



# Newsletter

April 2017

Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators Inc

V1

## Booking slip      5th May 2017 Meeting

Please complete and return with your cheque by **12<sup>th</sup> April** to:  
**John Allsopp, 23 Lyndon Way, BEECROFT, 2119** (phone 9980 2114)

Here is my payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (at \$45.00 per head)

for \_\_\_\_\_ and me to attend the IRSEA luncheon  
at 11.30am for 12.00pm at '**99 on York**', 99 York Street, Sydney on 5th May 2017.

Please provide \_\_\_\_\_ vegetarian meal(s).

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please print your surname here. \_\_\_\_\_

Make your cheque payable to the *Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools* and cross it 'Not negotiable'.

Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after **20th April**

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## IRSEA 2017 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

We, the undersigned, being financial members of the Association, nominate:

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As an ordinary committee member AND/OR for the specific position of (please specify):

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I acknowledge and accept this nomination

**Nominator:**

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**Nominee:**

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**PLEASE RETURN TO THE SECRETARY (Geoff Walton)**  
**prior to the Election to be conducted at the AGM on 5th May 2017**

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## *From the President*



*Alan Laughlin, President IRSEA 2016-17*

Our AGM luncheon meeting is scheduled for 5 May and I know all office holders are finalising reports and information for this occasion.

At our last committee meeting we spent a considerable time finalising processes to rationalise membership data bases and payment systems.

Our incoming Treasurer Ray Gillies and Membership Co-ordinator Allan Mills have been unstinting in their work on this. This is a challenging task and I am well aware of the many phone calls and emails they have been making.

Among the committee I would also like to single out Peter Robinson, who puts so much effort into our Newsletter. As you would know the task of editing, formatting, publishing and then mail out is extremely demanding.

My thanks for the hard work of these wonderful people. As I have said on a number of occasions, an organisation like ours is dependent on the good will and commitment of many people and their willingness to give up so much of their time.

Finally please consider attending our AGM. This is partly an administrative meeting, it is, as usual, an occasion for collegiality and catch up.

A couple of snippets of information. Firstly, I mentioned in our last Newsletter that the Australian College of Educators (ACE), had its 2017 Fellows and Friends Dinner at the Royal Automobile Club on 3 March and the guest speaker was Mark Scott, the Secretary (Director General) of the NSW Department of Education. I found his speech both exciting and engaging.

I was personally very heartened to hear Mark talk about the critical importance of leadership, particularly the role of the

principal in achieving our educational goals. This was a public affirmation of the importance of leadership that has been long overdue.

He compared the work of the military and medical professions in identifying and nurturing leadership and the need we have to lift our game. He saw that Australia's ongoing prosperity and advancement is critically dependent on education and particularly the leadership in our schools. To quote from his speech;

For those who choose to lead in an educational setting: who sign up to ensure every child learns and thrives, to see that every teacher is improving and every school is delivering on its unique social responsibility – what a challenge. What an opportunity. There are few roles more demanding, or as intrinsically rewarding. There are none more important.

He went on to state how the Department is now comprehensively researching areas of need and implementing programs to better support leaders in our schools. He also stated that the Department would be expanding the number of Director positions to reduce the school / Director ratio to a more manageable level to achieve better leadership support.

I came away feeling this man had a genuine feel for our schools and a commitment to making a difference. May I suggest you read the speech in detail, it can be found on the web: <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-us/key-people/mark-scott-s-update/the-leadership-challenge>

Secondly I would like to report on another uplifting event, the Insight Program on SBS, aired on 7 March. This show is chaired by

Jennie Brockie and presents personal stories on a range of issues. That night the title was "A Teacher Changed My Life". It presented contemporary stories from students who were, from many measures, in trouble in life and who were heading for a social and educational disaster. In each case, but through very diverse technics, a teacher had persevered and won these students over.

They had each become outstanding successes in their chosen field, as diverse as becoming a geologist with Rio Tinto to the principal of one of our high schools. The teachers were present and their perspectives uplifting. This again reaffirmed what we all know, that a good teacher values all children and takes the time to engage, support, persevere and build self-esteem.

It was great viewing and after personally developing a fair coating of cynicism with the current state of our media and politics, this was a show that cut through and gave me confidence that good things are still happening out there in our schools. If you haven't seen this, take the time and go to SBS on demand, Insight Episode 4, 2017. The link is: <http://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/program/insight>

In conclusion, may I acknowledge the recent sad passing of a number of our esteemed colleagues. Bernie Delaney passed away on 8 March 2017 and Bruce Kemp on 20 February 2017. We have also been advised that Tom Reid's widow, Shirley, passed away on 27 February 2017. We express our condolences to their families and friends. We also wish a speedy recovery for any of our members who may be experiencing ill health.

Alan Laughlin

**Geoff Walton**

**2017 Annual General Meeting:**

Our lunch meeting on 5 May will commence at the usual time, 12.30 pm, with a brief General Meeting. This will be followed by the 64th Annual General Meeting. Remember that with the exception of the positions of President, (Kerrie Ikin accepted the nomination for and was elected Vice President at the 2016 AGM and will move into the President's role for 2017) and Immediate Past President, all committee and office bearer positions will be declared vacant. To comply with Clause 16 of the Constitution, nominations for committee and office bearer positions must be made in writing. *(A copy of the Nomination Form has been incorporated into the first page of this email version of the Newsletter and will also be included with your Membership Renewal notice.)*

To maintain our financial member status, most of us will need to pay our 2017 fee (\$15) before or at the AGM on 5 May 2017. Ray Gillies and Allan Mills have prepared the 2017 Membership Renewal Notices which will be separately mailed to members by Australia Post.

