



THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

ABN 40 008 612 664

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN, MARK BONSER, AO, CSC, TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH ON SUNDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2019.

OVERVIEW OF 2018

Our WA Branch of the Association grew last year. We have over 670 members. I am hopeful we may exceed 700 members following the relatively large number of worthy West Australians honoured in the 2019 Australia Day list.

74 West Australians were on the Australia Day list, a significant increase on the previous list of 56 awardees. The increased numbers may indicate the work undertaken by your Branch committee, to better promote the honours' system, has achieved some traction.

I am delighted to say we have received great support in this project from our Patron the Governor, the Hon Kim Beazley AC and; from the Premier, the Hon Mark McGowan MLA. The immediate past Governor, the Hon Kerry Sanderson AC, continues to promote the Order of Australia on our behalf and, has agreed to be our Honorary Vice-Patron. This is indeed good news.

There is though, more work to be done. While overall numbers have increased, our State's 10.5% of the national population receives less than 7% of the awards. The State is under-represented in two key areas. These are; the number of appointments as an Officer of the Order and, the number of women receiving awards. Western Australia received only one of the 79 AOs awarded on Australia Day and, only 31.5% of the WA list were women. This was well below the national average of 37.4% of women on the national list.

The Branch project to increase the use of email for correspondence with members has achieved a success rate of over 90%. I would like to see us similarly increase the number and level of honours awarded to worthy West

Australians. Especially, when it comes to recognizing the many women of merit in our State's communities. I do hope we can convince more people that the Order of Australia is not 'a Big Mac Meal'.

NATIONAL HAPPENINGS

At the national level, much very good work is continuing to improve the decision making of the Board and its Executive. I will not go into great detail as this is the remit of our national Chairman Barry Nunn AO. The two most important areas I currently see receiving close attention are; financial management and reporting, and the investment portfolio. I am sure much of this will become apparent to the members at the National Conference to be held in Hobart from 11 to 14 April this year.

I am also hopeful that one of the next areas to receive national attention will be some urgent work to bring consistency and clarity to the Association's Constitution and By-Laws. They use complex language, are somewhat inconsistent and, need to provide a better balance between delegations of authority and the rights of the members.

Our Branch Elected Director, Professor Robin Watts AM, is chairing the committee reviewing these governance documents. And, I know she is very keen to ensure they are improved in a timely fashion. Robin has your committee's support in this important work and, I am sure she would welcome contributions from the members of our Branch.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH ACTIVITIES 2018

The Branch had a most successful calendar of activities in 2018. But change is good, and we do welcome new ideas that might be more relevant to our broad demographic.

The Police Patrons' Scheme is most ably led by Michael Bleus OAM. I am thankful for his ongoing efforts and, also thank Norma Beer, Ken and Shirley Birch, Jenny Davis, Macinty Winner, Jeff Wake, Geoff Simpson and Michael Bleus for being patrons in 2018. The Police Commissioner and the Academy staff fully support and value the contributions of our members. Please contact Michael Bleus if you are interested in being a Recruit Squad patron in 2019.

In April we held the reception to honour awardees in the Australia Day list at the University Club of the University of Western Australia. This only happened with the great support of the Chancellor of UWA, the Hon Robert French AC. I thank the Chancellor most sincerely for his support.

The Choral Evensong Dedication Service was held in June at St. George's Cathedral. The Dean, the Very Reverend Richard Pengelly, led a discussion between two awardees from the QB18 list; John Inverarity AM, OBE and, Lyn Foreman OAM. The discussion was about life skills, community and how the interviewees look to instill and maintain appropriate standards in those they influence. If only they had trained some of our current world leaders.

In August we had a good turnout at the City of Wanneroo for the reception to Honour awardees in the Queen's Birthday list. And, even with a spurious fire alarm interrupting proceedings, we had a great evening courtesy of Mayor Tracey Roberts, the Council and its employees. The Mayor has kindly offered to host another reception for us.

Over 130 attended the annual dinner at RPGC in September. Our Patron the Governor and Ms. Susie Annus were able to join us. And our keynote speaker, the Hon Robert French AC, delivered a most topical address titled; 'Against Incivility – Bad manners and general crossness in Australian civic discourse'. In looking at the world news, it seems to me that Australians may be relatively better mannered than many others.

The Royal Commonwealth Society joined our Christmas Lunch in November. The RAAF Association Club again looked after us very well and, Barry Nunn produced another challenging Christmas quiz. My thanks to Barry, and to those members who contributed prizes to the raffle.

Finally, our 'Let's Talk About' events included:

- A tour and lunch at the Police Academy.
- And, a tour and morning tea at Fremantle Prison.

Of course, none of this happens without a lot of work behind the scenes by our committee members and volunteers like Margaret Nunn, Norma Beer, Helen Smith and Joy Sinclair. A special thanks to our events coordinator, Bettine Heathcote, our Regional Conveners and all the committee members who give their time to arrange and support the Branch's activities. Thank you all.

EXPECTATIONS IN 2019

Members can expect a broad range of events in 2019. These include:

- The AD19 reception on 20 March at the City of Perth, the venue being arranged by Warren Kerr AM.
- A talk on finding HMAS SYDNEY at the Maritime Museum, also initiated by Warren Kerr.
- The Coral Evensong on 16 June. I understand the Archbishop may read the address this year.
- And, a wild flower-walk in Kings Park on 2 October.

Further information will be provided in our occasional newsletters and event invitations.

And, you can expect your Branch Committee will continue its work to increase the number of West Australians nominated for honours and, to further the Objects of the association.

Finally, a special thanks to our immediate past chairman, Bill Hassell AM, and all the committee for their support in my first year as Chairman.

Thank you.

Mark Bonser AO, CSC.