of 3.60% which compares with a profit of \$92,747 and a margin of 9.34% in 2024.
- Trading Income decreased by 18.2%.
- The average income per member was \$102.26 and the average expense per member was \$98.98.
- National investment income decreased by 49%.
- Branch Budget Grants totalled \$45,076, a decrease of 8.98%.
- Members equity (assets less liabilities) increased by 14.74%.
- *The Order* magazine costs were \$61,944, a decrease of 18% reflecting increases in paid advertising.

All business requiring member approval was passed unanimously.

ANNUAL MEMBERS' FORUM, 18 APRIL 2026

The National Chair welcomed 110 members and guests to the Annual Members' Forum and reminded them that this was their meeting and a time to raise any issues of concern or suggestions for improvements.

Before the question-and-answer session, the Chair of the Strategy Committee presented an information session on the 2027-2029 Strategic Plan and the

Association's partnership with the Menzies Leadership Foundation:

Strategic Plan 2027-2029 (draft)

The Committee considered that the structure of the 2024-2026 plan required very little changing but the current four goals (Membership, Growth, Promotion and Community) should be changed to take into consideration the comments from the recent Member Survey (M.S). The new goals are Membership and Growth, Promotion, Community, and Organisational Development. Two other issues from the M.S were improvements in communications with members and Board Succession planning. Mapping our communication processes across the whole of the Association is not an easy task but will be addressed.

All four goals will have suggested strategies (how achieved, priority, enablers/constraints, O.A.A Officer responsible, other person responsible), and how we will recognise that the strategy has been achieved. Reporting on progress will be done at the June and December Board meetings each year.

The proposed timetable is as follows: Draft Plan to June Board meeting for discussion and any changes; Plan open for review by Branches July-August; sign off by the Board at the October Board meeting; and distributed to Branches in November 2026.

Menzies Leadership Programme

The Menzies Leadership Foundation (M.L.F) was established in 1979 with funding from a public appeal, supplemented by government investment, to commemorate the life and achievements of Sir Robert Menzies, Australia's longest serving Prime Minister. The programme is a non-political, not-for-profit organisation that relies on donations and bequests to supplement investment income.

The Association Board has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (M.o.U) with the MLF to develop a series of podcasts on Leadership in Action. Both organisations' values align and the programme has the support of the Governor-General. The National President is leading the first series of podcasts.

Q What is the cost to the Association?

A The Board has allocated \$30,000 to cover travel costs associated with the launch of the programme and the first series of podcasts.

Q Can the Association withdraw from the M.o.U without a cost penalty?.

A Yes.

Q Who selects the content of the podcasts?

A Decided by both organisations through the working party.

Q How will secondary schools be aware of the programme?

A The working party is looking at ways to do this. Maybe via Parent and Citizen Associations.

Q Will the Strategic Plan take into consideration rural and remote areas?

A The Plan aims to address issues at a National Level and Branches are encouraged to adapt the strategies to their local catchment area.

Also:

Q Diversity is still an issue in the nomination process and Branch Committees.

A Maybe Branches should follow the lead of the Queensland Branch. Queensland has a Greek-born Multicultural and Diversity Officer who has regular contact with Brisbane Ethnic Radio and a range of ethnic organisations. The independent review of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General has suggested ways of improving the issues of diversity and multiculturalism and all members also have a role to play.

Q Shelley Reys spoke about the improvements to the nomination process but, having tried the process, it does not work. Questioner entered the information and at the end it dropped out.

A The issue has been discussed with Rob Ayling, Director of Communications and Creativity at the Officer of the Governor-General and work is being done on the I.T platform which will hopefully correct the problem.

Q The Nomination Brochure is available in English. Can it be made available in a range of languages?

A The Governor-General's Office has considered this but deciding on what languages to use is difficult because of the diversity of languages in Australia, and the likely cost is not justified. Maybe the best approach is to open the lines of communication with local multicultural organisations.

Q Given the cost-of-living issues facing members, has consideration been given to reducing membership fees?.

A Membership fees were reduced by 10 percent in 2024 and this did not make any substantial change in new members joining Association. As can be seen from the Treasurer's Report, 49 percent of revenue is from Branch functions and events and the cost is 51 percent. The 2026 Branch Business Plans listed function/activity costs to members and were considered when planning events and suggestions as to how a range of low-key functions might be introduced in 2026.

Q What is the Board working on during 2026/2027?

A Implementing the outcomes of the Member Survey at a National and Branch levels; developing the 2027-2029 Strategic Plan; progressing the Leadership Programme with the Menzies Leadership Foundation; continuing the improved level of communication with Branches and members; ensuring we have a secure and fit-for-purpose Cyber protection process in place and being ahead of the game.

Q Members are concerned at the number of posthumous awards. Branches cannot follow up because the addresses of the deceased are not provided. The other issue is that, because processing is taking so long, some referees have passed.

A The matter will be raised by the President with the Honours Secretariat.

Q What can be done to improve public knowledge about the Australian honours and awards system?

A The Independent Review of the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General has suggested ways of improving awareness. *The Order* magazine periodically has information, but the real push has to come from Branches' encouraging awardees to join the Association and spread the word. The Board will consider how future National Conferences can attract media coverage. Branches could also work with local government to host joint award recipient celebrations and seek media coverage.

Q I am a new member and am interested in locating new and existing recipients in my area.

A Twice a year -- Australia Day and the King's Birthday -- the Governor-General's Office releases the name of every awardee, the type of the award, the person's state and suburb or town, and a brief citation. The Association and Branches are provided with full details of the awardees. Each awardee receives a personal letter from the National Chair and the Branch Chair inviting them to join the Association and their local Branch. Apart from reading media coverage, joining a Branch is the main way to get to know local awardees. There is list of all awardees available through the Governor-General's website but not specific personal information.

Q Has any research been conducted to see why awardees do not join the Association or the Board or Branch Committees?

A Simple answer is Yes. The conversion rate fluctuates between 38 percent and 41 percent with the average since 2018 (the base year for measurement). The Member Survey showed that some awardees consider themselves too old or are still volunteering with the organisation that was part of their award citation.

The National Chair thanked members for their participation in the Forum and their continued support of the Association

Graham Hyde OAM
National Secretary

OAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE: BNE26 – BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

What better way to kick off a friendly and enjoyable conference than a twilight Welcome Reception at Queensland's Government House, Fernberg House, hosted by Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeanette Young A.C P.S.M, Governor of Queensland. The evening was balmy; the gardens were green; and the food and drinks celebrated the best of Queensland produce, including Mooloolaba prawns and Buderim ginger cordial. It was lovely to see members from across Australia mix and mingle, with opportunity for many to interact directly with the Governor.

Twelve months of planning and the Conference Committee, led by Queensland Branch Chair Ronda Nix O.A.M, delivered a diverse and interesting conference. From the conference satchels packed with goodies, including a torch featuring the Order emblem, to the welcome committee active each day under the tireless direction of Marjorie Voss O.A.M, all was in readiness for our visitors.

The Welcome to Country was provided by Shannon Ruska from Tribal Experiences Brisbane. His informal and informative welcome began the conference activities, including his cheeky selfie with the Governor before he left. A video address was provided by the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Hon. Sam Mostyn A.C, who unfortunately was unable to attend in person. Members and guests were welcomed by the Hon. Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, President of the Order of Australia Association, with an address and the official opening of the 38th National Conference by Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeanette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland.

The conference theme *Bridge to the Future* provided inspiration for several conference speakers. The Oration was delivered by MAJGEN Prof. John Pearn A.O R.F.D. Illustrated by his personal photos of bridges around the world, Prof. Pearn used bridges as a metaphor – for adventure, for negotiation, for creativity, and for the enduring domains of love and respect. He shared a story about his father-in-law who was a prisoner of war on the bridge over the River Kwai. He survived, where many did not. After the war ended and prisoners were being repatriated home, he stayed behind. During his captivity, at great personal risk, he had kept a diary. Once freed, he was able to use it to locate the grave sites of soldiers whose remains had not been marked and had been obscured by jungle growth. Although his family was waiting anxiously for his return, he stayed for several months so that bodies could be located and grieving families be given some solace. This story and others were both deeply personal and yet inclusive, with important messages for all listeners.

From bridges as metaphor to bridges as a physical construct: Michael Rayner A.M provided a fascinating insight into the use of bridges to connect key locations across Brisbane city. Attendees learned a little about the complexities of bridge design and construction, and a new term – *tensegrity* – a combination of tension and integrity, the fundamental principle informing the design of the Kurilpa Bridge. The audience learned

about the art of bridge design and its parallel to the beauty of a ballet troupe and obtained insights into the design of the Glasshouse Theatre, recently opened in Brisbane, the beautiful Helix Pedestrian Bridge in Singapore, and the flood resistant design of the new ferry terminals along the Brisbane River.

Several of the speakers took members into the world of medicine. Dr Dimity Dornan A.M provided a fascinating overview of bionics in healthcare, from the invention of the cochlear implant (bionic ear) through to current and anticipated developments in this field. Prof. Zarnie Lwin O.A.M discussed current trends and initiatives in cancer care collaborations in Queensland and the Asia Pacific. Dr Rolf Gomes, Queenslander of the Year 2026, outlined the development of 'Heart of Australia' – using specially designed trucks to take sophisticated investigative and treatment equipment to those living in rural and remote Queensland, together with access to a range of medical specialists not usually available. This fantastic initiative is now being expanded into other parts of Australia.

For those who had questions about the processes behind the Order of Australia awards, Shelley Reyes A.O provided a detailed outline and announced a key commitment to reduce the time between submission of a recommendation and announced outcome, which was warmly received. Dr Andrew Liveris A.O spoke of leadership and learnings from his international business career, which has led him to his current role as President of the Board for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Organising Committee.