**Executive Committee Meeting:**

During their meeting on 20 February 2017, committee members refined and agreed to the procedures for managing 2017 Membership Renewals. Ray Gillies, Assistant Treasurer tabled drafts of the forms that will be posted to members. Both Ray and Allan Mills, (Membership Officer), acknowledged the recent work that outgoing Treasurer, Richmond Manyweathers has undertaken over the last couple of months to ensure that the

information about individual member's financial status is up-to-date.

During 2017 the executive will give all Institute members, including the widows and widowers of members, an opportunity to provide feedback about the relevance of our current program of activities. The Objects of the Institute are listed on page 1 of the IRSEA Constitution – in a practical sense we would like to know “how well are we doing” and “what else should we try to include in the Institute program”?

**From the inbox:**

In a recent telephone conversation **Julie Goodsir** told me that Alan Laughlan's From the President column in the February Newsletter had alerted her to the ACE Dinner earlier this month. She also wanted to confirm whether widows and widowers needed to make special arrangements if they wanted to attend IRSEA meetings. I assured Julie that all widows and widowers were welcome to attend lunches, we have some who are regular attendees and that our Luncheon co-ordinator, John Allsopp, happily receives and processes their booking slips.

In an email from **David Maher**, he expresses a concern about what he sees as “an alarming decline in the HSC results obtained by students” in government secondary schools in what was the pre-Schools Renewal North-West Region. His concern is based on knowledge of the local educational community and his limited research into the pattern of HSC results and the number of students from this group of schools listed in the SMH's “Roll of Honour”. In 2014 and 2015 no students from this group of schools made the list and in 2016 the name of one student appeared in it. David has suggested that this is an

issue that we as an Institute should consider taking up. The recent announcement by Simon Birmingham of an **Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education** could be a timely focus .



Tony Re, Alan Pratt and Geoff Walton

### Members Say

#### My recent trip to the Solomon Islands

**Geoff George**

Last October my wife and I visited the Solomon Islands. You might ask where are they located and why go there?

The Solomon Islands are situated just north east of Australia and is a 3 1/2 hour flight from Sydney. It is a sovereign country consisting of six major islands and over 900 smaller islands lying to the east of Papua New Guinea. Its current population is nearing 700,000 with many living a subsistence form of life in their small villages, settlements and islands away from the main urban centres.

About 95% of the population are Christians with the majority being church of Melanesia (Anglican), Roman Catholic, South Seas Evangelical and Seventh Day Adventist.

The country's capital, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal. The Battle of Guadalcanal became an important and bloody campaign during the Second World War as the Allies began to repulse Japanese expansion.

The country became independent from Britain in 1978. At this time they did not have a Government Secondary School Education system other than a small number of privately funded church schools. The newly elected Government wished to establish their own government school system based on the NSW system.

Funding for this program was partly sourced through an organisation called the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) and the University of New England was the successful tenderer. Nine people were chosen representing nine curriculum areas (including religion) to assist the government in setting up their own Secondary School system. This program included the in-servicing of teachers so that they followed a modified curriculum based on the NSW Education System.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to be involved in the setting up of the Industrial Arts/Technology curriculum area. You may be aware that the late John Penman was the Maths representative. Our panel of nine visited the Solomons twice per year for periods of from 4 to 6 weeks.

Each visit entailed 2 weeks of intensive in-service training followed by in-school visits to assist them in setting up appropriate equipment and resources.

One of the major tasks during each visit was to develop teaching resources applicable to the Solomon Island

communities. Teachers were encouraged to develop and trial these with their classes between our visits. We would then observe the success of these resources during our visits to their schools.

We employed a number of trained teachers sourced from Britain and NSW to assist in the development of the local teachers. The University of South Pacific in Fiji established a campus in Honiara to train teachers in all curriculum areas. UNE and Macquarie University also assisted us with short courses for Solomon Island teachers during their semester breaks.

It is interesting to note that some of the expatriate teachers employed eventually married local girls. Joy and I were invited to some of these wedding ceremonies but unfortunately the timing was not convenient. They would have been interesting experiences as in those days things such as "Bride prices with shell money" was still in vogue.

Near the end of my tenure (1985) we were able to arrange for some of our partners to visit the Solomons with us. Joy and Helen Penman, together with John and me, had a wonderful experience travelling around the Islands in various forms of transport (including very basic wooden canoes).

Some of the accommodation was very basic but was made up for by the friendliness and hospitality of the local village people.

I found it very engaging during my recent visit to the Solomons. Joy and I spent the first few days in Honiara being a tourist visiting such places as the colourful food markets in downtown Honiara, the coconut

oil factory (famous for its coconut oil soaps).

The American War Memorial located high up on a ridge where one can view many of the battlefield sites and enjoy expansive views across Iron Bottom Sound, the National Museum, Botanical Gardens, the Honiara Golf Club (which now has grass greens!) and the Vilu War Museum. Honiara is not what you would call an attractive city but certainly has many interesting aspects to it.

