



Annual Report OAA North American Group, 2010

The North American Group of the Order of Australia Association began its existence in early 2010 in a format unique within the OAA: it covers the largest territory of any OAA grouping; it has the fewest adherents of any OAA grouping; and covers a significant percentage of Order of Australia honorary recipients of non-Australian nationality. Nonetheless, the Group — which covers the United States of America, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean states — has a significant function within the Association because of the importance of the US-Australia strategic relationship and the growing importance of the special Commonwealth linkage between Canada and Australia.

Most of the OAA members in the region retain their official affiliation with their home states' OAA branch, often because recipients are on temporary assignment to North America, but others — honorary recipients of awards in the Order as well as expatriates — pay their dues directly to the OAA in Canberra and have no group affiliation other than our North American Group. The new Group sees it is a mission to bring honorary recipients of the awards into the Association to further build the bonds of mutual appreciation which the original honours were meant to reflect. In that regard, the Group attempts to make contact with all recipients of awards in the region.

We were honored, in March 2010, when His Excellency the Honorable Kim Beazley, AC, the Australian Ambassador to the United States, agreed to become Vice-Patron of the Group (with Her Excellency the Governor-General as the OAA Patron overall). Ambassador Beazley and his team at the Embassy worked enthusiastically with the Group throughout the year, with the Ambassador hosting the spectacular Inaugural Dinner for the Group at the Ambassadorial Residence in Washington, DC, on October 12, 2010. This event drew a high-level response, and even the regrets, such as that from US General David Petraeus, AO (Hon.), showed the level of support for our efforts [Gen. Petraeus took time out to pen a personal response to the invitation, noting he was “rather busy” in Afghanistan, where he had just taken command of the Coalition combat operations].

The Group formally participated in the solemn ANZAC Day festivities, from Dawn Service to Cathedral services, and with other activities, on April 25, 2010, and will participate in all major Australia-related activities where possible through the coming year.

The North American Group is, of course, entirely volunteer in nature, having been chartered by OAA Headquarters in early 2010, deputing Gregory Copley, AM, as the initial Chairman. In 2011 it is anticipated that a formal structure of officers will be nominated. Initial activities have been run out of the International Strategic Studies Association (ISSA) offices in the Washington, DC, area, which has born all the costs and activities on behalf of the Group. Ms Kerin Backhaus, at the ISSA offices, has supported Gregory and Pamela Copley as the Group Secretariat. As a result, there are no financial details to report for the Group.

It is planned that the Group will schedule subscription events through 2011 to bring members together. One other function of the Group is to ensure that visiting holders of Orders have a point of contact when visiting Washington, DC.

Gregory R. Copley, AM,
Chairman, North American Group, OAA
January 1, 2011