Insights into the varied areas of Technology for Ageing and Disability Queensland by Maureen O'Brien-Stone, and the power of Social Cohesion by Elijah Buol O.A.M rounded out the presentations, before a panel discussion involving each of the afternoon presenters.

On Saturday afternoon, delegates had a choice of visiting the grotesques and other sculptures at the Great Court, University of Queensland, or an organ recital and evensong at Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Each of these events was greatly appreciated by the participants.

Saturday at the National Conference means the Annual Dinner and, importantly, a chance to meet the young men and women who have been awarded Order of Australia Foundation Scholarships. A full introduction to the awards presentation and the awardees follows later in this magazine.

The evening is a chance for attendees and guests to dress in their finery and enjoy the camaraderie that being an O.AA member promises. It's a time for laughter, friendship and selfies, a moment to step back from serious business to enjoy the social side of the conference and the promise of a positive future that the young awardees demonstrate. It is a moment to look forward with hope.

Sunday, on the other hand, is a time for solemn reflection. The morning wreath-laying ceremony at Anzac Square was a timely reminder of those who have served and still

serve in various conflicts, and a precursor to Anzac Day. MAJGEN Prof. John Pearn A.O R.F.D provided insight into the Women's Memorial in Anzac Square, and the address by Lorraine Hatton O.A.M added to the solemn occasion. The flag party was provided by Churchie A.D.F cadets, and the Naval band provided a wonderful accompaniment.

THE NEXT SECTION OF THE MAGAZINE COMPRISES REPORTS FROM THE BRANCHES. PHOTOS OF FEATURED MEMBERS ARE INCLUDED.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

CHAIR'S REPORT

Rex Wild A.O K.C

Branch Chair

The Annual General Meeting of the Northern Territory Branch was held in March 2026. It marked a changing of the guard to some extent. Alan James O.A.M, after several years' service to the Branch, resigned as Chair and I am happy to take on the role. Several other members, who had ensured the safe passage of the Branch through the difficult Covid years and thereafter, stayed on to ensure continuity and maintenance of the corporate knowledge within the Branch. With the addition of four members new to the committee, it is hoped that the Branch will continue to flourish.

Five out of the (now) 10 members of the committee attended last month's National Conference in Brisbane, and were impressed with what they saw, particularly given that Queensland had taken on the Conference at short notice. We were proud to have Andrew Liveris O.A at the Conference who, when speaking of the Brisbane Olympics of 2032, acknowledged his Territory origins. We will look forward to his report when the Conference comes to Darwin in 2029, only three years out!

We are similarly proud of the outgoing National President, Vicki O'Halloran A.O C.V.O, another outstanding Territorian. Vicki has made a grand contribution to the affairs of the Association.

In the meantime, the new Branch committee is resolved to expand the Branch's membership and will endeavour to provide a strong camaraderie for it. It is hoped that a positive set of social activities in Darwin and Alice Springs will foster this. The Branch *Action Plan* concentrates on hosting both formal and informal gatherings.

Additionally, the committee will encourage and promote increased nominations of Territorians of all ages, genders and cultures for recognition in the Order.

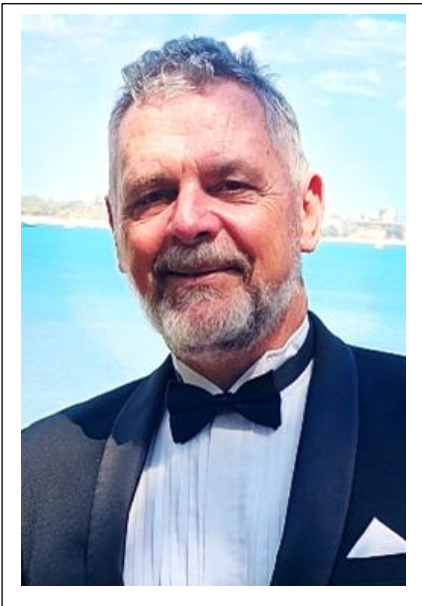
EVENTS

At the National Conference in Brisbane

Five members of the NT committee attended the National Conference in Brisbane and greatly enjoyed fellowship with distinguished Association members from all over the country. We found the presentations by all the speakers stimulating and uplifting, and wish to congratulate the Brisbane organising committee on a truly excellent Conference.

FEATURED MEMBER

Dr Derek Pugh O.A.M: Educator and storyteller



Dr Derek Pugh O.A.M is a distinguished educator and acclaimed author, renowned for his captivating storytelling across multiple genres, including history, science, adventure travel and young adult fiction. His literary career spans a diverse range of subjects, reflecting his insatiable curiosity and deep connection to the Northern Territory's rich tapestry of history and culture.

One of Dr. Pugh's most notable contributions to historical literature is his comprehensive 10-book series chronicling early European settlement of the Top End. He brings to life the challenges, triumphs and complexities of this pivotal period in Northern Territory history with vivid narrative. Additionally, his works such as *Tambora* delve into scientific phenomena, while novels like *Tammy Damulkurra* and *Schoolies* captivate readers with their engaging storytelling and relatable characters.

Dr Pugh's dedication to education has taken him on a remarkable journey, from large urban senior schools to remote homeland centre schools in Central Arnhem Land, as well as international schools around the globe. Living in Darwin, Dr Pugh continues to be a prolific writer, delving into Northern Territory settlement history with unwavering passion and expertise.

His book *Twenty to the Mile*, on the history of the Overland Telegraph Line, was turned into a documentary film with Dr Pugh as its presenter in 2023.

In recognition of his exceptional contributions to education and literature, Derek was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2020. Additionally, he was honoured with a Doctorate of Letters (D. Lit. honoris causa) from Charles Darwin University in 2024. In 2025, he became president of the Rotary Club of Darwin and the Historical Society of the Northern Territory.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

CHAIR'S REPORT

Noel Hender O.A.M B.E.M

Branch Chair

As I step into the role of Chair, I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Tony Metcalf O.A.M and the steadfast support of his wife, Cheryl. Over the past nine years, Tony has served this Branch with distinction – first as Treasurer and committee member and for the last six years as Chair. In accordance with the Constitution, Tony has now concluded his term on the Branch Committee, yet in true spirit of service he has immediately taken up the role of Coordinator and Chair of the 2027 National Conference Committee. We are deeply grateful for his continued commitment.

The recent national Member Survey revealed a strong desire to explore and promote the meaning of good citizenship. It was timely then, to see a headline in *The Advertiser* on 6 April 2026: *Teach Kids Their Civics Duty*. The accompanying article outlined the new S.A Education Minister's intention to reinvigorate civics education in schools. This aligns closely with the purpose of our Student Citizenship Awards, which recognise young South Australians who demonstrate active citizenship through service to their schools and communities.

The S.A Branch has worked steadily to expand this programme across secondary schools, and we are delighted that the State Government, along with the Independent and Catholic school sectors, have each committed ongoing financial support for at least the next three years. Their partnership ensures the sustainability and continued growth of this important initiative.

To further highlight the calibre of the young people recognised through the Awards, we are planning a Youth Panel as part of the 2027 National Conference in Adelaide. Three or four recent Student Citizens of the Year will share their experiences and reflections on civic contribution. This session sits comfortably within the conference theme, *Recognising Achievement: Inspiring Tomorrow*. Please mark your diaries for 13-16 May 2027 – we look forward to welcoming you to Adelaide.

In recent months, the Branch Committee has been active across a range of engagements. We have attended the Australia Day Honours Investitures at

Government House, celebrating the achievements of new recipients. We also hosted an evening reception to welcome new and aspiring members to the Association. In June, we are honoured that The Honourable Greg Crafter A.O, former Minister for Education and Minister for Local Government, will address our King's Birthday Luncheon, where new recipients and six of our centenarian members will be our guests of honour.

Our busy 2026 is gathering momentum as we look ahead to the National Conference in Adelaide 2027, and I thank all members for their continued support of the S.A Branch and its work.

EVENTS

COMMEMORATING AUSTRALIA DAY

The first Branch event of the year was a 'Celebration of Australia Day' Luncheon, held at Jarmer's Kitchen in Bowden. The guest speaker was Professor Peter Høj A.C, formerly Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Adelaide.

Professor Høj has worked in Denmark and Australia as a researcher and has published numerous scientific articles. He was a professor of viticulture at the University of Adelaide and later managing director of the Australian Wine Research Institute.

He was made a Companion of the Order of Australia, *For eminent service to higher education and to science, particularly to the commercialisation of research, and to policy development and reform* (A.D19). He received the Centenary Medal in 2001, *For service to Australian society through wine research and science*.

2025 BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We held our 2025 Annual General Meeting (40th A.G.M) in the Victoria Room of the Edinburgh Hotel. We particularly appreciate the attendance of those who made the long journey in from regional areas.

At this AGM, Branch Chair Tony Metcalf O.A.M retired from his elected role in accordance with the Constitution, having completed six years as Branch Chair and with immediate past service as Branch Treasurer. The Branch Committee extends on behalf of all members its gratitude to Tony for his dedication to the Branch in these roles.

For the election of office-bearers, Branch Chair Tony Metcalf O.A.M referred to the report submitted by the Returning Officer, Gary Byron A.M.

The statutory position of Chair fell vacant at this A.G.M: just one valid nomination was received by the designated closing date, and Noel Hender O.A.M B.E.M was declared as elected to the position of Chair.

The statutory position of Secretary also fell vacant at this A.G.M: just one valid nomination was received, and John Phillips O.A.M was declared re-elected.

The Returning Officer advised that five vacancies existed on the Branch Committee. Valid nominations were received by the designated closing date from two current serving committee members on the expiration of their current three-year term. The Branch Committee had determined these candidates to be suitable for appointment and, accordingly, Pamela Rajkowski O.A.M and Paul Rosenzweig O.A.M J.P were announced as re-elected for a further term of three years.