I was able to catch up with some Education officials who found my memories of my time in the Solomons very instructive as some of their history was lost during floods in Honiara following a Tsunami. They arranged for me to be interviewed on local radio with the Chief Education Officer.

Unfortunately education is still not compulsory because of lack of funding and accessibility problems on some of the Islands. Local teachers are now better qualified but unfortunately are not well paid. The government has built more schools, as has a number of the religious institutions, but all suffer from a lack of funding.

The next few days were spent travelling to some of the Islands we had visited during the 1980's. If ever you venture into that part of the world we would recommend the following Eco Resorts:

Zipolo Habu Resort on Lola Island, located within the Vonavona Lagoon in the Western Province. Our accommodation consisted of a leaf bungalow with private facilities right on the water of the lagoon. The resort has a restaurant and bar and the crystal clear waters are teeming with fish and amazing coral formations.



Fatboys Resort is located on Mbabanga Island near Gizo (which is the second largest village in the Solomons). Again, our accomodation had private facilities with a restaurant and bar over the water.

Fish and lobster are in abundance all over the Solomons and very cheap in restaurants. Snorkelling, fishing, kayaking, visiting local villages and just relaxing were our main activities. The local people go out of there way to make your visit enjoyable.

If you are looking for a fresh, safe and friendly destination to visit (and not far from Australia), the Solomon Islands will give you a new and different experience.



Brent and Sylvia Corish

#### **THE FRIENDS OF STEWART HOUSE**

**Alan Laughlin**

IRSEA has been a great supporter of FOSH and you may be interested in some of the coming social and fund raising activities. This is a great way to meet old friends and support a worthy cause.

#### **April 30, (Sunday). Heritage Steamboat on Sydney Harbour.**

Come and join the crew on the heritage steam tug, Waratah, built in 1906 and lovingly restored and operated by the Sydney Heritage Fleet. The cruise leaves Blackwattle Bay fleet base at 11.30 sharp. Returns approx.15.30. Bring your own lunch and drinks. (Deck chairs provided).

Contact: [alaughlin21@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alaughlin21@optusnet.com.au)

Cost: \$55 includes \$10 donation to Stewart House.

#### **May 17, (Wednesday). Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway.**

Rhodes Park, off Killoola St Concord West, 10 am. Cost is a \$10 donation to FOSH, paid on the day. Lunch is available. You will be taken by surviving Kokoda veterans (all in their 90's) for the 800 metre walk which includes 22 information stations.

Contact Ray Gentles at [rjgentles@gmail.com](mailto:rjgentles@gmail.com) or mobile 0407 710 795 by 1 May. (Ray's dad will be one of the guides)

#### **May 19, (Friday). Ghost Tour, Old Government House, Parramatta.**

The Governors and their households left Old Government House in the 1850s but their presence still haunts the house. Explore the 217 year old Georgian mansion by candlelight and hear strange tales from the site's long history. Time: 7.15pm Venue: Old Government House Parramatta Park Includes: Supper. Cost: \$50pp (includes donation to Stewart House) Bookings: Essential asap.

Contact: Brian Powyer  
[bpowyer@optusnet.com.au](mailto:bpowyer@optusnet.com.au) Mb: 0401 181 170

#### **June 17, (Saturday). Rosehill Gardens Race Day.**

Stewart House will be running its own Race Day at Rosehill Race Course. This will be in the Grand Pavilion Ballroom and includes a three course meal, drinks, live band, race guide and commentary. This is a fun day and a great opportunity to catch up with old friends.

Cost \$160 per head.

Amanda Bisset, SH Marketing Manager,  
[amanda@stewarthouse.org.au](mailto:amanda@stewarthouse.org.au) 9938 3100

**July 20, (Thursday). Lunch at Doyle's Restaurant on the beach at Watson's Bay.**

This popular event has been organised for Thursday July 20 commencing at 12.30pm. The menu comprises of fish chowder followed by fish and chips, accompanied by a glass of beer, wine or soft drink at a cost of \$45, which includes a \$10 donation for Stewart House.

Come by ferry from Circular Quay and invite your friends. Marketa Bird at [dqmbird@bigpond.com](mailto:dqmbird@bigpond.com) or mobile 0417 275 393.

**Members Say**

**Return to Mecca**

**Laurie Dicker**

Last December I had the great pleasure to attend the Institute luncheon in Sydney to meet up with many former colleagues with whom I used to work; though I did find it strange to be at a bowling club on the second floor of a city high rise. You have to make excuses for me as, for the last fifteen years, I have lived in Queensland and it is not often that I venture south of the border to meet up with my Mexican friends. Up here they play bowls on the grass outside.

As I looked around the group I was in awe at the collective intellect, talent, experience and corporate knowledge in that room and I estimated that it would take little time for them to put on their thinking caps to find solutions to all the current problems in teaching, learning and educational administration. But we, like old wolves, are expected to walk away to die in the forest and let the younger ones take over the pack.

I was humbled in the presence of educational royalty in that room and it got me thinking about my own experiences. I came to the conclusion that my only significant achievement in my long career in education was that I was the last person to be interviewed by the Public Service Board to be appointed as an Inspector of Schools.

