



## **The Order of Australia Association**

### **Victoria Branch Annual Report 2009**

I have pleasure in presenting the Branch report for 2009 embracing my inaugural year as Chairman of the Victoria Branch. I have had the unstinting support of a hard working Committee and I thank them for their loyalty and commitment. Special thanks to my Executive team of Deputy Chairmen Geoff Christopherson and Kevin Howard, Immediate Past Chairman Geoff Nielson, Treasurer Trevor Brown and Secretary Max Chester.

I also pay tribute to the office bearers, committees and members of the Regional Groups throughout the State. Their combined contribution continues to be significant and I again had the pleasure during the year to attend a number of Regional functions and to observe, at first hand, the hard work commitment and enthusiasm of members.

We are grateful for the continuing involvement of The Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC as Branch Patron and all Association Members are most appreciative of his interest and support.

Throughout 2009, the Branch conducted a variety of functions and meetings including six key annual events:-

The Australia Day Ceremony at Victoria Barracks, The Cultural Luncheon, A Mid-Year Reception, the New Award Recipients at the Melbourne Town Hall, The Annual general Meeting and Celebrity Luncheon at the Melbourne Town Hall and the hallmark Annual Dinner in the Banquet Room at the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria.

#### January: Australia Day

Over eighty members and friends attended the Flag Lowering Ceremony held at dusk on Australia Day at the Victoria Barracks. A reception followed in the Officers' Mess where Sarah Lenthall the winner of the Association Essay Competition was the impressive guest speaker. Earlier in the day, Victoria Branch Committee Members were guests at the Australia Day Flag Raising Ceremony at the Melbourne Town Hall and joined the annual parade to Federation Square and the Alexandra Gardens.

#### April: German Cuisine and Culture at Annual Luncheon

Some ninety members and friends enjoyed the Annual Cultural Luncheon in April held at the German Club Tivoli in Melbourne. The guest speaker was Wiebe Kleine from the Goethe

Cultural Institute whose address embraced a photographic journey through the calendar of folk festivals throughout Germany.

July: Indonesian Consulate Reception

This function at the Indonesian Consulate in Melbourne in July was a new and unique event for the Association with one hundred and twenty members and guests in attendance. The host and guest speaker was the Consul General Budiardman Bahar who presented an award on behalf of the Indonesian Government to Dr. David Marsh OAM and his wife Clare Marsh OAM for their ongoing contribution in the medical field to the people of Indonesia through the Marsh Foundation.

June: Crown Casino Live Show. The Buddy Holly Story

Through Committee member David Mann OAM and radio station 3AW the Victoria Branch continues to be the beneficiary of complimentary theatre tickets for various live shows in Melbourne. Additional fellowship opportunities have resulted along with contribution to Branch funds.

September: Melbourne Town Hall. Reception for New Award Recipients

The Annual Lord Mayor's function for new Award recipients attracted an attendance in excess of 160 people including former Victorian Governor Sir James Gobbo AC and Lady Shirley Gobbo. Those who were honoured on Australia Day and Queen's Birthday were joined by friends and relatives and other Association Members.

October: Eureka Tower Skydeck

Members were again treated to complimentary visits to the award winning Eureka Skydeck through the generosity of the venue operators Craig Opie and Paul O'Brien.

November: Annual General Meeting and Celebrity Luncheon.

The Melbourne Town Hall was the venue for the AGM which was followed by a Celebrity Luncheon where the guest speaker was media and show business personality John Michael Howson.

November: Annual Dinner in the RACV Banquet Room

Songwriter and former member of the international Seekers Group Bruce Woodley was the guest speaker at the Annual Dinner held in the Banquet Room at the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. The audience of some one hundred and ninety people were further entertained by the Australia Girls' Choir.

### The Branch Newsletter:

Regular communication with members was continuous within the Branch and the Regional groups throughout the State. All members received the Branch quarterly four colour Newsletter which provided updated news on forthcoming events together with articles on recently held functions and a wide variety of other key items of interest. Over a quarter of the Newsletter is given over to all Regional Groups who are encouraged to use the space to promote upcoming events and other relevant local issues.