An additional two valid nominations were received and were announced as elected to the Branch Committee, each for a term of three years. Dr Neville Highett A.M, who was made a Member of the Order in 2023, *For significant service to education in South Australia, and to the community* (K.B23), agreed to assume the role of Convenor of the Student Citizenship Awards.

Phillip Styles O.A.M was awarded the O.A.M, *For service to tourism in South Australia, and to the community* (K.B24) and has agreed to play an active role with the 2027 National Conference Subcommittee.

A feature of the event was an interesting display of stamps and coins released to mark the 50th anniversary of the Australian Honours System in 2025. This included six-coin coloured year sets (uncirculated and proof) released by the Royal Australian Mint on 1 May 2025. Unique among the coins was a coloured 50 cent coin based on Stuart Devlin's iconic Order of Australia medal, featuring three ribbons representing the three categories of the original awards of the Australian honours system – the Order of Australia, the Australian Bravery Decorations, and the National Medal.

After morning tea, guests heard from the 2025 South Australian Student Citizen of the Year Callum McIntyre, who completed Year 12 at Mount Gambier High School last year. Selected among the Top Ten of the 2025 Student Citizenship Awards, in an award ceremony at Government House late last year Callum was announced as the 2025 South Australian Student Citizen of the Year. Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson A.C, Governor of South Australia and S.A Branch Patron, presented Callum 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.

Callum's citation reads as follows: *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 southeast 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 S.A Branch was pleased to host Callum and his mother for lunch, and to make a contribution towards their travel costs to come to Adelaide.

FIRST FELLOWSHIP LUNCH OF 2026

We held our first Fellowship Lunch for the year at the Naval, Military and Air Force Club in Adelaide on Thursday 26 February 2026. The guest speaker was Dawn Thorp A.O on the topic 'It's in the blood -- the stem cell story'. Dawn was appointed an Officer of the Order, *For distinguished service to nursing, and to medicine, in the field of haematology, as an expert clinician and mentor*" (A.D19).

FEATURED MEMBER

JUDITH LEESON A.M – A UNIQUE AWARD

S.A Branch member Judith Leeson A.M has been recognised by Flinders University as a Companion of the University for her work as an advocate for the quality care of our older citizens. At a recent graduation ceremony, Flinders University recognised Judith's outstanding contributions as an advocate for transforming aged care, for her service to the university and to the community with the honorary award of Companion of the University.



Judith was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, *For service to the community, particularly through support for people seeking opportunity for life-long learning and career development* (A.D05). She has continued to serve the community in many ways, not least of which has been a term as a member of the Order of Australia Association S.A Branch Committee, and her ongoing service as a member of the Selection and Assessment Panel for our Student Citizenship Awards programme.

Flinders University honorary awards are seldom awarded and are presented to distinguished members of the community whose extraordinary leadership has changed lives.

Flinders University Chancellor John Hood F.A.I.C.D said recipients of honorary awards come from all walks of life and have made their mark through extraordinary community impact: *“Our distinguished recipients have been chosen for their steadfast commitment to serving the community and for exemplifying the values of courage, innovation, integrity and excellence that define our institution. We are delighted to acknowledge their remarkable contributions, which span many decades and continue to have an enduring impact”*.

Judith Leeson A.M has contributed to Flinders University for many years, building on an impressive 70-year career in early childhood education, disability services and career development and transition services for disadvantaged groups.

As a Caring Futures Institute Ambassador at Flinders, she has provided vital consumer-focused advice on ageing, aged care and palliative care, shaping programmes to meet community needs and consistently bringing a consumer-focused perspective to all her engagements. Judith has also played a key role in Aged Care Research and Industry Innovation Australia, a \$34 million initiative transforming aged care nationwide, serving as a board member, committee contributor, and grant reviewer.

Judith’s articulate and passionate orations and comments are grounded in the real needs of older people, always bringing audiences back to the core of why these issues matter. With her lived experience, and academic and career industry background, she has provided a critical eye to the review of grant applications.

“As Australia’s population continues to age and the focus on enhancing quality of life grows,” Chancellor Hood said, *Judith Leeson A.M has been recognised for generously contributing her time and expertise to strengthening the aged care workforce and improving the lives of older Australians and their families. Her lifelong commitment exemplifies Flinders University’s values.*

Judith received her award at the Flinders College of Nursing and Health Sciences graduation ceremony, where she gave the address to the graduating students.

Upcoming SA Branch activities:

Thursday 25 June: Honours recipients fellowship luncheon

Thursday 27 August: Honours recipients fellowship luncheon

VICTORIA

CHAIR'S REPORT

Fred Harrington O.A.M
Branch Chair

It was pleasing to see so many members and guests at the recent Paul Wheelton A.M Inspiring Australians Oration. Those in attendance were able to hear Kathryn Fagg A.O deliver the Oration, and then Foundation Scholarship recipient Chelsea Allen provide an overview of her life's journey and achievements after receiving her scholarship.

The Victorian Branch Annual General Meeting followed the Oration. I again take the opportunity to welcome three new members to the committee: Dr Peter Rogers A.M as Events Coordinator, Geoffrey Grinton O.A.M as Membership Secretary, and Selvarajah Muraledaran O.A.M as a committee member. This year, the committee will focus on three areas: Membership Growth, Membership Retention and Membership Participation.

Our 12 Regional Groups throughout Victoria have all held their Annual General Meetings. I thank all outgoing committee members for their contribution to their groups and Vic Branch and welcome the many fresh faces on these committees.

Planning is well underway for the next Victoria Branch event: our mid-year lunch on Tuesday 28 July at the Stamford Plaza Melbourne. Our guest speaker will be Ms Kirsty Sword Gusmao A.O, whose citation reads: Her citation: *For distinguished service to Australia-East Timor relations through the development of mutual co-operation and understanding*. There will also be a presentation from a recipient of the Order of Australia Foundation scholarship. Details are below.

In conclusion I thank those Regional Groups and individual members who attended or participated in ceremonies on Anzac Day to commemorate and acknowledge our service men and women on this special day.

FORTHCOMING VIC BRANCH EVENTS

Tuesday 28 July 11:30 am for a 12:30pm start. VIC Branch Mid-Year Luncheon at Stamford Plaza Melbourne, 111 Little Collins Street, Melbourne. Speaker: Kirsty Sword Gusmão AO. Scholarship Recipient – to be confirmed. Cost \$80 per person GST included for a 2-course lunch. Cash bar. Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/DLUUP>

EVENTS

PAUL WHEELTON AM INSPIRING AUSTRALIANS ORATION

Katherine Fagg A.C delivered the 2026 Paul Wheelton AM Inspiring Australians Oration, 'Strengthening Our Democracy' at the Angliss Conference Centre on Friday 20 March 2026. Kathryn was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in June 2019 and elevated to Companion of the Order of Australia in June 2025 *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.*

The Oration was presented to a strong audience of O.A.A VIC Branch members, invited guests and secondary students from Strathcona Grammar School and St Catherine's School. The event combined ceremony, discussion and community spirit and was enjoyed by all. A string quartet from St Catherine's School welcomed attendees, the Viva Voci Choir led the National Anthem and later concluded proceedings, and the programme was guided by Master of Ceremonies Beverley Pinder O.A.M. In a wide-ranging address, Katherine Fagg framed democracy as more than a system of elections, describing it as a shared civic project that depends on the everyday choices of individuals, organisations and institutions. She emphasised integrity, trust and accountability as essential democratic foundations, and highlighted the importance of strong public institutions that can withstand scrutiny, adapt to change and maintain a long-term focus. Drawing on her experience across public and financial settings, including service with the Reserve Bank, she spoke to the value of sound governance, evidence-based decision making and the character required to lead responsibly. To illustrate what Australia can achieve when institutions, researchers and industry work together, she referenced well-known Australian innovations by the C.S.I.R.O such as WiFi, Aerogard and the polymer banknote, pointing to persistence and partnership as drivers of national progress.

Katherine also acknowledged how national leadership and community service can reinforce democratic confidence, particularly in times when public debate is polarised or when communities are tested by tragedy and disruption. She made special reference to the heroism of those involved in the Bondi shootings, who "showed extraordinary courage in confronting the shooters; those who protected, sheltered and cared for others; and everyone who looked to help in whatever way they could". The Oration was also personal. As a cancer survivor, Katherine reflected on resilience and purpose from the perspective of this experience. She also explained how her upbringing shaped a sustained commitment to fairness and equal opportunity. She highlighted ongoing gender inequity, noting that women continue to earn around 78 percent of what men earn, and argued that strengthening democracy requires tackling exclusion wherever it persists.

Katherine's concluding message was a call to action: to participate, to hold institutions to high standards, and to build a more inclusive, contemporary democracy.

HOW A FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP BECAME A TURNING POINT

Chelsea Allen is a 2023 Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarship recipient. She reflected on receiving the prestigious scholarship, thanking donor Paul Wheelton A.M.

Chelsea described the award as a turning point in her life. Although she applied with hesitation and self-doubt, the news arrived during a difficult period marked by chronic injury, pain and uncertainty in her life, helping restore hope and direction. Beyond financial support, the scholarship's mentoring, provided by Professor Linda Kristjanson A.O, former Vice Chancellor of Swinburne University, strengthened her confidence and clarity regarding her studies and path.

Chelsea used the funding for an overseas exchange trip, including study in Sweden and travel through Europe and Thailand. Chelsea said these experiences built her resilience, cultural understanding and independence while creating lasting global connections.

In describing the journey and the scholarship as a whole, Chelsea remarked that it, "taught me resilience in a way no classroom ever could". Those lessons later helped her endure major spinal surgery and navigate a challenging recovery.

On returning home, Chelsea continued her education, gained professional experience and began a full-time role. She expressed deep gratitude to the Foundation, emphasising that the award changed her outlook and life trajectory well beyond the financial assistance.