Noel McClelland and I were appointed in September 1969. We had been interviewed by a panel to be recommended that we be appointed. We were then interviewed firstly by Jack Buggie as Director of Secondary Education and then by Dr David Vercoe as Director-General before going to the Public Service Board for another interview. We returned to Jack's office to await the decision of Mr Dickinson, Chairman, Gerry Gleeson and one other member of the Board, who in turn had to recommend to the Governor that he give Royal ascent to our appointments as loyal subjects of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, Queen of England and Australia.

After seeing me, the Board obviously did not want to be involved anymore in the selection and, as Noel had gone in first, I was the last to go through that process. I was disappointed that my official Departmental record of service did not recognise that major achievement.



I was very anxious about joining the inspectorate as I had little understanding of the conditions of employment on the secondary panel with regular visits to the country. I was put at ease when we met Ted Barker, Deputy Director of Secondary Education to explain the details of setting up a home office with equipment and stationery. Ted explained to Noel and me that it was most important to order as many rolls of red tape as allowed. When I asked if it was necessary to tie up every file with red tape he advised us not to waste it on files because red tape was the best thing to tie up your tomato plants in summer.

He then translated the bureaucratic jargon relating to pieces of furniture. We were allowed **Chairs, 2, Guests without arms**. Ted explained that only Deputy Directors and above were entitled to **Chairs, 4, Guests with arms**. I could not fathom why Inspectors could only invite anatomically challenged guests into their office.

When I asked to change some of the furniture he said that was not allowed as we had to stick to the proscribed list set down for Inspectors but if I went to the Department's used furniture store they would deliver what I wanted. It was then that I realised that Head Office had real human beings in it and life with the Department could not be bad if I had to work with people like Ted.

Three months later I was invited to a weeklong conference of senior administrators and Inspectors at the University of NSW. Just before the final dinner Tom McLaren told me I had to propose the Loyal Toast. I had to ask Graeme Little what that meant before calling everyone to fill their glasses with sweet sherry, to rise and respond to my call

'The Queen'. At that moment I became a confirmed republican.

In recent years I have had little opportunity to go on a pilgrimage back to the Mecca in Sydney so it was with great excitement that I returned in December for the luncheon. But I was somewhat disappointed with the cityscape. The buildings looked a little drab; the curtains had faded. I had to drink soy milk as the cows down south had gone dry. I couldn't get eggs as the chooks were off the lay and the school students at the station were complaining that they had to go to school in the dark. It is no wonder we have climate change with all those extra hours of sunshine. We in the independent state of Queensland don't have those problems. But you southerners are causing the ice caps to melt and the Great Barrier Reef to die.

I took a day to tour old sites. I went to the art gallery but the walls were filled with nudes and Judy would not have liked me to linger there, so I left with eyes cast down. I went to the Police and Justice Museum but was refused entry as it had been hired out to some corporate conference for the day. When I complained that the gallery belonged to the public and that we should have access, I was shown rudely to the exit to Phillip Street and told that when I could pay to hire the place for the day the government might let me in.

I walked to Bridge Street where I knew I would be welcomed with open arms knowing that my sweat, blood, tears, heart and soul were imbedded in the huge blocks of sandstone of that edifice. I got two steps inside the door before being ordered out with the explanation that the building was now owned by a private hotel and that the

Education Department had to move out to make way for that corporate enterprise.

I did ask if there was anyone in the senior management of education in NSW who came from a teaching, learning or curriculum background hoping that I might know someone from the past who was still there. The long silence gave me the answer. I was then informed that they were mostly accountants and administrators. I am already turning and I am not yet in my grave. I phoned Joe Bjelke Peterson, he's still alive up here you know, don't you worry about that. He advised me to get to hell out of the place, to go north to safety over the border. He told me to scatter some handfuls of wheat around the Mall to keep the locals scratching while I had a chance to escape.

But everywhere I walked I was run into by people tapping their fingers rapidly on a small rectangular disk in their hand, totally oblivious of me or anyone else. When I refused to get out of their way I was greeted with sour grunts. Someone told me that they were tapping on their mobile phones. Next thing you will try to tell me that Dick Tracey is real. What will they think of next? I decided to get back to paradise at Buderim where I can watch the 'Real Housewives of Sydney' from afar knowing that they were not like that in my day.

For those of you who are thinking of visiting Queensland I would advise you to do it soon. Recently there has been an advertisement showing in Queensland with Mal Meninga, coach of the Queensland State of Origin rugby league team, dressed in a maroon gown stating that we are going to build a great wall along our southern border and make NSW pay for it. It is tribal up here and when Pauline becomes Queen

of Queensland after the next election I am sure none of you Mexicans from down south will get in.

I predict that, by next year, you will need a current passport and visa to get in. Residents from certain suburbs in Sydney will be banned from travel to Queensland. Those entering by plane or train will be sprayed with insecticide and tick gates are to be installed along the borders to stop road traffic. All foreign boats will be turned away. "We will make Queensland grate again." In the meantime you are most welcome to come up. Give me a call and I will have a good bottle or two for your visit.



Laurie Dicker. Alan Pratt and Barrie Higgins

### Members Say

#### **Sydney Boys' High School Class of '61 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion**

##### **Trevor Wooden**

When reflecting on the fiftieth anniversary of the Sydney Boys' High School class of '61, or any class of any year, the great temptation is to reference the remarkable stellar achievements of some classmates. To do that alone would be to ignore the less

obvious but arguably more important achievements of the group as a whole, and the role of public education as provided at SBHS, impacting upon the changes to, and underpinning the growth of post World War two Australia.

