CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Well another year has passed and we now have a new group of outstanding Australians that have received awards in the Australia Day Honours. It is now a time for us as members of the Association to engage with these new recipients and encourage them to join our Association.

Whilst we are greatly encouraged by the efforts undertaken by our new Awardees it is also a time to reflect of the amazing work being conducted by existing members of our Association who do not slow down after receiving their Honour. I am continually reminded that so often our Awardees are encouraged to continue to make even greater contributions to our Country.

Two that come to mind are in our Victorian State Branch. Tony Smith OAM our State Membership Secretary, who after many years as Deputy Chair has been appointed Chairman of the Sea Shepherd Advisory Panel replacing Bob Brown.

David Mann OAM, Immediate past Chairman of the Victorian Branch of the Association has been appointed as Chairman of the Blue Ribbon Foundation [BRF]. David has been Deputy Chair of BRF for many years and has given a lifetime of service to emergency services and policing in Victoria.

In December we were able to celebrate another successful year of the State Branch at a special lunch at the Athenaeum Club where we welcomed new Branch members Helene Bender OAM and Michael Kennedy OAM and fare welleed Marion Lau OAM and Voi Williams OAM who have both given 7 years of committed service to our Branch and Association.

Our 2 special guests at the Lunch were Sir Angus Houston AK AFC Chairman of the Order of Australia Council and Matthew Connolly a current Order of Australia Association Foundation Scholarship recipient. Sir Angus encouraged us to nominate a greater diversity in our nominations and stressed the importance of having a greater gender balance in the recipients.

Again I take the opportunity to thank all our members who contribute so much to our vibrant regional groups that make our Association what it is.

Paul Wheelton AM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Victoria Branch acknowledges the ongoing and generous support of the Royal Automobile Club Victoria

Victoria State Branch Committee and guests with Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC
SOUTH CENTRAL SUBURBAN REGIONAL GROUP

The converted 1877 homestead ‘Coggeshall’ originally of the Abbott family, is now the pride and joy of the Sandringham Club, a place it has called home since 1922. At our End of Year Dinner at the Club in November, eighty members and guests filled the historic dining room, enjoying an excellent meal and friendly company.

Feature of the evening was a fascinating address by Professor Jeffrey V Rosenfeld AM OBE KStJ (pictured), one of Australia’s leading neurosurgeons and senior military surgeons. He is recognised internationally for his traumatic brain surgery and bionic vision research and teaching. He is renowned for his work with child cancer patients.

His OBE is not an historic award as for most Australian recipients but awarded quite recently through the British government, in recognition of his ongoing contributions to the health of remote villagers in Papua New Guinea.

This unassuming but brilliant man is never content to rest on his laurels, always seeking new challenges. His current work on bionic vision research at Monash University is evidence of that.

Jeffrey was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation and Order of Australia Association wine glasses by Chairman Roger Wilson OAM.

To conclude the year, the services of outgoing committee member Commander John Moller OAM, RFD, JP were recognised at an informal gathering in December. One of four regional group members to have served on committee since its inception in 2008, John has given great service as Treasurer and as a fount of all local knowledge. His new challenge is as Victorian Section President of the Naval Association of Australia, on top of service to a multitude of other local community bodies.

AGM OF EASTERN SUBURBS REGIONAL GROUP, GUEST SPEAKER - THE HON DAVID HARPER QC, AM

After many years as a barrister, David was asked to go on the bench. As a judge of the Supreme Court he had two assistants, an associate and a tipstaff. The associate helps with the administrative work. They used to be retired Australian Defence officers but now they are graduates in law who help with legal research. The tipstaff liaises between the judge and the jury.

David said “It is essential for a community to live within the rule of law. Nobody is above the law. Without that there would be anarchy”.

David distinguished between his work in civil and in criminal cases. In civil cases without a jury it is up to the judge to decide on the truth of the evidence offered. In criminal cases such as murder or manslaughter, only the jury has the power to bring in a verdict. They must decide on the veracity of the prosecution’s case. To a question “Has the jury had ever got it wrong?” David said “Yes, but not to convict an innocent person. Sometimes they have acquitted a person whom I would have locked up”.

The judge can direct the jury to return a verdict of not guilty, but only if the prosecution case is so weak that no reasonable jury could convict. The judge can never direct the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty.

