



# AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

No. 29 September 2017

*Supporting those who risk their life to save life, property or the environment.*

**The official newsletter of the Australian Bravery Association.**

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S INVITATION TO MELBOURNE

8-11 FEBRUARY 2018

John Thurgar SC MBE OAM RFD



Dear ABA members and friends,

The annual ABA Conference for 2018 will be in Melbourne. The concept is to alternate venues from Canberra every 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In 2018 the Annual Conference will showcase Melbourne, the capital of the State of Victoria. The activities begin with a semi-formal Reception at Government House, South

Yarra, which will be hosted by Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria.

The formal Black-Tie Dinner at the Athenaeum Club will feature a **sense of tradition: steeped in history**. "A proud resident of Collins Street, Melbourne, for 150 years, the Athenaeum is one of Australia's oldest and finest clubs. The Club takes pride in its heritage and traditions, yet is contemporary in its outlook. The Club's location, service, facilities and first-class dining reflect their Australian and international reputation as a welcoming place of relaxation and good fellowship in a busy world, and the club is renowned for its fine ambience."

The Guest Speaker at the Dinner will be the Commissioner of the Emergency Management Commission for Victoria - Mr Craig Lapsley PSM.

Planning for the Service of Remembrance is well advanced thanks to the work of our tireless Padre, Jim Cosgrove. Negotiations are continuing with the principals of the venue and an announcement will be made before the end of 2017 as to the location of the Service. Please refer to the Letter of Invitation and RSVP sheet for further program details.

There are lots of chances to enjoy the restaurants, sounds and sites of Melbourne or visit friends who reside there. A small bus will be available to transport the aged or infirm to and from functions. However, you must book on your event rsvp sheet. Please remember, the tram service in the CBD is free, frequent, safe and reliable. I am looking forward to seeing you in Melbourne. Safe travel. John Thurgar SC MBE OAM RFD

## Coming events

**ABA National Conference  
Melbourne  
8<sup>th</sup> - 11th February 2018**

**The program is attached along  
with your registration form**

- Welcome to Melbourne
- AGM
- Alfresco dining
- Queen Victoria Markets
- Athenaeum Club Black Tie dinner
- Service of Remembrance
- These and other opportunities to visit the MCG and the National Gallery are options for your Melbourne visit.

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### Editors' Note:

*This newsletter is authorised by Alan & Brenda Cochrane, Australian Bravery Association, PO Box 127, Bundaberg.  
E&OE*



## NOTES FROM YOUR EDITORS – Alan Cochrane OAM & Brenda Cochrane OAM

Another year drawing to a close and what a great year it has been for the ABA. Bill Lowther and daughter Debbie in South Australia and Vic Boreham assisted by wife Lyn in West Australia all held their first ABA gatherings in their states. What a great success. As usual, the Mildura and Queensland reunions were well attended and members enjoyed the activities that Coralee and Sally organised. We're far flung in this great nation and keeping contact with members is a vital part of what the ABA represents. Forming new friendships and fostering others that, although we may only catch up once a year, we know they are at the end of a phone call if we feel the need for a chat or a laugh. Or maybe just to ask "are you OK".

In this edition we are pleased to introduce Chris Harding. Chris is a member of both the Gallantry Medallists' League in the United Kingdom (where he currently resides) and the ABA and has been our representative at their functions. For this publication he has supplied an article on the organisation's events this year as well as notes for his "meet your member".

As 2017 comes to a close we are busy attending to that "to do" list. We've been checking out the maps and hopefully our caravan gets another spin next year. We would be delighted to hear from fellow caravanners travelling through Bundaberg and show them the sights and why we are proud to call Aussie – home.

We take this opportunity to wish you and your families a safe and blessed Christmas season and look forward to meeting you in Melbourne. Please see the notation n on the RSVP slip re room sharing.

We leave you with these thoughts –

**A Christmas wish** – May you never forget what is worth remembering or remember what is best forgotten.

**Friendship** is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything. *Muhammad Ali*

It is one of the blessing of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them. *Ralph Emerson*

Best Wishes to all – Alan & Brenda

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## ABA ON FACEBOOK

The Australian Bravery Association now has two Facebook pages members can access.



**Australian Bravery Association:** This is an open community page (open to the public) which provides information about the association, including upcoming events, and matters relating to Bravery awards and recipients and the Australians honours and awards system.

