



AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY ASSOCIATION

Newsletter 21

December 2013

Supporting those who risk their life to save life, property or the environment.
The official newsletter of the Australian Bravery Association

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT - John Thurgar

Dear Members,

This has been a busy year in the history of the ABA and I wish to publicly thank all the members of the National Executive (NX) for digging deep and keeping faith in the ABA and its aims and objectives. We have had to convene on a bi-monthly basis to keep abreast of matters brought before us. Fortunately, we have employed the use of technology and teleconferencing to allow us to convene regularly and keep costs to a minimum.

We have had many exciting and positive events and happenings over the past year. Your National Vice-Presidents have met and extended your congratulations to the new Bravery Award recipients at the various State Government Houses as well as at Yarralumla. The Mildura gathering in June was once again a great success thanks to Coralee. The weather was warm and Sally even 'hotter' for the Queensland gathering in August at Currumbin. Thanks Coralee and Sally for all your hard work and friendship. On another positive note, the A/Professor Geoffrey Boyce, 'Brave Youth of the Year Award' is currently being finalised and there are some great contenders for this year's award as well as the 'Dennis Lever BM' Memorial Trophy.

Unfortunately, we have also spent considerable time dealing with the serious issue regarding three of the four former signatories of the ABA national bank accounts, not signing over those accounts to the currently elected national office bearers.

Whatever the reasons are for them taking this course of action, the results which directly affect the ABA have been:

- To prevent the incoming office bearers gaining access to the ABA national bank account records.
- To prevent the current National Treasurer from conducting a full and comprehensive audit of the ABA bank accounts for the past four years in response to member's concerns arising from the lack of information within the former National Treasurer's Reports and unanswered questions regarding the accounts over that period.
- To limit funds available for the day to day operation of the ABA.
- To deny current office bearers access to funds to seek legal advice and if necessary take action.
- To hold to ransom, a perceived amount of money that is claimed by an entity separate to the ABA.

The books of account for the ABA national bank accounts were handed over at the AGM in a plastic box with little or no explanation. A thorough check has revealed supporting invoices, receipts and documentation for payments made are missing, records of income and expenditure are incomplete, and records of major transactions have no supporting documentation or records.

The above matters will be on the agenda for discussion at the AGM, and your direction as members of the ABA will be sought.

AGM in Canberra over the period 14-17 February 2014

Please see the attached Program of events for February 2014. We envisage the next AGM weekend to be bigger and better than ever. It will be a 'cracker'. Please note there will be a Meet and Greet especially for first-timers to Canberra. This will allow us to meet everyone prior to moving across the road to the Australian War Memorial for a

tour, followed by the moving 'Last Post' Ceremony, based on the evening ritual at Ypres in Belgium. Sadly, we have many former members to pay our respects to. The ABA will feature during the ceremony and we will lay a number of wreaths. If any of you would like to bring and lay a wreath at the appointed time during the ceremony, please feel free to do so. I encourage all of you to support those who wish to do so.

I will not go through the rest of the events, but they certainly are diverse and not to be missed.

Remember to take advantage of the accommodation offer at the Quality Hotel at Woden. It is close to all venues and reasonably priced.

Vale

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of our dearly cherished and highly respected member Gillian Lowther, wife of long serving NX member, Bill Lowther. Gillian passed away after a short battle with cancer. Our most sincere sympathy goes to Bill and his family. Gillian will be sorely missed.

I have just received news of the death of the immediate past President of our sister organisation in the UK, "The Gallantry Medallists League, " Lt Col John Gaff GM. John Balding, current President of the League wrote, "It is with great sadness that I report the passing of John Gaff who has died after fighting a long battle with cancer. John was a great friend to the League and was elected President at the AGM in 2002 and held that post for 6 years. "I met with John Gaff whilst he was President, and he fully supported our Association, right from the start.

Other Matters I have been involved in concerning our Members:

Queens Gallantry Medal

The Queens Gallantry Medal (QGM) has only been awarded to 31 Australians, and is not widely recognised by the general public. However, this year a new book about the QGM will be produced, and for the first time Australian recipients will be mentioned. Keep an eye out in the bookstores. It was brought to my attention that the QGM does not appear on current 'medal boards'. This will now change thanks to our honorary member, Mr Warwick Cary of the Cary Corporation (Medal Shop).

The Stella Bella Foundation

Les Gilroy, one of our members from the ACT, asked me to approach CPL Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG, in order to seek an autographed photo of himself to auction at the Stella Bella Foundation fundraising ball on the 30 Nov 2013 in Canberra. (Please look up this most worthy cause for sick kids in the ACT and southern NSW area on the internet).