Emotion can run very high in criminal cases. Sentencing attracts a great deal of attention. The media often gets on the bandwagon. But David was not enthusiastic about the therapeutic effect of imprisonment. He is not an advocate of locking more offenders up. In his opinion it does not stop recidivism nor deter crime.

At the moment he is very involved in the rehabilitation of released prisoners.

It was an illuminating talk, very appropriate to an Order of Australia group of members.

Colin Browne OAM (ESRG Secretary)

Alston has been married to Coral for 60 years.

He was awarded an Australian Honour – the Order of Australia Medal in 1996 (for service to youth through the Scout Movement) and made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2007 “For service to youth, particularly through leadership roles in the development of the scouting movement throughout Victoria.”

Alston rejoined the Barwon Regional Group Committee of the Order of Australia Association as a committee member at the 2011/2012 Annual General Meeting, was elected Deputy Chair 2014 AGM till 2016 AGM and he remains a serving committee member.

His service and active roles in scouting have varied extensively over 60 years from joining at the age of 8 years - from youth adult leader at Group level, District, Area, Regional Commissioner, Assistant Chief Commissioner and becoming Chief Commissioner for Victoria 2001 – 2008. He remains the Honorary Commissioner and Office bearer for the Geelong Scout Region and a Member of the Victorian Branch Council. At the Victorian AGM held in November 2016 Alston was elected a Life Member of the Victorian Branch.

Within scouting he has been awarded the Medal of Merit with bar, Silver Acorn, Silver Kangaroo for eminent and meritorious service to scouting for a period exceeding twenty years.

He’s represented Australia at overseas conferences in England, Greece, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Brunei, Taiwan, Thailand, and Sri Lanka.

Appointed an Honorary Justice of the Peace in 2009 and as Secretary of the Geelong Branch of the Royal Victorian Association of Honorary Justices. Alston helps “man” the desk at the Geelong and Corio Police Stations, and also attends to people requiring witnessing documents from his home. Since becoming a Justice of Peace in 2009 he’s witnessed some 26,698 items by 5428 persons.

Alston also received a Grand Master’s Order of Service Medal and 60 Years Membership Certificate from Freemasons Victoria.

VICTORIAN REGIONAL GROUP CONVENERS

Barwon: Barbara Abley AM
Central Highlands: Jean Wise OAM
Central Suburbs: Suzette Gallagher OAM
Eastern Suburbs: Barbara Thompson OAM
Gippsland: Beth Delzoppo OAM
Loddon Campaspe: John Higgs OAM
Mallee: Vernon Knight AM
Mornington Peninsula: Brian Stahl OAM JP
North East & Goulburn Valley: Barbara Thomas OAM
North Central Suburbs: Fred Harrington OAM
South Central Suburbs: Roger Wilson OAM
South West Victoria: Peter Habersberger AM RFD
Western Suburbs: Vance Hilton OAM
GALLIPOLI PEACE MESSAGE

Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC (Ret’d) was the guest of honour at a ceremony to mark the end of the war at Gallipoli, between the ANZACs and the Turks.

The guns fell silent in the ANZAC Sector at Gallipoli in the early hours of the 20th of December 1915. The 101th anniversary of this important event was commemorated at the Shrine of Remembrance with a ceremony. There were several members of the Victoria State Branch Committee of the Order of Australia Association present at the Shrine. Mr Paul Wheelton AM, Chairman of the Victoria State Branch of the Order of Australia Association laid a wreath on behalf of the organisation.

To commemorate the start of peace at Gallipoli and the end of hostilities between ANZACs and the Turks, the Friends of Gallipoli Inc. [FOGI], a not-for profit organisation, co-ordinated this 5th annual ceremony at the Shrine of the Remembrance.

The Chairman of FOGI and a member of the Victoria State Branch Committee, Dr John Basarin, OAM, said that “Marking of the conclusion of hostilities and silencing of the guns at Gallipoli between Australians and the Turks is actually a strong message of peace today. As Ataturk declared in 1934 “… Johnnies and Mehmetes are now lying in the bosom of a friendly country and are in peace…”

The ceremony was preceded by presentation of the FOGI Award to Sir Angus at the Australian Turkish Friendship Memorial near the Shrine for his significant support for the realisation of this Memorial. [Photo Credits: Magnet Photo Galleries, Melbourne.]