**Australian Bravery Awardees:** This page is the original Australian Bravery Association page. It is a closed group, a private and discreet discussion portal for rescuers and their families. If you need someone to chat to who has walked in your shoes, this place is for you.

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## NATIONAL SECRETARY REPORT – Brian Harland

The end of the year once more and the start of preparations for the Annual General Meeting.

This year I have been thinking about more involvement for the membership and would like any member who could either email me [brian.harland@forbravery.org.au](mailto:brian.harland@forbravery.org.au) or ring me on my mobile 0417 280 965 to let me know of any suggestions, concerns, points of interest that I can note and bring up at the AGM for discussion or implementation.

One point that has come to our attention is the process of nominating someone for a bravery award and we have on our website [www.forbravery.org.au](http://www.forbravery.org.au) the links to the various sites. Please have a look and become familiar with them when someone asks you about nominating.

I must also thank the Royal Humane Society of NSW and the Royal Humane Society of Australasia for helping me answer the many queries I receive from members of the public wanting information on awards both recent and from many years ago.

### Mr Don McHattie GM and the Gallantry Medallists' League

It was a privilege on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October this year to present, on behalf of the Gallantry Medallists' League in the U.K. a 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Medallion Set to Mr Don McHattie GM and his wife Moira and daughter Sue, at their home in Newcastle. The Newcastle Anzac Memorial Walk is close by and was opened in 2015 dedicated to the memory of fallen soldiers in WW1 and also has significance for the McHattie family.

Don received a George Medal under the Imperial Honours System for his role in the rescue of soldiers caught up in the Stockton Bight Military Disaster in 1954. Don was very proud, as was his family, to have received the Medal and also looked forward to receiving his copy of the newsletter from the Gallantry Medallists' League.

Sadly, Don passed away peacefully on the 7<sup>th</sup> October.



Photo: Brian Harland with Sue McHattie (daughter of Don).

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1954 one of Australia's worst peacetime disasters happened at Stockton Bight near Newcastle. It involved a convoy of amphibious vehicles setting out at 2am in darkness going north in the open sea with a forecast of good weather. At 4am an unexpected squall blew up and the seas became monstrous. Some 100 soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Northern Rivers Lancers were pitched into the freak heavy seas infested with sharks. Soldiers struggled to swim ashore and three men died and it was lucky the toll wasn't higher. The vessels were about two miles out to sea when the waves pounded the flotilla.

After the alarm was finally raised and amid the chaos, the acknowledged hero of the day was Sergeant Donald McHattie, who later went on to become a well-known Newcastle auctioneer. He was awarded the George Medal for displaying outstanding courage and leadership, completely disregarding his own safety, to save at least nine men and give artificial respiration to three others. He'd been thrown into the sea twice, once when his original vehicle sank and later when a rescue craft with the crews of three vehicles, tipped over.

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## VETERANS HEALTH WEEK 2017 - REPORT BY PROJECT STAY AFLOAT Inc.

Veterans' Health Week (VHW) 2017 focussed on 'physical activity'. One event conducted was - kayaking.

The kayak event was conducted by Project Stay Afloat Inc. at Jack Evans Boat Harbour, Tweed Heads - Coolangatta. Members from the Australian Bravery Association also participated in the fun.

Due to inclement weather on the day, the military wet weather programme was activated, in other words – *Everyone got wet.*

Project Stay Afloat Inc. is a not for profit organisation that aims to encourage people to participate in paddle sport activities for the betterment of their physical and mental health. Many in our community are affected by PTS, depression and anxiety. The core volunteers in Stay Afloat are drawn from former and current Defence personnel, Police, Ambulance, Fire Department, Critical Care nursing and community volunteers.

This VHW event drew a broad range of ages from 30 to 82 years. Our participants attended this event knowing that we had their safety, privacy and confidentiality at the fore front of our minds.

This year's theme for VHW was physical activity and this activity was aimed at bringing participants together in a social and supportive environment. Participants were mainly drawn from the veteran and former Australian Defence Force community and their families. Younger, indigenous and homeless veterans were encouraged to attend and participate at a level suitable to their circumstances.