FEATURED MEMBER

2026 RECIPIENT DR JUDY TANG O.A.M

Dr Judy Tang O.A.M was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division of the 2026 Australia Day Honours list, in recognition of her service to mental health, cultural diversity, equality and ageing.

With more than 15 years of clinical and academic experience, Dr Tang has established herself as a highly respected clinical neuropsychologist. She holds a doctorate in Clinical Neuropsychology from Monash University (2008) and a Bachelor of Science



with Honours. Her professional career has centred on providing neuropsychological services in medico-legal and community settings, with a particular focus on supporting people with complex and often marginalised needs.

Alongside her clinical work, Judy has been deeply engaged in advocacy and community leadership. Her roles have included Commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Board Director at the Victorian Pride Centre and Board Director of the Australian Institute for Diversity in Mental Health. These roles reflect her longstanding commitment to advancing equity, inclusion and wellbeing across Australia's diverse communities.

Judy's advocacy is grounded in her expert understanding of mental health, ageing and community care, and in her lived awareness of how systemic barriers affect people's access to services. She has consistently championed the rights of multicultural and L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ communities, challenging discrimination and prejudice to ensure fairer and more equitable health outcomes. Her work has also extended to policy advocacy, where she has sought to influence broader systems of care to better reflect the realities of people's lives.

Her motivation to enter the field grew from a deep curiosity about the brain. "I saw that everyone used their brain differently," she explains. "I wanted to understand how and why." Fascinated by the workings of the brain, Judy recognised that studying neuropsychology could unlock important insights into the relationship between brain function and behaviour. Neuropsychology focuses on assessing the biological causes of brain function and its interaction with behaviour, and it remains a relatively narrow field in Australia, with only around 1,000 practitioners nationwide.

Early in her career, Judy became acutely aware of the lack of diversity embedded within traditional neuropsychological frameworks. "Psychology was a far less diverse field when I started," she notes.

While specialising in rehabilitation for older adults, she worked part-time as a support worker, where clients with dementia, motor neurone disease and other conditions shared deeply personal stories. "For me, it was important to support clients in having their voices heard. Each person had led such a rich life, but the slow creep of loneliness and isolation was heartbreaking to watch." This exposure sharpened her interest in the

impact of isolation on brain health and wellbeing.

During her university studies, Judy recognised that neuropsychology often took a narrow, highly westernised approach. “We were taught a very specific idea of what makes a ‘good’ brain,” she explains, “with little acknowledgement of cultural, linguistic and life experiences that could significantly influence assessment outcomes”. ‘Cultural diversity’, at the time, was addressed in only a single lecture.

A pivotal moment in Judy’s career emerged when she was asked to assess a 15-year-old refugee who had just settled in Australia. The young person was believed to have a learning disability, as he was frequently caught daydreaming, watching planes overhead, and would often take an extended time to prepare for school each morning. During the assessment process, Judy discovered that, contrary to initial impressions, the student was highly intelligent and had remarkably taught himself English in only six months. What he lacked was exposure to the everyday routines that Australian students take for granted: simple tasks like packing a school bag and preparing a lunch box were entirely unfamiliar to him, having grown up in a rural environment in a very different country before his displacement. This experience highlighted for Judy the critical importance of recognising cultural background, trauma and life experiences in neuropsychology. She realised that, if they do not take these factors into account, practitioners risk misdiagnosing individuals.

Beyond her clinical work, Judy identified significant gaps in support for multicultural and L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ communities and has consistently stepped forward to help address them. Whether working with parents of young L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ people, supporting people navigating faith and identity, or addressing loneliness and isolation, her work is underpinned by the belief that everyone deserves a sense of belonging and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the community. Healthy connection – healthy brain.

Judy has described feeling shocked and humbled on learning of her O.A.M. She admits to still grappling with imposter syndrome but is deeply grateful for the recognition of her extensive voluntary and advocacy work. “It has encouraged me to keep going,” she reflects, using the honour as further motivation to propel her advocacy and continue pushing for systemic change.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

CHAIR’S REPORT

Andrew Phelan A.M

Branch Chair

Following our A.G.M, the A.C.T Branch Committee remained largely unchanged, with the notable exception of the retirement of Branch Secretary Robert Altamore O.A.M, whom we thank for his many years of tireless and dedicated service to the Branch. I

thank all committee members for their dedicated volunteer efforts in making possible the range of activities and initiatives that enrich our Branch community.

The Branch has launched our 2026 Student Citizenship Awards programme. The purpose of the Association is *to celebrate and promote outstanding Australian citizenship*, with one of our most important goals being to encourage young Australians in service to the nation. Our annual Student Citizenship Awards directly advance this mission by recognising the wonderful contributions school students make through community service, acts of kindness, and outstanding citizenship within the A.C.T community. These awards are among the most important and rewarding activities our Branch undertakes, allowing us to acknowledge and inspire the next generation of community-minded Australians, and to demonstrate the ongoing relevance and value of the principles that underpin the Order of Australia.

On 29 April 2026, the A.C.T Branch held its Autumn Reception for new recipients at the Royal Canberra Golf Club, celebrating the outstanding citizenship of those honoured in the Australia Day list. I was privileged to acknowledge 11 new recipients' remarkable contributions to community and nation, spanning children's literature, scientific communication, community health, the arts, environmental conservation, public administration, intelligence, baseball and military service. We were delighted that our Branch Patron Dr Sue Packer A.O attended, and grateful for the support of the A.C.T Government in hosting the event. Among those present was Colonel Michael Miller, Official Secretary to the Governor of New South Wales and member of the Council of the Order, whose attendance and generous words about the evening were warmly appreciated by the Branch. We are pleased to welcome those new recipients who have taken up membership of the Association following the reception.

Monica and I thoroughly enjoyed attending the National Conference in Brisbane in April. Congratulations to Queensland Chair and Convenor Mrs Ronda Nix O.A.M and her team for their outstanding organisational efforts. On behalf of the Branch, I thank Barry Nunn A.O R.F.D E.D (Retd) for his many years of untiring service to the Association, including as National Chair, and congratulate William Lye O.A.M K.C on his election as National Chair.

We look forward to our next Branch event — the 2026 King's Birthday Lunch, to be held at the Royal Canberra Golf Club on Tuesday 9 June 2026.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

9 June 26: King's Birthday Lunch. Check website for details.

EVENTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and GUEST SPEAKER

Our Annual General Meeting was held at the Royal Canberra Golf Club on Wednesday 11 February with a good attendance of members and guests. Continuing committee members were re-elected along with Branch Nominated Director Michael Crane D.S.C & Bar A.M. Long-serving Secretary Robert Altamore O.A.M retired from the committee and was thanked for his service to the Branch.

Following the A.G.M, Branch Nominated Director Michael Crane D.S.C & Bar A.M as guest speaker discussed issues raised in the recent O.A.A national survey of members, and actions the O.A.A Board is taking to address these.

Mike explained that the survey had originated from a desire by Branch Chairs to understand the issues that are important to members. More than 1,730 members responded to the survey, including 102 from the A.C.T with this total representing about 21 percent of the national membership. This response rate was statistically significant, and several other metrics tended to support the view that the response was generally representative of member demographics by age, gender, length of membership and membership type.

Mike went on to explain the process the Board had used for analysis of the survey results, including how Artificial Intelligence (A.I) had been employed. Four key themes were identified, which largely overlapped with the objectives in the Association's Strategic Plan. More than 60 potential actions were identified, of which the Board chose five top priorities for initial focus. These actions will be progressed through Board committees.

APRIL RECEPTION FOR NEW AWARDEES

Seventy-five Branch members and guests gathered at the Royal Canberra Golf Club on 29 April to welcome 11 new recipients of honours in the Australia Day awards. This event followed their investiture at Government House earlier in April. We have 10 new members from the Australia Day awards. The Branch welcomes the contribution made by the ACT Government towards facilitating the welcome event.

FEATURED MEMBERS

AN AWARDED COUPLE: BILL and LOIS MAIDEN

Dr Bill Maiden P.S.M O.A.M

Dr Bill Maiden retired in 2012 after a teaching career of 43 years in N.S.W and the A.C.T. He possesses an undergraduate degree, two Masters degrees and a Ph.D, has contributed greatly to the education system in Canberra, was the foundation principal

at two schools and was critical in the opening of other new schools.

For many years, Dr Maiden served as a community member and was Deputy Chairperson of the now restructured A.C.T Non-Government Schools Education Council and was Chair of the A.C.T Teacher Quality Institute Board. In recognition of his distinguished career and outstanding service to education and professional organisations, he was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2005 *for outstanding public service within the ACT government school system* and a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2017 *for service to education in the Australian Capital Territory*.



Dr Maiden has taught Masters' programmes at the University of Canberra and on three occasions was invited by the University of Canberra to teach in its Master of Educational Leadership summer school program in Hangzhou and Harbin, China. He received the U.C Alumni Excellence Award for Education, Science, Technology and Maths in 2017.

Bill served on the A.C.T Branch Committee for several years and led our Student Citizenship Awards programme during that time.

He reflected that, "to have been involved in education as a career, and to have had the pleasure of working with so many fine educators across many levels and sectors, has been highly rewarding and satisfying. I could never have imagined, when I started out as a teacher, that the professional and academic experiences throughout my working life would have given me such stimulation and enjoyment as well as an abiding interest in education and lifelong learning."

Lois Maiden O.A.M

The teaching career of Lois Maiden began in 1969 in primary schools in N.S.W. Since moving to the A.C.T in 1977, her teaching experience has covered early childhood years through to senior primary classes and included a teaching posting for three years at Christmas Island. Following retirement, Lois has taught music on a voluntary basis twice each week at Totom House Early Childhood Centre Kaleen since 2014, where she teaches a variety of activities including musical games, instruments, songs and notation to separate groups of children -- babies, toddlers and pre-school children -- from 4 months to 5 years of age.