It is not an easy task to get through to the current VC recipients as I am sure you are all aware these days. However, after some time, Ben was good enough to oblige and Nathan Henderson-Smith from Stella Bella advises that they mounted the photograph with a miniature set of Bens Medals and it brought \$500 at auction.

For more information on the Foundation, please go to www.stellabellalittlestars.org.au

Bike Riders Care

One of our WA members, Mark Machin from Perth organised a group of motorcycle riders from 'Cops Care' to ride across Australia to raise money for Children's charities in WA. The group wanted to gain access to the Bravery Garden as a highlight of their ride and asked for assistance with Government House.

Our Co-Patron, Mr Michael Bryce, met the group at Government House and gave them a private tour of the building. Mark reported that this gesture was warmly received by the riders, and made the visit to Government House and the Bravery Garden the highlight of the event.

This is another good cause; please see www.copscare.org for more information.

Supporting the CV Association in gaining Recognition for their members

In the former Imperial Award scheme (prior to 1975) there were entitlements to travel etc. for all level 1 award recipients. There are no such entitlements under our current system.

As a former National President of the ABA, I wrote to the then Prime Minister, requesting such entitlements be put in place prior to the first VC of Australia being awarded. I was told that this would be done when the matter arose. Well it did, and Government has not reacted.

The CV Association has taken up the cause and is pursuing the matter. I wish them well.

The small entitlement to travel and accommodation allowed level 1 recipients to attend special 'approved' events, such as Police and Emergency Services Graduation Parades, State events etc. They were seen to represent the finest qualities in our citizens and be role models for others.

Unfortunately, the CV recipients seem to have 'had their moment' and now appear to have been forgotten by Government. I personally am appalled at the lack of support for our CV recipients. I think they have much to offer in terms of being role models for our fellow Australians, especially our youth, who seem to be more impressed by celluloid 'heroes' and sporting identities rather than real life heroes.

Recognition of The Outstanding Civilian Service Medal

Phil Hutson, a keen member of the ABA has been awarded The Outstanding Civilian Service Medal for his service in Iraq. Unfortunately he has not been able to join us for celebrations as he is always 'away'.

It has been my honour to assist with this award being added to the Official List of Foreign Awards recognised by Government House.

I hope I do not embarrass Phil by reproducing his citation below. Well done Phil.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

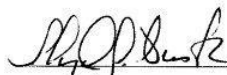
MR. PHILLIP J. HUTSON

IS AWARDED

THE OUTSTANDING CIVILIAN SERVICE MEDAL

FOR EXCEPTIONALLY MERITORIOUS SERVICE DURING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM FROM 23 OCTOBER 2007 TO 22 APRIL 2008 AS INVESTIGATIONS ADVISOR, LAW AND ORDER TASK FORCE, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-IRAQ. HIS OUTSTANDING DEDICATION TO DUTY DURING COMBAT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ CONTRIBUTED TO THE OVERWHELMING SUCCESS OF THE COMMAND'S MISSION. HIS ACTIONS ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE FINEST TRADITIONS OF CIVIL SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON HIM, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-IRAQ, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS-IRAQ


LLOYD J. AUSTIN III
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

DA FORM 7017, 1 AUG 01

Christmas Wishes

I wish you and your families all a safe and wonderful festive season this year. May you be surrounded with love and friendship. I look forward to seeing you all in Canberra in February 2014. John Thurgar.

VIC/TAS. REPORT 2013 - Coralee Lever

To all the A.B.A Family,

Recently I travelled to Melbourne for the Investitures and Bill Lowther SC came along as my guest. Each time I go to Government House I am treated very well. Bill and I managed to speak to quite a few of the new Bravery Awardees and I am sure that I will have a response from some of the family members of these recipients who asked for my phone number and address which I see as a positive.

Sadly, one of our A.B.A supporters, Mr PETER WALMSLEY, husband of Leanne, has passed away. Peter looked after all of the A.B.A. Members who stayed at the Quest Apartments in Mildura.

The new Managers of the Quest Apartments will continue with the connection that has been made with the A.B.A.

Just a reminder to all members to keep **MILDURA IN MIND FOR THE LONG WEEKEND IN JUNE. 2014.**

I hope to be able to bring with me in Feb.2014 a program with costs. (I love to welcome you all to my part of the world.)

Wishing all a Merry Christmas, and will see you all in Canberra 2014. Take care – Coralee

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QUEENSLAND REPORT – Sally Gregory

Greetings to everyone from the sunny and soggy Gold Coast. We have had a proactive and positive year to date and have enjoyed the privilege of witnessing the state bravery award investitures which are always both humbling and inspiring. Recipients awarded for their kindness and courage this year include many who went above and beyond the call of duty and safety to help people in terrifying circumstances in both the Lockyer Valley flood and Cyclone Yasi in the north. There was even a crocodile rescue in the Gulf and a brave young girl who rescued her friend who was pinned beneath a bus. Each one, a story of terror and potential tragedy.