Our qualified volunteer kayaking instructor and assistants delivered initial kayak water skills training followed by safety and trip briefs before heading out for a 6 km paddle on the Tweed River and Terranora Broadwater. The unrelenting wind and rain was no deterrent and most participants took the opportunity to join us for another 6 km paddle along the Brunswick River the following day.

Participants discovered "that they were not alone" and had the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and connect in a challenging, non-threatening, way with each other.



Stay Afloat is a not for profit paddle club (affiliated with Paddle NSW) and a member of Australian Canoeing.

## WEST AUSTRALIA REPORT – Vic Boreham

I am so pleased to advise that our luncheon on Saturday, November 4th turned out to be a terrific day. We dined at the Ocean Beach Hotel in Cottesloe. The hotel overlooks the Indian Ocean and has a million dollar view all around. The weather on the day was perfect, about 28 degrees. Prior to the arrival of attendees, I must admit to being both nervous and excited at the prospect of us all getting together. This is the first time West Australian members have come together here in Perth.

Twelve of us attended and each said he/she thoroughly enjoyed the company and the day. None of the attendees had met each other previously, but by the end of the luncheon period that had all changed. I have been asked to arrange another and will do so, probably around the February/March period next year. With luck we will be able to entice a few more members who were unable to attend. Please keep in mind that friends and family of members are also welcome.



Photo: Vic Boreham in the foreground with his happy WA group.

Those who attended were Peggy and Graham Kew, Diane McCusker, Margaret and Heather Jardine, Garry Hearn and Helen King, Mason Hayman, Mark Mackin and Anne Carbone, Lyn and Vic Boreham.

Several others would have attended however they had made prior arrangements.

There is a fitting end to this report. Mason Hayman was seated next to me and Margaret Jardine was seated across the table in front of Mason. They had never met before. I mentioned that they had something in common. Mason was in the Merchant Navy and Margaret's late husband was also an ex Merchant Navy man. They got talking, with the result that Mason knew Margaret's husband all those years ago. What a coincidence.

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## MERCHANDISE

Don't forget we have a large range of merchandise for purchase and further advertise the ABA. We have recently received fresh stocks of ties to go with the fine quality shirts. Full colour photos and merchandise order forms are on our web site.

All Order forms to: **National Treasurer, Brenda Cochrane, PO Box 127, Bundaberg Qld 4670 or**  
**Email: [brenda.cochrane@forbravery.org.au](mailto:brenda.cochrane@forbravery.org.au)**

Tie Bars/lapel pins/brooches	\$10	Cuff links	\$20	Association neck ties	\$27
Men's embroidered shirts	\$35	Ladies embroidered shirts	\$35	Book donation kits	\$8
Embroidered baseball style caps	\$20	Name badges	\$20		

+ \$8 postage for above mail orders

Mark Whittaker's book - **BRAVE** : \$20.00 + 10.00 postage

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## THE GALLANTRY MEDALLISTS LEAGUE 2017 – Chris Harding

The GML's AGM was held in April at Windsor Castle followed by a lunch with our wives in a local restaurant adjacent to the castle. This was my first meeting as the ABA's representative, and our first visit to the weekend home of HM The Queen, even though we only live 25 miles from the castle. Our hosts were the castle's Governor Admiral Sir James Perowne KBE and Lady Perowne who open up their grace and favour home to the GML and included a guided tour of the Queen's private garden, which was built on terraces that climbed the main tower's wall. The main agenda for the AGM was the July biannually Muster that was to be held in Northern Ireland for the first time.



**Photo: Front row centre Lt Col (Retd) John Balding MBE GM, right of John, Lt Col (Retd) Pete Shields MBE QGM, Sir Ronnie Flanagan GBE QPM, myself Rear row behind John B and Pete Shields.**

The Muster was held at La Mon Country Hotel, itself a victim of the NI troubles; also, it was my first visit since I was a young British soldier stationed in Belfast, so it was a pleasure that I could take my wife Andrea back to a city that was renowned for its hospitality to visitors. After the formalities of booking into the hotel we were given a private tour of Stormont NI Parliament and the main assembly rooms that incorporated the many gifts from other Commonwealth countries including Australia.

The following day we attended a wreath laying ceremony at the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Memorial Garden, followed by a guided tour of the garden by our RUC GC Association hosts. The afternoon was spent at the Titanic Museum, which was founded on the social history of the Harland and Wolff shipyard and the Belfast workers that built the Titanic.