Lois received a Children's Week 'Community for Children Award' in 2018 and was a finalist for the ANZUK (Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom Early Childhood

Education) Volunteer of the Year Awards in 2022.

On Australia Day 2024, Lois was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia *For service to primary and early childhood education*. Her award was noted as a rare recognition for workers in the childcare sector within the 2024 honours list.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Address (edited) by Shelley Reys A.O, Chair, Council for the Order of Australia

It's wonderful to be here in Brisbane for the Association's National Conference. Quite frankly, it was an invitation that I couldn't refuse – this room is full of talented, committed, creative, generous people working across a huge range of skills, passions and vocations, contributing so much to our collective life in Australia.

You are a reminder that people in the Order of Australia don't stop when they're recognised. More often than not, recognition is, in fact, a spur for further service and contribution to community.

And so it's my privilege to be here and, equally, a privilege to lead the Council for the Order of Australia, the body that considers nominations and makes recommendations to the Governor-General as to who gets to join you as members of the Order. These are people who go 'above and beyond' and show us, as Australians, what courage, tenacity and commitment look like.

In the knowledge that many of you are nominators yourselves, what I'd like to do is give you some insight into how the Council approaches its work, and what we can be focusing on, together.

Finally, as good friends of the Order, I'd like to give you some 'back-room' insights into what we're challenged by and what we're doing to address them.

The first matter is that of gender imbalance that persists in our Honours lists, as I know it's front of mind for many of us, and something that's been a subject of discussion in the media.

The second is the backlog of nominations that the Honours Secretariat is currently dealing with that has extended the time from nomination to outcome.

The third and final is some information about the Council, some clarity on how we deliberate, and what we consider when we look to award some of our finest Australians.

Addressing the gender imbalance

Firstly, then: gender. This is an issue that has received a lot of attention.

As you're all well aware, the major factor in who is recognised in the Order is nominations. Without outstanding people being nominated, they can't be recognised. So, when we consider gender balance, it is important to look at the nominations

themselves. Let me give you a high-level summary of what we know with these four facts:

1. Far more men than women are being nominated.
2. Men nominate more often than women.
3. And men tend to nominate other men.
4. Of the women that nominate, they tend to nominate men (although in recent years that has changed).

In my view, this is shocking. And it's one of our greatest challenges because it's not merely a matter of refining our internal priorities and processes. It will require a cultural shift about how the nation views women and their value. I'm talking about a cultural shift across industries and institutions, across social networks and community organisations, about how we, as Australians, view and value women.

Let's get 'under the hood' and look into the detail.

We all know that there are just as many deserving women as there are men in our community.

Women who are doing extraordinary things – in medicine and science and engineering; law and literature and policymaking; in care and advocacy and justice; in sports and the arts; in education; in their neighbourhoods, networks and communities; and in the corporate sector. Everywhere, there are great women going 'above and beyond'.

And so the problem has never been that women aren't doing enough. The problem is that women aren't being seen in the same manner that we see men, and therefore, nominated in the same numbers as men.

And that is something Australians need to change. And it's something that you can contribute to by nominating deserving women - and using your sphere of influence - by encouraging others to nominate deserving women, too.

We need to work towards a future where every Honours list truly reflects the diversity of our community. Acknowledging high achievement sends our thanks to those who have made a valuable contribution. And it gives all Australians a sense of what's possible; what courage, skill and dedication look like across our whole community; the many ways Australians go above and beyond on the world stage or in our local neighbourhoods.

Reducing the time from nomination to outcome

I'm aware that many of you are keen nominators. On the back of my address today, I hope you'll be motivated to nominate deserving women, as well as men. However, should you nominate someone this evening, I won't see that nomination for three to five years.

In many ways this is good news; such is the popularity of Australia's eminent award and I'm thrilled by this. In other ways, it presents our second challenge, and that is, how we can turn nominations around in a timelier manner. Put simply, our work needs

to match the public's enthusiasm.

From my perspective, the ideal period for a nomination process to play out is 12 to 18 months.

As it stands currently, a nomination you make tonight, under the same process, might not conclude until 2029 or even later. That's because the system has a backlog of more than 8,000 nominations. And the number of nominations has surpassed the capacity of the Secretariat to research them and the Council to consider them.

And so, today, I am pleased to announce that we've been successful in gaining financial support from the commonwealth government and I'd like to thank Minister Gorman, an active and enthusiastic Council member representing the Prime Minister, for supporting this growing number of nominations.

In addition, we have adjusted the Secretariat's procedures and, at the same time, we've adjusted the way in which Council operates, including the establishment of a sub-committee to triage our assessments.

All of these new actions balance efficiency with rigour.

They will drastically increase the throughput of nominations to Council. And importantly, they will ensure that the current careful research of each nomination continues because, as we all know, the integrity of the Order is paramount and must be maintained.

The additional investment and changes to the administration of the Order will mean clearing the backlog, reducing the amount of time from nomination to outcome, and ensuring that we recognise and celebrate people that have gone above and beyond. We have a plan, we now have the resources, and I am confident that, by 30 June 2027, Council will have been able to consider all of the existing backlog of 8,000 nominations that are currently in the system.

So while I can't stand here and say that the person you nominate tonight will be included in the 2027 King's Birthday honours list, I can say that, in a year's time, we will assume the ideal timeframe of 12 to 18 months.

The operations of the Council

Finally, I want to give you a flavour of what it's like for the Council when we sit down together to consider nominations.

For those that aren't aware, the Council comprises eight community representatives, a representative from each state and territory, as well as representatives from the Chief of the Defence Force, the Prime Minister, and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, who serve as *ex-officio* members of Council.

Each person brings diverse perspectives and experiences and their unique and important lens over every nomination. And each works incredibly hard and takes their role very seriously. They devote months to prepare for each of our two meetings across the year, representing large slices of personal time across the Christmas and New Year period when most people are enjoying family time.

Why do we do that? Because we recognise that we're custodians of a system with a 50-year history.

We're conscious of the weight of our responsibility; we're respectful of the past, mindful of the present and conscious that our work also goes to the future of the Order. And we're conscious that, as we go about our work, we represent all of you, as people recognised in the Order, maintaining how your contribution is valued.

Our discussions are frank and respectful, and I'm sure you'll appreciate that confidentiality is critical.

Sometimes there is consensus but often there are differing views and robust debate. Our challenge is to be as objective and consistent as possible in what is, by design, a merit-based system, albeit one where we, the Council, are required to make decisions based on the information we have at hand.

To help that decision making process there are several steps:

1. First, a nomination goes through a rigorous, independent research process, which involves clarifying someone's contribution, reference checking, seeking further references if required, and so on. This is a critical part of the Secretarial process.
2. Then the nomination is provided to Council for consideration where we make an assessment, and where each Council member applies - what I referred to earlier - as their unique lens over the information. This demonstrates how important it is for Council members to represent different parts of our society and the Order itself.
3. At that point, Council may request further information or investigation or make a decision.
4. When the list is complete, we then make our recommendations to the Governor-General and seek her approval of the list.
5. The award would then be announced in the next list, be that the Australia Day or King's Birthday Honours list.

Of particular note is The Order's constitution, which provides the basic structure for our decision-making and the recommendations we make to the Governor-General:

- Companions are individuals who, and I quote, are recognised 'for eminent achievement and merit of the highest degree in service to Australia or to humanity at large'.
- Officers are honoured for 'distinguished service of a high degree to Australia or to humanity at large'.
- Members are recognised for 'service in a particular locality or field of activity or to a particular group'.
- The OAM encompasses 'service worthy of particular recognition'.

But nothing is black and white; there is always room for the Council to exercise judgement within these categories.

Another example of exercising judgement might be a term I've used many times this morning, and this is above and beyond'. What does this mean, exactly?

First, meritorious work is not necessarily voluntary work. One might be paid - and paid very well - in their day job – and that doesn't exclude them from consideration. If we were to exclude people from being recognised for doing their job, we would automatically exclude, for example, a brilliant medical researcher whose work has saved lives or a nurse who has been paid but who in her role has also transformed health care in a remote community

We avoid awarding people for doing a good job. Someone may be a terrific school principal who's well respected and highly competent, for example, but that doesn't mean they've gone above and beyond. But if that school principal invented a literacy programme that changed the lives of hundreds of students in a demonstrative way, that may be considered above and beyond what might otherwise be expected of them in their role.

Another example might be someone who is a terrific business person, whose company has been very successful, but that too wouldn't mean that they've gone above and beyond.

If someone has done a good job, and is paid well, we'll ask ourselves, 'how has this person gone beyond that of their peer'? For example, is their impact greater than that of others in similar roles, have they volunteered their time, have they mentored or shaped younger generations, have they led something that's innovative or life-changing for others, has their work been delivered in exceptionally difficult or challenging environs, is their impact so profound that it is exceptional when compared to others in the same field?

In testing ourselves, we might picture the nominee standing with their colleagues and ask ourselves, "if awarded, how would their peers react?" Would they regard the honour as appropriate recognition of a peer for doing more than just showing up?

None of this is easy, and no system is perfect but, as Chair, I am indebted to my fellow Council members for their rigour, commitment and professionalism.

In closing

As Chair, I want the Order of Australia to be as inclusive as possible and to reflect and celebrate everything that we are as a people, and as a nation.

We all know the saying: "you can't be what you can't see". I look forward to a day when, through the Honours system, every young Australian – regardless of their gender, or other characteristic – can look at the Honours list on Australia Day or The King's Birthday and see themselves.

Because, when someone sees themselves, a new world opens up – a world of endless

possibility. Imagine if young people, of all backgrounds, could see themselves, and their futures, in the Honours lists. Then our nation's highest honours and awards would reflect the fullness of who we are, in all our wonderful diversity.

That's the day I'm looking forward to, and I hope you'll join me, and the Council, in that endeavour.