Our class of '61 had enrolled five years earlier, in 1957, as the last of the war babies preceding the ubiquitous baby boomers, the Wyndham Report and the educational reforms giving rise to six years of secondary schooling and the introduction of the Higher School Certificate.

Our class of '61 reflected the huge changes confronting Australia in the post war decade where only sixteen percent of students completed secondary school with only thirteen per cent undertaking the Leaving Certificate, eight per cent matriculating and only five per cent actually attending university.

Sydney Boys' High School was originally founded in 1883 as the beginning of a planned public education experiment premised upon ideas drawn from all over the Western world.

We, who enrolled in 1957, at twelve years of age were drawn from various backgrounds; we entered from all social classes through out Sydney, from a variety of European and Asian origins reflecting the post World War Two chaos, its iniquities and inequities, the plight of refugees and the huge migration program undertaken to stimulate national growth, commencing in 1948.

In coming together, I believe, we unconsciously formed our own unplanned socio-educational experiment critical to Australian democracy. As such our class of

'61 was a real melting pot, a crucible in which the values and beliefs integral to the successful construction of modern Australia were to be fused.

Values which included tolerance, justice, equity, self responsibility, the fair go, team work and a belief in a democratic, equitable, ordered and civil society. The ethos and sense of community developed by our, originally, disparate group of students was the genesis of the modern multi cultural Australia long before the term was considered.

Without that ethos being formed in schools such as Sydney Boys' High School at this time, our society, in coming together as a coherent entity may well have been in dire straits. For many of us addressing the challenges, born out of the times; the challenges arising from our individual backgrounds and the challenges thrown up by the remarkable academic and sporting traditions of the school, was not always easy.

It should be remembered that there were not many of the modern student welfare support structures available in the 1950's; so when you fell over you picked yourself up, often with your mates support only, dusted down and just got on with it.

One of our classmates, recently wrote stating in part: "our actions were our own. Consequences were expected; no one to hide behind. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke rules was unheard of."

From this then grew the resilience and determination required to keep on answering the often difficult questions posed, at that time and in later life, which

led to an enhanced sense of community and individual achievement.

All of this was underpinned by our principal, K J Andrews' forward looking belief, in education being child centred, so that his boys learned to accept responsibility, how to think and act independently and to make moral judgements for themselves within the framework of seeking academic achievement and success.

And success there was, on all fronts, which is very effectively represented in the achievements of many old boys, and in this case, as an example only, I single out Professor Sir Michael Marmot, the world renowned epidemiologist. Mick was knighted by her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and I quote: *"For services to epidemiology and research into understanding health inequalities."*

Mick argues through his research that we need to make society more participatory and more inclusive in order to improve the public health of **all** citizens. He demonstrates that average life expectancy is directly related to individual socio-psychological, economic and political empowerment and he underscores the related impact of government policy on the development or lack of development of that individual empowerment.

There have been many such individual success stories from the class of '61 but perhaps the great achievement belongs to the group, as a whole, in developing a belief and a value system which enabled the academic and individual achievements to project into the public domain.

Quoting one of our classmates again: *our generation has produced some of the best*

*risk takers, problem solvers and inventors ever. The past fifty years has seen an explosion of innovation. We had freedom, responsibility, success and failure and we learned how to deal with it all.*

So in dealing with it all and in transcending our cultural, ethnic and socio economic circumstances and in responding to the various challenges, we, the students of '61, as a group, have been able to positively and generously contribute to our democratic Australian society and, in many cases, the world community at large.

Richard Flanagan the Tasmanian author ('Gould's Book of Fishes') has said: *My grandfather was an illiterate railway fettler. I am a writer whose books are read around the world: the only difference between me and my grandfather is two generations of public education.*

For many of us, as the class of '61, the difference in successfully emerging from our respective backgrounds, accepting challenge and making positive contributions to our society, was the five years spent together at Sydney Boys' High School.

**Trevor Wootten**



Cate and Ian Vacchini

## **MEETINGS...BLOODY MEETINGS**

**Graham Sims**

Those of us with long memories, (is that ANYONE?), might remember the wonderful John Cleese 'training film' of the above name. Some brave souls in the old Department used to show it as a so-called 'trigger film', (even though neither Roy Rogers nor his trusty steed appeared in it.)

Of course, showing it was an exercise in risk management, as its fundamental focus was to demonstrate how, when and why NOT to hold a meeting. We would all nod wisely, and thenceforth go off to our endless meetings, the vast majority of which flew in the face of the very points the Cleese film so tellingly demonstrated.

I once spent nearly an hour at an 'important' meeting, (was ANY meeting ever promulgated as UNimportant?), before I realized I'd gone to the wrong one.

Neither my PRESENCE at the one, nor my ABSENCE from the other, made the slightest bit of difference to either.

Too many meetings remind me of the lovemaking of elephants ... they come with high expectations ... are done with a great deal of seriousness ... are accompanied by a lot of noise ... and the eventual reward is in no way commensurate with the degree of effort involved.