**Photo: GML Dinner at Stormont Castle in September 2017. President Lt Col John Balding MBE GM on the left and The Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA PC the First Minister of NI on the right.**

The main dinner was held that evening at La Mon, hosted by president Lt Col John Balding MBE GM, one of the main guests in attendance being The Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA PC the First Minister of NI. The after-dinner speeches included the letter of greetings from John Thurgar SC MBE OAM RFD on behalf of the ABA. The evening was a great success, with the attendance of seventy GML members, making it one of biggest attended Musters in recent times. The next Muster is hoping to be in Edinburgh Scotland, a 6hrs drive from our

Farnborough home, or as our Australian cousins would say, "just up the road cobber".

The next GML 2017 gathering was at the Cenotaph Whitehall London for the Remembrance Sunday parade, including a march past and the salute taken by HRH Prince Charles.

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## MEETING YOUR MEMBERS

### Christopher John HARDING

Chris Harding was appointed the ABA UK Representative in 2014. Since then he has represented the ABA at various Gallantry Medallist League functions and activities. In particular at GML AGM's usually held at Windsor Castle, the annual Remembrance Day March at the Cenotaph in London and at their annual Musters. This year the Annual Muster was held in Belfast – Northern Ireland and the Dinner was at Stormont Castle. At that function he read out a message from the ABA National President - Mr John Thurgar SC MBE OAM RFD.



Chris lives in the UK and is best located to represent the ABA with our twined organisation in the UK, the Gallantry Medallists League. He knows Australians and has served here in Australia and alongside our troops in Iraq. Please see Chris's report for more information.

A little history about Chris. He was born in December 1955, in Malta GC, where his father was stationed with the Royal Navy. He enlisted in the Army in 1972 and discharged in July 1996, with the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1.

During that period of 24 years of service he served in the UK, Italy, Norway, Germany, Cyprus, New Zealand, Australia and the Falklands.

In addition to the Australian Commendation for Brave Conduct he has been awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, The British General Service Medal with various clasps, the Northern Ireland Campaign Medal and the UNIFCYP (Cyprus) Medal.

After discharging from the British Army, he continued to work as a contractor in the Logistics field in a number of countries and at various major international events, such as – the Olympics, FIFA World Cup and the European Games. It was during this service that he was awarded the Australian Commendation for Brave Conduct, whilst serving in Iraq, from 2003 to 2005 as a Civilian Contractor.

He found service alongside the Aussies as 'unusual' at first. Especially always being introduced as 'the Pom' on every new greeting. He liked working with the Australians as they were 'on the same wavelength' as him. He found the American Military officers did not quite understand the classic banter exchanged between himself and the Australians based on the traditional competitiveness around sport between the two nations. Of note is the fact that many of his ancestors from the period 1900s to 1970s emigrated to Australia and New Zealand and served with their military forces. Sadly, in one branch of the family, the Gamblings, there were two boys. Both brothers, John and Alfred, fell in the Great War whilst serving in the AIF.

### **Chris was decorated with the Australian Commendation for Brave Conduct In 2011.**

**Citation:** On the afternoon of 8 August 2004, Mr Harding went to the aid of injured and dying people following a terrorist attack at Al Kasik Army Base, Northern Iraq.

Here is the last word from Chris regarding his service in Iraq.

"My medal was given to me for my involvement after a terrorist attacked on a dining facility at Al Kasik Camp Iraq. I was a contractor working for the Australian and American Coalition forces. As you know many contractors were killed throughout the Iraq war doing jobs that the Coalition Forces couldn't do. Many of these contractors died providing services that assisted the war effort, yet they didn't qualify for any medals or a marked grave outlining why they died."

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## ABA VICE PATRONS

Keith Payne VC AM, Darrell Tree CV, Victor Boscoe CV, Allan Sparkes CV OAM, Tim Britten CV, Richard Joyes CV, and Doug Baird

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**Honorary Legal Officer:** Bernard Collaery

**Honorary Psychologist:** Pamela Davidson BM - Email: pameladavidson@forbravery.org.au

**Honorary Surgeon:** Associate Professor Geoffrey Boyce FRCP (Edin and Glas) FRACP FACP FAAN FAADEP

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