### Promotional Flyers:

Promotional flyers were again produced specifically for each function and designed to sell the upcoming event and to make it easy for members to book and pay by mail. Flyers were mailed as inserts in the Branch Newsletters to obviously save on additional mailings. Newsletters with promotional flyers were mailed at least four weeks prior to forthcoming events in March, June, October, December.

### Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV)

Monthly Branch Committee Meetings and the Annual Dinner were held at the RACV with the RACV continuing its annual financial contribution (\$8,000) to the Branch Newsletter.

### The Australia Day Committee (Vic)

The Branch maintained its close links with the ADC (Vic) and operates on a reciprocal arrangement with events throughout the year. Four Branch Committee Members are also Australia Day Ambassadors.

### Committee Meetings

Committee Meetings were held monthly and Regional Group Representatives attended monthly meetings on a roster basis. All functions are planned on a budget basis requiring all events to be at least self funding but ideally in profit. Financial reports are provided monthly.

### State Branch Committee Meeting in Wangaratta

In line with the established practice of conducting a State Branch Committee meeting in a Regional Group area each year, the May Committee Meeting was held in the impressive Council Chambers of the city of Wangaratta.. The meeting and subsequent luncheon was hosted by the Mayor of Wangaratta Cr. Ron Webb and all arrangements were handled by Deputy Chairman (Country) Kevin Howard.

### Strategy for Increasing Association Membership

Following approval at the National Committee Meeting in February, the Branch embarked on a trial programme in Victoria with the key objective of increasing membership of the Association. The trial has focussed on two distinct groups of Award recipients: - Queens Birthday 2008 and Australia Day 2009 with follow up mailings to those who had not taken up Association membership. The mailings included a letter from the State Chairman together with an information brochure encouraging Awardees to become Members and then subsequent contact by Regional Group Chairmen. Follow up mailings were also implemented to encourage 'lapsed members' to renew their memberships.

### Branch Annual Grants.

The Branch Committee strongly opposed any cessation of the Branch Annual Grants to all States. To assist the National body with its cash flow situation, the Victoria State Committee proposed that the amount of the grant to Victoria for 2009 be loaned to the National body at current bank interest rates for this year only. This offer was rejected.

Deep concern was expressed by all Regional Groups on the possibility of grants either being suspended or totally removed. The very viability of some Regional Groups is dependent on the annual subsidy received via the State Branch from the National body.

### Community Involvement

- The State Branch and Regional Groups continued to become involved in worthwhile community projects in local areas including school and student projects, strategic alliances with local government and participation with community celebrations including Australia Day.
- During 2008/9, the Branch conducted the Victoria Essay Competition for young people to recognise the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the First World War and the completion of the Great Ocean, the world's largest war memorial. The winner was law student Sarah Lenthall whose prize was a tour to Gallipoli and the Western Front.
- It is the intention of the State Branch to plan and implement further worthwhile and appropriate community projects in the context of promoting the history, culture and traditions of our country. Where necessary and when prudent, reserve funds will continue to be utilised for this purpose.

### New Regional Groups

New Groups were established in Gippsland and South West Victoria. There are now eleven Regional Groups functioning in Victoria including five in the Melbourne Metropolitan area.

### Joint Meetings of Regional Group Representatives

Representatives of all Groups met three times during the year under the chairmanship of the Regional Co-ordinator. These meetings have proven to be most valuable because they enable Groups to share ideas for projects and activities, establish a feeling of camaraderie, and ensure that all Groups are fully informed on State and National matters that affect the Regions.

### Regional Group Representatives at State Branch Committee Meetings

The practice of the State Chairman to invite two representatives of a Regional Group to attend and participate in the monthly meetings of the State Branch Committee continued throughout the year. The practice provides the opportunity for these representatives to get to know personally the members of the Branch and also become aware of the many issues that are part of the State Branch role and responsibility. At the same time it gives all Branch members the opportunity to hear first hand about the issues and activities of Regional Groups.

In conclusion, I thank the National office-bearers and staff for their advice and assistance together with my fellow directors from the other States and Territories for their camaraderie and teamwork. The Victoria Branch will continue to build on its strong position and continue to play a role in the national expansion of the Order of Australia Association.

**Don Hyde AM**  
**Victoria**