

Message from Order of Australia Association National Chair William Lye OAM KC

Dear Members

I am honoured to serve as the Association's National Chair. My role sits alongside that of our National President, but it is a different one.

President Hieu speaks for the Association and champions the values for which the Order stands. My work is closer to the engine room. I chair the Board and, together with my fellow directors, help ensure that the Association is well governed; that our branches are supported; and that the commitments we make are translated into activities that benefit our members and communities.

Each State, Territory and overseas branch brings its own character, energy, and approach to member events and local activities.

In South Australia, members contribute to programs that encourage young people to understand citizenship, service, and the values reflected in The Order.

Queensland presents its Secondary Schools Citizenship Awards at Parliament House in Brisbane.

The Australian Capital Territory runs its own Student Citizenship Awards, judged by a panel of members, recognising students whose community service deserves acknowledgement.

New South Wales has sixteen regional groups, a Branch Youth Award, and a calendar that ranges from an Australia Day harbour cruise to a winter lunch at Parliament House.

In Victoria, the Paul Wheelton AM Inspiring Australians Oration is a signature event, and Foundation scholarship recipients return to tell members what they have achieved since receiving support.

Western Australia takes a different approach again. Its members support the WA Police Recruit Squad Patron Scheme and fund a Branch scholarship. The Governor attends the annual black-tie dinner as Branch Patron.

Tasmania works through three regional groups, i.e., in the north, north-west and south, and each conducting its own meetings, speakers' events and visits. Welcome lunches are held on the days of Government House investitures.

In the Northern Territory, members commemorate the anniversary of the first bombs to fall on Australian soil at Darwin on 19 February 1942. Each year, the Mayor of Alice Springs hosts a gathering that introduces newly honoured Territorians to earlier recipients.



Then there are members who live a very long way from Australia. Our United Kingdom Branch keeps Australians connected across the United Kingdom and Europe, gathering in Paris and London and working alongside our High Commission in London.

Our North America Branch does the same across an even larger map. Distance changes nothing about the honour, nor has it diminished members' commitment to the Association.

None of this happens by itself. It happens because more than 8,000 members, across every State and Territory and in our two overseas branches, give their time and ask for little in return.

That is the Association at its best. I would like to see more recipients join us, deepen their contribution, and strengthen the fellowship that binds our members together.

A membership organisation that does not renew itself can gradually become a reunion. I want ours to remain a vibrant Association. We are therefore seeking to involve members who are still in the midst of their careers: bringing them onto committees before inviting them to join boards and giving them work that is worthwhile. Our branches are being encouraged to do the same.

If you have been waiting to be asked, please regard this as my invitation.

Renewal also means holding ourselves to a high standard. Every recipient carries a part of the institution with them, especially when the lapel pin is worn. How we conduct ourselves in public, how we speak of one another, how we run a meeting, and how we treat the person who comes to an event for the first time knowing no one in the room. All these things either strengthen the Order or quietly diminish it.

I would prefer that we strengthen it.

When I received the Medal of the Order in 2017, it was not because I had set out to be recognised. Few recipients do. The Order has a way of finding people who have simply been getting on with useful work and saying, publicly, that the work has mattered. Recognition of that kind is worth protecting and worth passing on.

If you have received an honour and have not yet joined us, I encourage you to do so. If you are already a member, speak with your branch about where you might contribute. And if someone in your community has carried the load for years without acknowledgement, nominate them. Someone once did that for you.

Kind regards,

William Lye OAM KC
National Chair