Meetings are a bit like 'important' announcements ... (again, is there ever an UNimportant announcement?)

Perhaps I'm not alone in remembering a certain Deputy Principal of Homebush Boys' High, who, every morning, just as teachers

were valiantly trying to start their lessons, would interrupt proceedings with an ear-splitting siren-sound through the P.A. system, heralding his inevitably 'important' and unfailingly boring 'announcements'.

One day, he excelled himself to the point where his announcements were never seen (or heard) in the same light again.

Having 'announced' himself with his usual siren-sound, he then proclaimed: 'I am making this announcement to advise you that today there will be ... NO announcements!'

The almost simultaneous roar of laughter could be heard not only all over the school, but through the streets of Homebush ... and the esteemed DP never understood WHY.

I've never considered meetings to be places where things are actually DONE ... merely places where things are SAID ... a bit like Parliament, perhaps.

Like most of you, over the years, I've attended Branch meetings, Board meetings, Task Force meetings, District meetings, Project meetings, Club meetings, etc, etc.

They tended to be circumscribed by Agendas, Motions, General Business, Business Arising, (from where ... the ashes?) Presidents'/ Treasurers'/ Secretaries' Reports, Apologies (for what ... having the meeting?) and a whole gaggle of protocols that, while no doubt well-intended, all too often stretched the meeting into stifling boredom.

There always were, however, some linear souls who thrived on all this rigmarole, who would leap to their feet on some arcane



‘point of order’, and make Houdini-like remarks such as ‘through the Chair, if I may’, and so on.

One of the things I looked forward to in retirement was, so I thought, the relief of not having to attend meetings any more ... except the occasional ARISSEA/ISEA/ARSEA (or whatever we now call ourselves) meetings ... and they’re not too bad, minimum protocol and maximum socializing.

What I forgot to allow for were the more than 150 meetings of Probus, View, Rotary, Seniors and other clubs and groups to which I have been invited as guest speaker over the last three years or so.

To say they vary extraordinarily, from one to the other, would be an understatement.

Some run like clockwork, with a minimum of ‘bumf’, and, as guest speaker, I’m warmly welcomed, given the allocated time and (pretty basic) equipment needed.

Others seem to drown in their own, self-inflicted bureaucratese, run way behind schedule, and leave their guest speaker frustratingly inadequate time for their session.

It seems to have nothing to do with the SIZE of the group. Some very large (100+) groups run superbly, while some very small (20 or fewer) groups, to quote the old saying, could not run a brothel if the British navy was in port on pay night. Why is it so?

Some clubs actually distribute all the documentation from the previous meeting, in itself a GOOD idea, but then office-bearers stand up and READ all of it aloud, (often BADLY) despite the fact that the stuff

is already in everyone’s hands. AARRGGHH!

Other, more sensible office-bearers simply say, ‘All the relevant correspondence and documents are in members’ hands. Are there any questions?’

Some clubs, or, rather, some club MEMBERS seem to take their duties VERY seriously indeed.

I recall a small Ladies Probus Club, (NO ,not necessarily a club only for small ladies), whose Welfare Officer took her welfare duties, almost literally, beyond the pale.

As I sat patiently waiting for my speaker’s session to start, (already some 20 minutes late), Celeste, as we’ll call her, intoned the list of ailments, accidents and various misadventures that had befallen members since their last meeting.

Finally, she said, ‘Madame President, I’ve had extreme difficulty...EXTREME difficulty...in contacting Gladys. I’ve rung and left messages on her home phone and mobile...and she never seems to be home. The thought has occurred to me that she might have moved. Does anyone know her whereabouts?’

At this stage, before Celeste resumed her flow, in which she’d only paused to draw breath, a voice from the back of the room said, ‘She’s DEAD!’

‘WHO’S dead?’ asked the instantly refocused Welfare Officer.

‘Gladys is dead,’ said the voice. ‘She died some three months ago.’

‘Oh,’ said Celeste slowly, in almost disbelieving tones. ‘Then I don’t suppose she’d really be interested in our forthcoming bus trip.’

On another occasion, I was invited to speak at a Seniors’ Club in inner-western Sydney, and was given to understand there was parking available beneath the building .

On arrival, I discovered that a) there was NO parking beneath the building, nor anywhere else that I could find, and b) the building was virtually next to the railway station, meaning that I could have come by train anyway.

By then pretty hot under the collar, (and elsewhere, since it was a HOT day), I parked in a 15 minute ‘kiss & drop’ spot at the station, sprinted ... well, staggered, up the steps to the building, found the ‘organiser’, (using this term in its broadest sense), and said, “I’m your guest speaker. There’s NO parking under this building. Nor can I find parking anywhere nearby. What do I do?”

The ‘organiser’ looked around the large, upstairs room, possibly in the hope that a parking spot would magically appear before us, and made the profound statement, “Oh ,there’s no parking here, you know. Only in the streets, and that’s limited to one hour, I think.”

At this point, I found myself saying, “Right! I’ll drive around the block twice, and if I can’t find anywhere to park, I’m going home. I’ve driven for nearly an hour to get here, and I’m not wasting much more of my time.”

“I quite understand,” said the ‘organiser’, but I doubt she did.

