

OAA VIC Branch Chair's Report tabled at the Nov 22, 2017 AGM

It has been a great privilege to take over the role of Victoria Branch Chairman from Paul Wheelton AM in September this year following his election as Deputy Chairman of the National Council. We are indebted to Paul for the legacy he has left and I am acutely aware of the shoes I have to fill. As you will appreciate, I have been in this role for barely three months, and many of the projects I will report on were achieved under the chairmanship of Paul, so I attribute that success to Paul's leadership during his nearly two year-period in the role. I also pay tribute to the outstanding members of the Victoria Branch who are the reason I took on this role - as you expect with most Honour recipients, they are extremely dedicated and hard-working.

During the year, the Victoria Branch facilitated a number of events, a highlight being The Inspiring Australians Oration. This was a highly successful event with our wonderful Governor of Victoria, the Hon Linda Dessau AC, giving a most poignant and inspiring inaugural Oration.

Outgoing Treasurer, Julian Stock AM, facilitated yet another sell-out event at The National Gallery. We thank him for his service and welcome Wayne Myers OAM as our new Treasurer. Our branch has asked Wayne to focus on the future financial sustainability of our committee, ensuring we maintain a strong base from which to fund our operations and activities.

Other events throughout the year included the Australia Day Flag Lowering service at The Shrine, for which we thank Max Chester OAM, and the New Awardees function at the Alex Theatre, so generously sponsored and hosted by the theatre owner, Alex Vass.

These events would not happen without the expertise of Christine Unsworth AM and we thank Christine for her dedication and commitment to ensuring excellence in the running of all our events.

I'd like to acknowledge the support I receive from our Deputy Chairs: Duncan Stalker OAM, Deputy Chair Country and Dr John Basarin OAM, Deputy Chair Metropolitan.

2017 saw the awarding of our first Scholarship to a promising young Victorian, Jordan Eitler, via the OAA Foundation. This has resulted in a tangible benefit for us as members of the Association - we can see firsthand the results of our scholarship donation as Jordan is a regular attendee at our events. We thank the North East Victoria & Goulbourn Valley regional group for their contribution to our Victoria Branch scholarship and were pleased to announce our next scholarship will be fully covered with a generous donation by the family of the late Jack Joel OAM.

The work of Richard Rozen OAM and Neil Soullier OAM sourcing and managing our merchandise continues to provide us with a steady revenue stream, as well as constantly updated seasonal items for sale.

One of the great privileges of the role Chairman is to attend the Government House Investiture on behalf of the Victoria Branch. These occasions are all the more poignant due to the genuine warmth and interest shown by our Governor, and it is a delight to experience this from behind the scenes.

Much of the work of the OAA is carried out by the 13 regional groups across the State. The State Committee is here to support those regional groups whether it be through

policy development or interpretation, guidance, or just providing the glue that brings it all together. We've been pleased to see some outstanding Regional Group events and it's pleasing to see members of Victoria-Branch participating in many of these, as guests and as speakers. The Regional Groups Co-ordinator, Fred Harrington OAM, provides excellent leadership and support to our groups and we thank him for convening the group meetings throughout the year.

Can I acknowledge the work of each of our regional groups and confirm our commitment to represent you, to serve you and to act as your conduit to the National Board.

To that end, since assuming the role of chair, I have been pleased to actively support Trevor Clark OAM in his efforts to reinvigorate the newly named Melbourne Central Regional Group; we've supported the facilitation of the initial CBD Networking evenings, which we expect to grow in popularity over the next 12 months with high profile guests and venues.

Our E-newsletter has been well received and is expertly edited by Deputy Chairman Metropolitan, Dr John Basarin OAM, who also collates and edits our content for our national newsletter, The Order. Locally, we distribute approximately 80% of our newsletter by email and continue to urge members to access their Association news electronically, via their own or someone else's email. Mailing out of hard copies is undertaken by former Victoria Branch member Voi Williams OAM and we thank her for undertaking this task.

We've held workshops around strategy development and membership and we are working to align this work with initiatives currently being undertaken by National. My thanks to Cathy Roth OAM for leading us in this important work. On the subject of membership, I'd like to make a few comments regarding the drive to increase nominations for an Honour as a means of increasing the membership of the Association. As a principle, I would caution against this as I fear the result will be a dilution of the unique experience that being awarded such a prestigious acknowledgement provides. It should always be a special and thoroughly deserved tribute to those of you in the community who contribute above and beyond to make our world a better place. The Association needs to find a way to sustain itself, and add value to its mission and objectives, with a membership that is not numbers-based. I'll leave that with you for further debate and discussion.

Thank you for supporting my appointment as Chairman of the branch for a further year; as you will no doubt be aware, there will be new arrangements for our AGM, the next of which will be held in February 2019, to bring us in line with financial reporting arrangements required by the National Council

A key priority for the future will be to continue our reach into the community, raising awareness of the Honours system, removing barriers to nominations, and simplifying the process to encourage greater diversity across gender, age and cultural background.

We will support our National Council to achieve its own reformation and we are pleased to now have three Victoria Branch members sitting on the National Board, Paul Wheelton, Helene Bender and Dr Michael Kennedy. We wish them all the best with the reform work they are contributing to and look forward to improved processes, governance and direction from our national leadership team in the future.

Again, my thanks to Fred Harrington, for his tireless work as our Honorary Secretary. Fred puts significant hours into this role, often working under enormous pressure, and it is very much appreciated.

That concludes my Chair's Report. I look forward to working with you all in 2018 and enjoying the company of those of you who are joining us for the Luncheon today.