Thank you.

QUEENSLAND

CHAIR'S REPORT

Ronda Nix O.A.M

Branch Chair

As Convenor of the 2026 National Conference, I am pleased to report that, despite the short lead time we had to prepare, our Queensland Branch delivered a first-class, enjoyable and memorable event in Brisbane. I was very fortunate to have such a wonderful hardworking Conference Committee. Everyone on the committee was allocated a particular area of responsibility, and everyone did their job extremely well. Our thanks must also go to our wonderful volunteers during the conference. Their warm and friendly greetings at the Registration Desk set the tone for the entire conference. I congratulate everyone on their hard work, energy and cooperation in delivering what was a truly great conference.

Our theme was 'A Bridge to the Future' which was suggested by Darryl Seccombe O.A.M. All our brilliant presenters took us on a journey with them over the bridge as they showed us their vision of the possibilities ahead. We were so fortunate to engage such top-drawer speakers. It is an indication of the standing of The Order of Australia in the community that every person we approached to speak agreed immediately. We are extremely grateful to the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency the Hon. Dr Jeannette Young A.C P.S.M, who not only hosted a lovely outdoors reception at Government House on a perfect balmy Queensland evening where she moved through the gathering speaking to many of those present, but also attended on the first morning of the Conference where she addressed delegates and partners, then officially opened the Conference.

We received glowing feedback from both our excursions to the Organ Recital and Evensong at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church and the tour of The Great Court at the University of Queensland to view the sculptures with sculptor Dr Rhyl Hinwood A.M

C.F. I thank and acknowledge our generous sponsors, our Platinum Sponsor Honeycombes Property Group, our Gold Sponsors Brisbane Markets and The University of Queensland, and our Silver Sponsors drugARM, Cayas + Ward, and Tower 31 Photography. I also thank all our many supporters, in particular the Rotary Club of Paddington. Without our wonderful supporters our Conference Bags would definitely have been much lighter. Our thanks must also go to Aaron Quatham of Select Audio Visual for his professionalism in making all the presentations run so smoothly, and of course to our wonderful photographer Vanessa Bertagnole who managed to cover every aspect of the conference without being intrusive, which is quite a skill. Next year the conference will be held in Adelaide. I wish the Chair of the South Australia Branch, Noel Hender O.A.M B.E.M, and Conference Convener Tony Metcalf O.A.M and their team every success.

The Queensland Branch held our A.G.M and Annual Dinner at Kedron Wavell Services Club on 16 March 2026 and welcomed three new Committee members: Rhonda Weston A.M, Lynda Barry O.A.M and Peter Henderson O.A.M. I have already worked with Rhonda who took on the role of National Conference Secretary, and I look forward to working with Lynda and Peter. The Guest Speaker at the Dinner was the wonderful Professor John Fraser A.O, clinician, scientist and inventor.

The Australia Day investitures will take place at Government House from 18 to 21 May. We look forward to meeting our newest recipients at a welcome dinner to be held at 6pm on 19 May at the Carina Leagues Club.

EVENTS

Passionate about cycling

Retired firefighter Wayne Sticher captivated the Darling Downs Regional Group at their gathering in Toowoomba on Friday 13 March 2026. All present were amazed to hear about Wayne's cycling adventures, in particular his ride from Mt Isa to Perth, unaccompanied, no support crew available to assist with the inevitable issues he encountered.

Wayne's passion for cycling is now focused on ensuring cycling is accessible for the elderly and those with disabilities. He established *Cycling Without Age, Gold Coast* where he and a crew of volunteers use rickshaws and modified trishaws to provide cycling experiences for those who would not be able to cycle independently. His oldest client is 108. Wayne was nominated for Australian of the Year in 2025. Truly inspiring.

Challenges of aged care

At the Gold Coast lunch on 23 March 2026, the guest speaker Ann Robilotta Glenista

gave a thought-provoking address on aged care in Australia. She outlined current government expenditure, noting that \$36.4 billion was allocated to aged care in 2023-24. Despite this significant investment, she highlighted ongoing challenges, particularly that care is often delivered to a cost rather than to individual need.

She talked about key financial aspects, including annual and lifetime caps on contributions, daily contributions for nursing home care, accommodation bonds, and the requirement for A.CAT assessments. Attendees were reminded of the importance of understanding their personal circumstances when planning for aged care and the value of seeking professional advice. The address prompted several thoughtful questions from the audience, reflecting strong engagement with the topic.

A 'Heart to Heart' with Professor John Fraser AO

One hundred and ten guests attended the Queensland Branch Annual Dinner on Monday 16 March 2026 in the Blue Pacific Ballroom at Kedron Wavell Services Club in Brisbane.

Everyone present enjoyed good fellowship in a relaxed and happy atmosphere and were 'blown away' by our irresistible Scottish-born guest speaker, Professor John Fraser A.O, who turned down a promising career as an actor to become a distinguished intensive care physician, researcher and innovator, recognised for his leadership in critical care. In his address he highlighted his significant contributions to medicine and research that have focused on improving outcomes for heart and lung failure.

Professor Fraser paid a glowing tribute during his talk to Dr Daniel Timms, an innovative biomedical engineer from Ferny Grove in Brisbane, with whom he collaborated closely in co-founding the BiVACOR Total Artificial Heart. What really impressed us was John's easy-going delivery and flashes of brilliant Scottish humour which turned a serious subject into something so interesting. In truth we all would have been happy if he had talked longer than his scheduled 20 minutes.

FEATURED MEMBER

Dr Rhyl Hinwood A.M

Brisbane-born Rhyl Hinwood won a commission in 1976 to complete the carvings in the Great Court of the University of Queensland. Fifty years later, she has completed that commission with the installation of the final grotesque!

On Saturday 18 April 2026, in conjunction with the National Conference of the Order of Australia Association, Rhyl led a fascinated group of Association members round the

Great Court, explaining the background and symbolism of each carving, of which there are thousands. These include animals, birds and plants unique to Queensland, together with university crests from around the world.



She also explained the difference between gargoyles (which we do not have at U.Q) and grotesques. A gargoyle is a carved stone figure, typically in a grotesque form, featuring a spout designed to convey rainwater away from the walls of buildings. A grotesque is also carved but is strictly decorative, usually with exaggerated or fantastical features.

The final grotesque to be installed at U.Q features the first Australian Indigenous woman to complete a university degree: Margaret Valadian A.O M.B.E. Margaret Valadian graduated from U.Q in 1966 with a Bachelor of Social Studies. We also learned that each sculptor who works on a building is expected to include a grotesque of themselves, so it was fascinating to see the images for John Muller and Rhyl herself.

For those interested to learn more, see *Carving a History: A Guide to the Great Court, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, Queensland, 1979, rev. 2021, ISBN 9781742721606* (paperback).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CHAIR'S REPORT

Judy Hogben A.M

Branch Chair

The last few months have been busy in the W.A Branch, including holding our A.G.M on 25 February. Responding to suggestions from the survey to “change things up a bit”, this year we tried a different format –an evening meeting followed by a guest speaker, Richard Offen, and supper. The meeting’s format and Richard’s talk, titled ‘Western Australia – A historical Boast’, were extremely well received. To provide greater access to those who could not attend, particularly our regional members, a video was made of the guest speaker’s talk and has been posted on the web.

<https://theorderofaustralia.asn.au/wa/about-us/> . The help of our friends and partners, U.3.A, in videoing the talk, is greatly appreciated.

As 2025 was a special celebratory year, the W.A Branch calendar was packed with events. Ten events were held, with close to 1,200 people attending or connecting via one-to-one meetings. While we don't expect that to be replicated in 2026, the calendar does feature several interesting and different events, commencing with a *Gilbert and Sullivan* evening in March. Approximately 110 members, guests and visitors attended the very successful evening. The musical performance was especially curated for the Branch and featured a number of well-known and much-loved songs. Forthcoming events will include 'coffee and talk' mornings and a visit to Professor Kingsley Dixon A.O's private Waroona Garden for our Peel members. Professor Dixon is the 2026 W.A Senior Australian of the Year and is an internationally recognised botanist, particularly for his work on biodiversity and native plant conservation.

Most recently, Branch members attended numerous Anzac Day venues and functions including an R.S.L organised breakfast at Government House followed by the march past and parade. We do this with both pride and gratitude for the service of so many of our members and fellow Australians as well as sorrow for the suffering past and enduring.

I look forward to catching up with members and guests at the forthcoming events and thank the WA Branch committee for its ongoing work and support.

FORTHCOMING WA BRANCH EVENTS

21 May for Peel members. A visit to Cypress Farm and Garden, Waroona.

21 May for Perth members. Coffee afternoon tea. Guest speaker Peter Snow O.A.M, talking on development of the Albany Whaling Station.

21 June. Annual church service at St George's Cathedral.

VALE: PROFESSOR BRYANT ALLAN RIGBYE STOKES AO, 8.1.1937 – 21.2.2026

Professor Bryant Allan Rigbe Stokes A.O, affectionately known as Bars, was born in Western Australia in 1937.

He studied medicine at the University of W.A and practised his medicine in W.A. He travelled widely to gain expertise in his chosen field, neurosurgery, and brought many new techniques to W.A. He was also a dedicated public servant.

As a gifted surgeon, he was known for his ability to relate to his patients. At one stage when on call, he arrived at serious accidents before ambulance and police crews arrived!

To his patients who valued his expertise he was generous to the many he treated. He had a passion to improve patient outcomes ensuring safety and quality.

His life was devoted to medicine, and he never married. He was a regular worshipper at his local Anglican Church. He mentored many doctors over his long life and expected the best from those he taught. He would not accept second best.

Professor Stokes also served as W.A's Chief Medical Officer, filled in as both Commissioner of Health and Director General of Health, and chaired numerous hospital boards.