As an anti-climax, I found an unrestricted parking spot, by a fluke, in a (reasonably) nearby street, and, muttering and grumbling, returned to the club, where, as almost the final straw, I found that they’d started the meeting without me, and my breathless arrival was treated with total ‘IGNORE’, in that good old Aussie phrase.

I sat down at a table, near the door, partly to catch my breath, and to ponder whether I’d chuck a fit of pique.

Two things then happened.

A nice lady from the group came over to me and said, “You look as if you could do with a cup of tea.” I agreed, and she soon produced one for me. (The ‘organiser’, who saw all this happening, continued to ignore me completely.

And then, while I was quaffing my cuppa, and contemplating a dignified departure in high dudgeon, up the stairs galloped a woman, who looked as breathless and frustrated as I was.

Making a bee-line straight for ME, she exploded, “I’m terribly sorry I’m late! There was NOWHERE to park, despite what I’d been told.”

All I could think of to say was, “I quite understand, but who are you?”

“I’m your guest speaker!” she replied.

From somewhere deep inside me, I heard a voice say, “Oh no, you’re NOT. I am!!!”

At this point, the ‘organiser’, who no doubt thought she’d better do some ‘organising’, ran over and said to my competitor, “No! No! You’re not due till NEXT month!”

Probably because she no longer had the energy to leave, the one-month-too-early guest speaker asked if she could stay and listen to my session, which she did.

The 'circus' had yet one more act to perform, when a tiny, bird-like lady sidled up to me, just before I spoke, and said in hushed tones, "You're our guest speaker, aren't you?"

Taking the proverbial punt, I replied, "Yes, I believe I am."

"Ah," she whispered. "We give our guest speakers a gift, and I've decided you'd like a dish!"

After a brief, deluded thought that she'd somehow arranged a date for me with Elle, or Kim Kardashian, I decided that was wishful thinking and gave my talk.

At the end of it, up popped this little old lady, and presented me with ... you guessed it, a dish, a very small-feeling dish, wrapped in what looked like old Christmas wrapping paper.

Now, folks, this had NOT been my best, or smoothest-running day, so, when I eventually got home, I left the 'dish', still wrapped, on the dishwasher. (Where else, one might ask?)

When Judy got home from school, she noticed the small package and asked what it was.

From the lounge-room, where I was watching the news, I gave her a somewhat censured version of my day.

Soon I heard the rustling of paper, followed by a chuckle from Judy, who then brought in

'my dish', saying, "this has been in an old lady's cupboard for years. Look at it."

The 'dish', actually what my family used to call a 'bread & butter plate', had indeed seen better days. It was chipped, tatty, and bore the faded inscription, 'David Jones 1948'.

That particular club is on my small, but significant 'Sorry, I have a prior commitment' list.

I've also learnt not to accept a speaking engagement at ANY Annual General Meeting of a club or group. NOT because I don't believe in AGM's, no doubt a necessary evil, but rather because in my experience they never run to time, have their own protocol and agenda, and rarely provide a suitably relaxing atmosphere for an invited guest speaker.

One particular group, far away in 'the Shire', convinced me of this.

I was invited to speak, on an agreed topic, for an agreed time of 45-50 minutes, drove from Thornleigh in the north, way beyond my comfort zone, almost as far as we go for our holidays, arrived on time, (no mean feat) discovered that it was the group's AGM, (which they'd not mentioned), AND that they'd invited THREE local politicians to the meeting.

Blind Freddie could see that all three 'pollies' would insist on speaking, to extol their virtues and achievements, whether invited to do so or not. ALL three did so, and this, coupled with all the AGM mumbo-jumbo deemed necessary, meant that, as the guest speaker, who'd travelled from one end of Sydney to the other, I had precisely

12 minutes, instead of my pre-arranged time of 45-50 minutes.

I found myself saying that there was no way I could do justice to the topic as agreed, wished them a Merry Easter ... and left. They are also on my 'prior commitment' list.

While the above may sound like a churlish old curmudgeon's whingeing about meetings which he freely and voluntarily agreed to attend, these less than happy adventures in retirement are more than compensated for by the many delightful groups to whom I speak, who genuinely enjoy the fellowship, who love hearing or being reminded about some of the characters and events of our past, who love to contribute their own memories and anecdotes, and who invite me back, again and again.

I now have at least 25 topics, some of which were suggested by groups to whom I have spoken.

I have met and become friends with some truly delightful and remarkable people, including the 94 year-old niece of the redoubtable Bea Miles, (the topic of one of my talks), and a lady whose newsagency was regularly frequented by the wrestler, Big Chief Little Wolf, the topic of another.

Almost none of my talks remains in its original format, as there is often in the audience at least one person who has a personal perspective or memory to add, ALL of which I love to hear, and often incorporate.

In addition to the talks themselves, I now regularly show and discuss a selected film, from my extensive library, to a 'movie club' within a local retirement village, to an

always enthusiastic and appreciative audience.

While it is a delicate and personal issue, I have become MUCH more aware of, and, I hope, sensitive to the issue of loneliness among (too) many folk of our vintage.

The fact that some social groups may take their administrative procedures a mite too seriously for my liking, they play a valid, sometimes vital role, in helping people to feel they are still part of 'the real world', and that their views and memories are still worthwhile.

Being, so far, lucky enough to have retained a reasonable number of my 'little grey cells', as Poirot would put it, while some dear friends are really struggling with Parkinson's and other dignity destroying maladies, I intend to keep up my speaking program for as long as possible.