In total – the awards bestowed were as follows – 2 x Star of Courage, 9 x Bravery Medals, 17 x Commendations for Brave Conduct and 37 x Group Bravery Citations. The same can also be said for the Royal Humane Society awards which were similar in number. These figures represent an unprecedented number of awards being bestowed and of course, most of us know that the recognised awards represent only a small percentage of the acts of courage that occur in our communities every week. Thus we should all be mindful of the many unknown acts of bravery and be grateful that kind people do exist.

A fine example of the Group Bravery Citation can be seen in the picture of ABA founder and his sturdy crew of TS Ipswich who scrubbed up very nicely in their uniforms for their day at Government house Brisbane. As I mentioned them in the previous newsletter, I won't repeat their citation, tho I do encourage you to go online and read about their rescues which totalled 57. The next photo is Trevor Burns SC who was awarded for rescuing a young lady who had been bitten by a shark near Rockingham in 2010. His story is close to my heart and it was a thrill for me to meet him.



I'll take this opportunity to note that as a member of the community YOU can nominate anyone you see in the media or in your neighbourhood, for a bravery award. To do so, you need only go to Google and enter "Bravery award nomination", download the form, fill in the details and add a paper clipping or internet link to substantiate the nomination. The person does not need to be known to you. I'm sure you know how it feels to receive a letter from government Houses stating that you have been nominated for a bravery award. It really is an extraordinary feeling.

For those of you planning your social calendar next year, I am happy to report that we have booked the prestigious United Service Club at 183 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane for our next state bravery dinner which will be on September 6th. Being in the heart of the city, there is plenty of accommodation within walking distance and if you get in quick you can even reserve a room on site. More information at www.unitedserviceclub.com.au

Invitations and RSVPs won't be sent out until July so suggest you mark it on your calendar now. I hope that this new centralised venue will allow more of our Brisbane based members to attend and to bring some of their friends too. There's nothing quite like an ABA dinner – 100% quality guests and stories, most of which are true ☺

I've booked my flights to Canberra to attend the ABA National Conference (and guaranteed good time) on February 14-17th and hope that you can join me and the team for what is shaping up to be the best event ever, thanks to the fascinating programme that John Thurgar and team have put together which includes a VIP tour of the Australian War Memorial.

Until then, there are some great conversations and articles being posted regularly on our Facebook page, so I encourage you to join in the conversation and get to meet some of our wonderful members online. Here's the link for you to use to get amongst it- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/50189583164/>

Before I finish, I'd like to say a special thanks to my new administration assistant Richie (Manfred) Neustifter (saver of dozens in the 2004 Tsunami) and all round good guy, who comes over every 2nd Monday night and helps me with the administration work that is part of the role of the National Executive. Like many of us, Richie volunteers his time to the ABA and he certainly makes my job easier. He's proof that "no one can do everything but everyone can do something". Thanks Richie – You're a champ.

That brings us near the end of 2013 – a year of rebuilding and positive progress for our ABA. Thanks again to the hard working NX who have put in more hours than you can imagine, to get our beloved ABA back on track, doing what we do best – "Supporting those who risk their life to save life, property and the environment".

A Christmas special those who attended the Qld bravery dinner - fabulous colour prints of fabulous people for only \$11.50. Order/view at - <http://www.whisperimages.com.au/index.php/australian-bravery-awards-annual-dinner-qld-2013>

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all – see you at Canberra. Gillian Lowther – we miss you. Hugs Sal.

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SA/NT REPORT – Bill Lowther

I represented the ABA for the memorial service on Remembrance Day at Bublacowie War Museum near Yorktown. This is the biggest military museum in South Australia. Museum owner, and ABA member, Christopher Soare, is prepared to put a Garden of Remembrance on the site for Civilian Bravery recipients. I thanked Chris for this kind gesture on behalf of our members.

Visitors are welcome to the museum and accommodation is available. Kindest regards to all of you. Bill

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Notes from your Editors - Brenda & Alan Cochrane

Firstly we would like to extend congratulations to John Meyers, Friend of the ABA, who has received an Order of Australia medal for "Service to the community particularly through the exhibition and researching of military history".

John and his wife along with a huge band of volunteers run the Maryborough Military Museum. Whenever you are in the Wide Bay area this museum is a "must visit" on your list to do. It has the reputation of having the finest collection outside of Canberra. It is currently home to the medals of Keith Payne VC OAM, Tim Brittain CV and Jim Runham SC OAM JP amongst others. We will be lunching with John and Elsie next Saturday when the Order of Australia group of Wide Bay will visit the museum and welcome John to the association.