His obituary in the *West Australian* noted, "Professor Stokes' reputation for giving frank and fearless advice meant he was regularly called on to conduct high level inquiries into hospital care, governance and clinical standards, often in the glare of public spotlight". He was very generous, giving so much of what he earned to fund scholarships, research projects, for neuroscience and to other charities. He was also aware of the need for psychological support.

His obituary ends: "He was, as one colleague put it, a compass for doing the right thing, even when it was hard".

The State recognised his great contribution by a State Funeral at St George's Cathedral on 21 February 2026. The Cathedral was filled to overflowing.

FEATURED MEMBER

NEWCOMER TO THE W.A BOARD: MS DEBBIE KARASINSKI A.M



The 2026 WA Branch A.G.M saw the election of a new Branch Committee member – Debbie Karasinski A.M. Debbie has extensive experience in community and committee work, having worked in the health, disability, aged care and mental health sectors in Western Australia for more than 40 years. This experience has been within the not-for-profit, corporate and government environments and has included service delivery, policy development and governance.

Debbie Karasinski holds a Master of Science and a Bachelor of Applied Science, was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2000 for her contribution to people with multiple sclerosis,

and was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019 for her contribution to people with disability and the West Australian community.

Debbie will bring a wealth of experience to the W.A Branch of the Association being, among other things, the inaugural Chair of the Child and Adolescent Health Service Board of Western Australia, Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O) of a disability service provider, Senses Australia, CEO of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of W.A, and Chief Occupational Therapist at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

Now semi-retired, Debbie continues her contribution to the West Australian community as a current member of the Perth Clinic Board and the Chorus Board. Added to that, she is now a member of the WA Branch of the O.A.A.

NEW SOUTH WALES

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dr John Gullotta A.M.

Branch Chair

It has been a very busy time for the NSW Branch.

A group of 23 N.S.W members joined the 150 members and partners from across Australia for the National Conference in Brisbane from 16 to 19 April, which was a great success. On behalf of the N.S.W Branch, congratulations to Ronda Nix O.A.M and her organising committee for their hard work, and we look forward to the 2027 Conference which will be held in Adelaide!

The national A.G.M saw the retirement of National Chair, MAJGEN Barry Nunn A.O R.F.D E.D (RETD) after nine years at the helm. I would like to extend my sincere personal thanks to Barry for his guidance, wise counsel and friendship to me personally, as well as his exemplary service to our Association. He will be truly missed but will be most ably succeeded by our newly elected Chair, William Lye O.A.M KC. We are also very proud that our own David North O.A.M was elected as Deputy Chair. William and David will provide a strong leadership team to steer our Association into the future, and I look forward to working with them very closely together with our N.S.W Branch Committee. Congratulations!

The N.S.W Branch held its A.G.M on 19 March 2026 at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. Dianne North O.A.M was re-elected unopposed as Honorary Secretary and David North O.A.M was re-elected N.S.W Branch Nominated Director. As David was later elected as Deputy National Chair at the national A.G.M, the N.S.W Committee elected, via circular resolution, Mr Gary Smith A.M as N.S.W Branch Nominated Director for the next year.

Congratulations to Dianne, David and Gary on their appointments and the newly formed N.S.W Branch Committee. I am very excited to be working productively with such a dynamic and enthusiastic group.

The 2026 King's Birthday Investitures were held in May, and the Branch was represented at the Investiture ceremonies at Government House Sydney to represent and promote our Association. We will also hold the annual luncheon for the K.B26 New Recipients and their guests at N.S.W Parliament House in June.

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 Hon. 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.

I look forward to seeing you all at our forthcoming events.

EVENTS

N.S.W Branch Annual General Meeting – 19 March 2026

The 45th Order of Australia Association N.S.W Branch Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday, 19 March at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, Sydney. It was attended by 56 members, family and friends. Two committee positions were open: Honorary Secretary and Branch Nominated Director. One nomination was received for Honorary Secretary, resulting in the unopposed re-election of Dianne North O.A.M. Two nominations were submitted for Branch Nominated Director, requiring an election. David North OAM was re-elected to the role.



The meeting featured presentations from two young individuals supported by the

Association: Alyssa Jeffries, a 2025 O.A.A N.S.W Youth Community Service Award recipient, and Jade Harrison, awarded the O.A.A Foundation Scholarship in 2024 sponsored by the N.S.W Branch. Each spoke about their experiences and current pursuits.

Following the A.G.M, attendees enjoyed lunch and the opportunity to socialise.

The guest speaker for the event was Ken Hutt O.A.M, recognised in the Australia Day 2026 Honours. Ken is a member of the Rotary Club of Berry and serves as President and Training Officer of the Broughton Vale/Berry Rural Fire Service. His background includes service as a police officer in Police Rescue and the Water Police.

Ken is an accomplished adventurer, yachtsman and mountaineer, with expeditions across Tibet, Nepal, Pakistan, Patagonia and New Zealand. He has circumnavigated Tasmania, completed the Kokoda Track, and is an experienced high-altitude paraglider. Ken has raised millions of dollars for Rotary's *End Polio* campaign through demanding paragliding challenges from some of the world's highest mountains. He highlighted the history and continuing impact of polio in Australia, where many children contracted the disease before vaccines became available, leaving survivors with long-term health effects. Post-Polio Syndrome is a debilitating, extremely painful condition for many survivors.

Since Rotary launched *End Polio* in 1985, global cases have fallen from 300,000 annually to only isolated cases in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ken's missions have been both daring and effective. A flight in Tibet, undertaken without a permit, raised \$250,000. He risked being shot down by Chinese authorities. After four years of negotiation with the Nepalese Government, he secured permission to paraglide from Mount Everest and, although COVID-19 prevented the attempt, the campaign raised \$1.5 million. He has visited Everest Base Camp several times and intends to return next year to continue fundraising.

N.S.W Contingent at 2026 National Conference Brisbane

Twenty-three N.S.W Branch members joined the 150 members and partners from across Australia for the OAA National Conference in Brisbane from 16 to 19 April, held on the beautiful South Bank. The wonderful events are detailed elsewhere, but the photos shown here illustrate how much all 23 N.S.W members enjoyed their time catching up with friends from across Australia.

AROUND THE REGIONS

Illawarra Region Visit to the Maritime Museum

On Wednesday 18 March, 10 Illawarra members travelled by train and light rail to the National Maritime Museum in Sydney. At Pyrmont station we were greeted by our

guide, Lindsay May O.A.M, who led us across the road to the museum. With an extraordinary record of 50 consecutive Sydney to Hobart Yacht Races and extensive volunteer experience at the museum, Lindsay proved to be the perfect guide, sharing his deep knowledge of maritime history throughout the day.

Our visit began aboard the James Craig, an 1847 three-masted, iron hulled barque that still regularly sails on the harbour. We then explored H.M.A.S Vampire, a Daring class destroyer that served from 1959 to 1986, escorting troops to Vietnam in the 1960s and later operating as a training ship. As the museum's largest vessel, it offered an impressive vantage point to view the H.M.B Endeavour replica and the Duyfken, a 1602 Dutch East India Company yacht which were both berthed nearby. We also saw the historic M.V Krait, the original fishing vessel used in the 1942 raids on Singapore Harbour, and the striking Cape Bowling Green Lighthouse, built in the 1870s at Cape Bowling Green, a low sandy spit 70km south of Townsville, Queensland. It operated from 1874 to 1987. It was relocated and opened to the public at the National Maritime Museum in 1994.

The more adventurous members of our group boarded H.M.A.S Onslow, an Oberon class submarine in service from 1968 to 1999. The submarine guide shared fascinating stories, including details of its Special Forces diving chamber, used for leaving for covert operations, and its soundproofing making it one of the quietest classes of submarines ever built. After experiencing the cramped living quarters, we unanimously agreed that submarine life was not for us.

Inside the galleries, we admired the stunning Ocean Photographer of the Year exhibition and followed James Cameron's Deepsea Challenger on its journey to the ocean floor. We also viewed Blackmore's First Lady, the 11-metre yacht in which Kay Cottee A.O sailed solo, non-stop and unassisted around the world for 189 days in 1987/88.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch at Ripples Café and all agreed it was a wonderful and memorable day, made exceptional by Lindsay May's expert guidance.

TASMANIA

CHAIR'S REPORT

Alastair Douglas O.A.M.

Branch Chair

Over two days at the end of April, Her Excellency, The Honourable Barbara Baker A.C conducted four Investiture Ceremonies for the Australia Day Honours on beautiful fine days at Government House for 21 Order of Australia awardees. As we all know, they are special and happy occasions, allowing friends and relatives to acknowledge and

celebrate the contributions that the awardees have made to our society. On each of the days, the Association has just enough time between the morning and afternoon ceremonies to host lunches for a total of 118 guests which included 11 awardees.

In February, the Branch held its Annual General Meeting at which Rod Fraser O.A.M was elected Branch Treasurer following the retirement of Ron Blake O.A.M. Dr George Merridew A.M and Barry Easter O.A.M, Membership Officer, were re-elected for further three-year terms. I look forward to working with the team for this coming year. The meeting was a hybrid operation held in Hobart but allowing members to join in by Zoom. Fortunately, we had some trial runs to sort out sound issues and with the valued assistance of Walt Lowry, the young grandson of our Branch Nominated Director Rosemary Callingham A.M, the system worked better than acceptably well. And we learned much from the experience which will assist for any future occasions when we might choose a hybrid meeting.

The A.G.M also provided the opportunity to make a presentation to Beverley Harris O.A.M who had her 100th birthday in December 2025. Until very recent years, Bev was a regular attendee at National Conferences and was a regular supporter and volunteer at Branch functions. Congratulations Bev and thanks for your great support to the Association over many years.