Despite the occasional pomp and ceremony that some folk can't seem to do without, I have a ball!

### December Lunch



Peg Craddock and Jeanette Manyweathers

## Members Say

### Frank Fisher

Although Bernie Delaney was well into his 90th year, the passing of a fine, respected former colleague is nevertheless tinged with great sadness.

In my years as Assistant Regional Director, responsible for the North West Region's secondary staffing, I had regular contact with Bernie Delaney in his role as Assistant Director, Personnel. With his background as a mathematician there could be no better officer in this position over-sighting the staffing of secondary schools across the state.

He was a top professional and an officer of great integrity and modesty. He earned the respect of our peers for the manner in which he operated, always "on the ball" and for dealing with requests for staffing with a straight bat and on the square.

The potential requests for establishment and/or reclassification of departments usually brought a prompt first response from Bernie, "NO!" Then it was up to you to argue the case systematically on its merits.

Australians have a great propensity to assign nicknames to the people with whom they work. Bernie did not escape - privately and respectfully he was assigned the title of James Bond origin, 'Dr No'.

For almost five years I was one who drew heavily on Bernie Delaney's professional experience and resources. That will never be erased from my memory and I honour him now.

In the 1980s, more than thirty years ago and in the years immediately preceding the

concept of the "Self Managing School" and "Schools Renewal", our proud Department of Education was supported by a particularly fine body of Assistant Directors in the Personnel Directorate who dealt daily with the mechanics of keeping schools 'up and running'.

Officers including Bernie Delaney, Peter Bray and Bill Booth were highly experienced and competent, and human beings of exemplary modesty, integrity and professionalism. They lent strength to our Department's reputation

All of us have attended many retirement functions for our fellow officers and colleagues; we would be hard pressed to remember any of them in any detail.

However, I did attend Bernie Delaney's retirement function in 1987 and it remains the most memorable of all. It was a harbour cruise and luncheon on the well-known small hired ferry the 'Vagabond Star'.

It was a beautiful Sydney Sunday and the cruise around the harbour from Walsh Bay lasted for about two hours - or should have. We were all standing up outside on the top deck, in the sunshine. A very happy day.

The luncheon was fine. Next came the speeches and by the time Bernie was asked to respond the skipper had almost run out of hire time and was anxious to return to Walsh Bay. Poor Bernie! He became so engrossed in his life's journey that he barely recounted past his own secondary school days.

The 'Vagabond Star' circled numerous times underneath the Harbour Bridge as Bernie valiantly endeavoured to complete



his response. The skipper applied what in today's computer age amounts to a 'forced closure' return to Walsh Bay.

Even then, the hire-time had well and truly expired. Bernie was deeply embarrassed and a few days later each of us received a personal letter of apology.

Bernie need not have done that. It was great to be there that day and to share with him this important moment. It is one farewell we will all remember. He will remain a memorable figure in my life.

Rest in Peace, Bernie.

#### **David Maher**

Today's SMH carries the death notice of Bernie Delaney who was 90 and well-known to me. I first met Bernie in 1952 when I was appointed T.I.C. to Burrupine near Macksville and Joy and Bernie joined the staff of Macksville High School.

Joy and Bernie were very hospitable to me at that time and again to Anne and me when we moved to Carlingford from Moree in 1970. The flavour of Joy's package of biscuits that she occasionally made for me to take back to my isolated community lingered for many years with me after they were devoured with gratefulness.

Bernie was a member of the famous Macksville High School cricket team that comprised five teachers and six students. Other staff members of the team included: Jock Elphick; Bill Leyshon; Allan Cox; Stan Moore, all of whom had distinguished careers in Education. My recollection is that Joy was the team's scorer when Bernie played in the team.

I played for Taylor's Arm. Our home ground was adjacent to the school and opposite the Pub With No Beer.

Joy and Bernie were a great team and will be missed for their professionalism, kindnesses towards others and many other worthy qualities.

#### **Address changes (Changes shown in Bold)**

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**PO Box 619, Tweed Heads NSW 2485**  
**07 5590 4609**

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[hcmaster@optusnet.com.au](mailto:hcmaster@optusnet.com.au)

PHELPS Lionel  
[lionelphelps1234@gmail.com](mailto:lionelphelps1234@gmail.com)

PROWSE, Ron **14 Hay Ave**  
**SHOULHAVEN HEADS NSW 2535**

ROWLAND David  
**1141 Mount Crosby Road**  
**Karana Downs 4306**  
[sherara@bigpond.com](mailto:sherara@bigpond.com)  
**07 3201 1613**

#### **Deaths**

20/2/2017 **KEMP B (Bruce)**  
**102/4-10 Pound Rd,**  
**HORNSBY NSW 2077**

8/3/2017 **DELANEY B (Bernie)**  
**37 Rosen St,**  
**EPPING NSW 2121**

**Fellow members,  
I need material for the July 2017 Newsletter.**

**What interests you? What have you done?  
What do you remember?  
Chances are that it will be of interest to other members**

**Accompanying photos are most welcome.  
Preferably as uncompressed jpg email attachments.  
(straight from your camera)**

**Copy deadline: 15th June 2017**

**Peter Robinson,  
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**Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.**