Speaking of friends and friendship; we have experienced several examples this last week alone. Loyalty, Integrity and Honour are most important in friendships and if you share these traits with your friends that is one of the biggest gifts you can give. A gift beyond price!

Your national executive is actively engaged in promoting friendship and unity within our organisation. With this creed there are no losers only winners all round.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas, thank you for your friendship and hopefully see you all in Canberra in February for a great weekend of fun, friendship and activities.

Best wishes Alan & Brenda

ABA HONORARY PSYCHOLOGIST REPORT 2013

This year has continued to present challenges to the National Executive, as a flow on from what they were entrusted to do by members, at the 2013 AGM.

Personally I have been pleased to get back to the job of assisting members when required, and have had the honour of doing so on numerous occasions.

I agreed to do a TV appearance on Sunday Sunrise and a magazine story on behalf of the ABA and sincerely hope these were well received.

I was also able to meet members for the first time at Coralee's Mildura June event this year and got a lot out of the experience, not only as a recipient, but also in the capacity of my professional role.

Looking to the future I think the Association needs to consider ways to expand the numbers of people that can help out on committees formed in the future. Our NX are a tireless bunch but getting older each year (said with a smile). Recruitment and transition of roles is going to become an important issue and I believe that the 2014 events held by the ABA will really be fantastic and inspire people to take a greater role.

At the 2014 AGM we will be discussing the role and structure of a foundation (if indeed we agree we are ready to establish this once again). If we deem this to be appropriate at this time then members really need to carefully think about the aims of that foundation and how these are to be achieved; and who we entrust this responsibility to in terms of leadership and committee members.

The method for selecting people to a foundation, I believe, needs to be the decision of the members and not the National Executive alone.

If it is to go ahead, it is my opinion that there needs to be a criteria established for being eligible to represent the ABA on a foundation and that once meeting eligibility, members should vote to form any committee, interim or otherwise.

This may be slow, but this is the only way to ensure that ABA ideals represent the members' wishes. If there are not enough people to form a foundation then perhaps our organization is not yet ready for it.

Our future direction and priorities will be up for discussion at our next AGM and this presents us with a great opportunity to express our views no matter how diverse. It is from ideas that we get a great organization.

Pamela Davidson

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MERCHANDISE

Don't forget we have a large range of merchandise for purchase and further advertise the ABA.

All Orders to: Secretary, Melanie Warburton, 16 Embling Street, Wanniasa ACT 2903

Tie Bars/lapel pins/cuff links and brooch	\$10	Book donation kits	\$8
Men's embroidered shirts and ties	\$50	Ladies embroidered shirts	\$50
Embroidered baseball style caps	\$20	Name Badges	\$20

+ \$5 postage for above mail orders

Mark Whittaker's book - **'BRAVE'** \$34.99 + 10.50 postage
Recounting the rescue stories of many of our ABA members



**Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia
and His Excellency Mr Michael Bryce AM AE**

**Vice-Patrons
Victor Boscoe CV, Tim Britten CV, Richard Joyes CV, Keith Payne VC OAM
Allan Sparkes CV, Darrell Tree CV**

**Guardian of the Brave
Mr Geoff Handbury AO**

Australian Bravery Association National Executive

National President

John Thurgar SC MBE OAM RFD

Email: john.thurgar@forbravery.org

Deputy National President

Andrew Kendall

Email: andrew.kendall@forbravery.org

National Treasurer

Hedonna Thurgar

Email: Hedonna.thurgar@forbravery.org

**National Secretary/ Membership
Secretary**

Melanie Warburton

Email: melanie.warburton@forbravery.org

National Vice President – ACT

Mindy Sutherland

National Vice President - NSW

Brian Harland

Email: brian.harland@forbravery.org

National Vice President – QLD

Sally Gregory CBC

Email: sally.gregory@forbravery.org

National Vice President – SA/NT

Bill Lowther SC

Email: bill.lowther@forbravery.org

National Vice President – VIC/TAS

Coralee Lever

Email: coralee.lever@forbravery.org

National Vice President – WA

Vic Boreham CBC

Email: vic.boreham@forbravery.org

PLEASE NOTE:

All postal mail to our National Office 16 Embling Street, Wanniasa ACT 2903

All of your Executive can be accessed by email on the “forbravery” addresses above.

Our Website address is

www.forbravery.org.au

Web Masters:

Andrew Kendall and Mark Tregallis

Items for the newsletter to

cochrane@forbravery.org.au

The newsletter is available on the website (password not required).

The above phone numbers have been omitted on the web.