Our Branch Patron, Her Excellency, The Honourable Barbara Baker A.C, retires from her role as Governor of Tasmania on 15 June 2026. The support she has given to the Association on so many occasions during her term of office has been greatly appreciated. We very much thank Her Excellency, her husband Professor Don Chalmers A.O and staff at Government House for their kindness, support for the Order and the Association.

EVENTS

A.G.M GUEST SPEAKER PROFESSOR DAVID BOWMAN

Following the Branch A.G.M in February, members and guests were privileged to hear a presentation by Professor David Bowman. Professor Bowman established the new transdisciplinary field of pyrogeography. Pyrogeography “provides a synthetic understanding of landscape burning that unites human, physical and biological dimensions of fire from the geological past into the future and spanning local to global geographic scales”. Professor Bowman’s field research has taken him across Australia over the last 40 years, and he collaborates with a global network of fire scientists. His research is motivated by a commitment to improving the scientific basis of fire management.

Professor Bowman holds a research chair in Pyrogeography and Fire Science in the School of Natural Sciences and is an Honorary Professor Archaeology and Natural

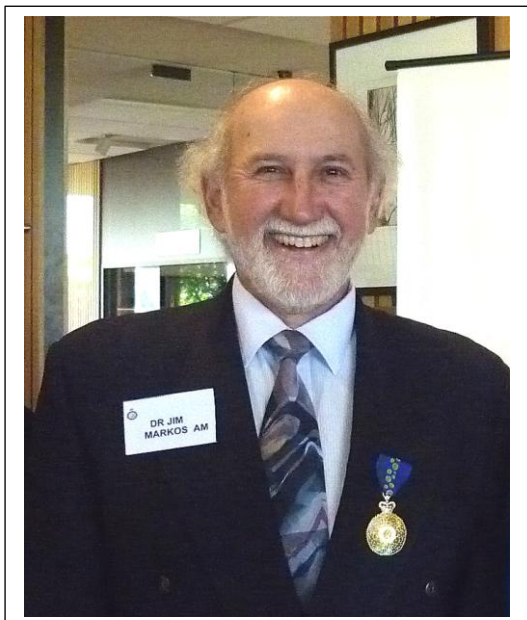
History at the Australian National University. He was awarded a University of Tasmania P.h.D in forest ecology and management in 1984, and a Doctor of Science from the University of Tasmania in 2001. In 1984 he took a post as a wildlife biologist with the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, where he undertook pioneering field research in this tropical savanna frontier.

In 1994 Professor Bowman was awarded a Charles Bullard Fellowship at Harvard University where he wrote an influential book on the environmental controls of Australian rainforest distribution for Cambridge University Press. In 2002 he became Director of the Australian Research Council Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management. In 2007 he took up a research chair at the University of Tasmania where he built critical mass in pyrogeographic and environmental change biology research. He has research fellowships at a range of universities around the world (Harvard US, Oxford UK, Kyoto Japan, Arizona US, Leeds UK, UBC Canada).

His talk was very topical following the devastating fires experienced on the Tasmanian East Coast in December 2025, in which 20 homes were lost, and it received a very interested and enthusiastic response from members.

FEATURED MEMBER

TAKING A DEEP BREATH: DR JAMES MARKOS A.M



James Markos was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in January 2025 *For significant contribution to medical research and teaching in respiratory and sleep medicine.*

James graduated in Medicine from the University of Sydney in January 1978 working at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney for three years, then moving to Hobart with his Tasmanian wife, Margaret. He worked at the Royal Hobart Hospital, during which time he published his first medical research paper. In 1985, he moved to Perth W.A to study lung and sleep medicine at the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, and was made a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of

Physicians in 1986. He then spent two years in Vancouver at the Pulmonary Research Lab of the University of British Columbia, researching the mechanisms of lung injury in emphysema and pneumonia.

Returning to Australia in July 1990 as the first full-time respiratory physician at Launceston General Hospital (L.G.H), James continued to work full-time in Launceston at the hospital and in private practice, until he retired in August 2024 at age 70. He was a senior clinical lecturer with the University of Tasmania Medical School and participated actively in the teaching of medical students, medical residents and other hospital staff. James remained active with medical research despite a busy clinical workload, still finding time to publish some 30 research papers.

James was the Tasmanian Representative for Lung Foundation Australia (L.F.A) from 1990 to 2010. He participated in activities to combat the winter wood smoke pollution in Launceston in the 1990s and early 2000s, for which he received an Outstanding Volunteer Award from the Australian Government (2001). He advanced the profile of the L.F.A in Tasmania with efforts to reduce wood smoke pollution as well as being involved in fundraising campaigns with events like *Setting the Cat among the Pigeons* (2000) and four *Breath of Life Music Festivals* from 2008. The music festival promoted awareness of pulmonary fibrosis and more research to find a cure. James received an Outstanding Volunteer Award in 2014 and a Lung Legend Award in 2025 from L.F.A. Since the 1990s, James has supported the Clifford Craig Medical Research Foundation at the Launceston General Hospital, serving on its Board for nine years. He remains on the Science and Research Committee and is a member of the Historical Society of the LGH. He retired from medical practice in August 2024 and lives in Devon Hills on the outskirts of Launceston.

THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION

Report from Foundation Chair Dr Helen Nugent A.C

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

An undoubted highlight of the Annual Conference of the Order of Australia Association in Brisbane in April 2026 was the Saturday night Annual Dinner when the 2025 Foundation scholarship awardees were presented with their certificates.

While Her Excellency the Governor-General was unable to be present because of other commitments, she sent an inspirational video which reflected on her shared time with the awardees in September 2025 at Yarralumla. That video is available on the Foundation website. The Foundation Board is very grateful to The Honorable Justice Debra Mullins A.O, President of the Queensland Court of Appeal, for making the presentations after the awardees were introduced by Dr Helen Nugent A.C, the Foundation Chair. The awardees then impressed the audience with brief remarks where their vision, commitment and eloquence were on full display.



This photo shows five of the six Scholarship Awardees at the National Conference, with Foundation Chair Dr Helen

The Foundation's partner universities were represented with great distinction at the event. The Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, Ms Diane Smith-Gander A.O saw two scholars from U.W.A, Mr Jake Barnett and Mr Ockert Visser, receiving their awards. We also welcomed the Chancellor of the Queensland University of Technology, Ms Ann Sherry A.O and the Vice-Chancellor and President of Q.U.T, Professor Margaret Sheil A.O,

who witnessed Mr Zeph Hardie being presented with his award. From the University of Queensland, we welcomed Professor Suzanne Le Mire, Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience, who supported Ms Nazia Safdari receiving her award. Ms Miriam Grice, also from the University of Queensland, received a Foundation Scholarship. She was deeply disappointed she could not be present, but she was interstate attending her brother's wedding. Professor Keitha Dunstan, Provost at Bond University, saw Mr Isum Malawaraarachchi receive his award.

Dr Nugent also announced the distinguished group of mentors who will offer wisdom and guidance to the scholars. A synopsis of her remarks in relation to the awardees and their mentors are reproduced below.

Jake Barnett is undertaking a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) with a major in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Western Australia. After a false start doing medicine at the University of Melbourne, Jake has found his calling with his desire to pursue a career in renewables, one of the most profound challenges facing not just Australia, but the world. Dr Cathy Foley A.O, the former Chief Scientist of Australia and the C.S.I.R.O, has agreed to mentor Jake. She shares his passion and enthusiasm.

Zeph Hardie is undertaking a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) with majors in Computer and Software Systems at the Queensland University of Technology. Zeph has a clear-headed vision to make a difference in the emerging field of neuromorphic computing research, where chips and sensors reflect the structure and function of the human brain. In future, this might make a real difference for people with disability. We are delighted that one of the global leaders in this field, Professor Michael Milford, who holds a Chair within the Faculty of Engineering in the School of Electrical Engineering and Robotics at Q.U.T, has agreed to be Zeph's mentor.

Isum Malawaraarachchi is undertaking a Bachelor of Medical Studies at Bond University. Isum's chosen field is emergency medicine. Associate Professor Anthony Holley AM is the perfect mentor for Isum. Professor Holley is not just Associate Professor at the University of Queensland but is also the Senior Staff Specialist Intensive Care at Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital, as well as being the Principal Consultant Trauma to the Surgeon General for the Australian Defence Force.

Nazia Safdari is undertaking a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and Bachelor of Business Management at the University of Queensland. Reflecting her and her family's personal experiences, Nazia wants to work with marginalized and persecuted communities to help them become productive citizens, by becoming a Protection Officer with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (U.N.H.C.R). Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs A.C has agreed to be Nazia's mentor. Gillian is not only a distinguished lawyer, having been Dean of the University of Sydney Law School, but has also been President of the Australian Human Rights Commission and Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, where she worked as part of the executive team of U.N.H.C.R.

Ockert Visser is undertaking a Bachelor of Science (Honours) at the University of Western Australia, specializing in Physics and Computer Science. Ockert has a huge career ambition, wanting to pursue a career in Quantum Computing. He will be aided in that ambition with the input of his distinguished mentor, Professor Michelle Simmons A.C. Michelle is a recognized global leader in the field of Quantum Computing. She is currently Scientia Professor of Quantum Physics in the Faculty of Science at the University of N.S.W and founding director of the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for Quantum Computation and Technology. She was named Australian of the Year in 2018.

Miriam Grice is undertaking a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours) at the University of Queensland. Growing up in regional Australia, Miriam wishes to make a difference in rural health, particularly the impact of substance abuse on an individual's health. We are grateful to Associate Professor Robert Ali A.O for accepting the role as Miriam's mentor. Professor Ali is a Public Health and Addiction Medicine physician who has worked in the alcohol and drug area since 1985. He is the director of a World Health Organization (W.H.O) Centre for the Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Problems based in the School of Medical Sciences at the University of Adelaide. He was also the Chair of the National Expert Advisory Committee on Illicit Drugs.

It was truly a night to remember.

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