# The Official Newsletter of the Australian Bravery Association



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



**Cover Photo:** Damian Greenwood, Jess Jeffery, Greg Corin, David Savage and Martin Hess at ABA Service Government House 14 Feb 2021.



6 Mark Tregellas on imposter syndrome



Chris Harding and the Duke of Edinburgh



Tom Voigt on Post Traumatic Growth

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# PATRON

# *His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC FTSE (Retd)*

In March, I was delighted to announce 111 Australian Bravery Decorations. The list included two individuals awarded the Star of Courage, 43 who received the Bravery Medal, 40 Commendations for Brave Conduct and seven Group Bravery Citations (to 26 individuals).

In approving the decorations, I was, as is always the case, struck by the stories of the deeds of each of the recipients.

The circumstances of the incidents varied greatly – individuals coming to the aid of someone being assaulted, or entering treacherous waters to rescue a stranger, entering a burning building, attending a road accident and more.

The background of recipients was equally diverse – young and old, from cities or rural areas, men and women.

What was common – what is always common – was their bravery and how they responded to a moment that fate brought them to.

Each was confronted with a dangerous or perilous situation. Each had little, if any, time to think. Each responded with courage and bravery and put themselves in harm's way. They put the safety and well-being of others ahead of their own.

That is the common thread between these very different circumstances. It is always striking and gives me great confidence in who we are as a nation. The response and actions of the most recent - and, indeed, all Bravery recipients - are admirable and inspirational. Each deserves the thanks and recognition of our nation.

That there are so many examples of people coming to their fellow citizens' aid in a moment of danger speaks not only to the individual's character but also, I believe, to who we are as a society.

I am grateful for the work of the Australian Bravery Association to support recipients and their families, particularly when they subsequently experience physical, emotional or other personal hardship. Thank you for your care and concern for your fellow Australians.

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia Government House Dunrossil Drive YARRALUMLA ACT 2600



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The Australian Bravery Association is proud to have His Excellency General, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC FTSE (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, as our Patron. He joins our Vice-Patrons Darrell Tree CV; Victor Boscoe CV; Allan Sparkes CV, OAM; Tim Britten CV; Richard Joyes CV; and Doug Baird OAM, Father of Corporal Cameron Baird VC, MG.

# NATIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

**Andrew Kendall** 



Dear ABA members and friends,

I hope all are well, given the continuing uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Unfortunately, our two state events (Queensland and Victoria) planned for the last two months were either cancelled or postponed. We hope circumstances change, allowing the Victoria Reunion to happen later in the year.

My condolences to ABA Queensland President Sally Gregory on the passing of her husband, Kevin, a veteran firefighter, was a strong supporter of Sally and her unending efforts to serve the ABA and our members.

On a positive note, ABA ACT President Peter White and I were pleased to meet with the new CEO of the Royal Australian Mint, Mr Leigh Gordon AO, CSM, to discuss an ongoing relationship between the ABA and the Royal Australian Mint (RAM). Also present were the RAM Executive General Manager Sales, Marketing & Innovation, Mark Cartwright, and Acting Education and Visitor Services Manager Sales, Marketing & Innovation, Holly Anderson. Over the coming months, we are hoping to announce some exciting plans in this space. The RAM has been very supportive of the ABA and the Australian Honours and Awards System over many years. We look forward to that continuing.

A very warm welcome to our newest members of the ABA family. We have a wonderful group who are there to offer support to all our newest members. We hope you get to meet them all when next we can get together in one location—it's been a while! Thank you to all our volunteers. If not for you the ABA does not operate.

Enjoy this edition of For Bravery.

Best Regards Andrew

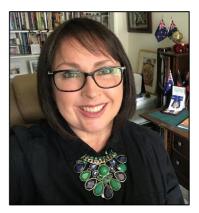
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# FOR BRAVERY NEWSLETTER EDITOR

# Dr Kay Danes, OAM

Dear ABA members and friends,

Do you love writing? Can you think conceptually and bring forward creative ideas? Maybe you would like to expand your research and writing skills or simply join our team to create a creative copy in a consistent, compelling, and brand-appropriate voice. Why not consider becoming a *volunteer writer* for our newsletter?



**Very important:** We reserve the right to edit any submitted article before publication for length, clarity, or grammar. We also reserve the right to edit the article to avoid having duplicate content. We aim to offer variety. If you use acronyms when you write, please spell them out first (Thank You = THX).

The **FOR BRAVERY** Newsletter's primary purpose is to provide an essential communications bridge for the Australian Bravery Association (ABA) membership and its supporters. We welcome your support through timely submissions to help us keep ABA members updated on just some of the things happening in the ABA world.

Articles should be commercially neutral and readable to a broad audience.

- A personal rescue event (500 words) or investiture related content.
- A bravery-related (real-life) encounter.
- Something witty to give us a laugh or an inspirational poem.
- Reflections on remembrance, celebration or festive messages.
- Honouring someone in the ABA inspires others.

Articles should be formatted as a Microsoft Word Document with Times New Roman 12 Font.

# Email: <u>ABANewsEditor@gmail.com</u>

#### Deadlines: 24 February, 24 June, 24 October

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# HOW MY BRAVERY AWARDS AFFECTED MY IMPOSTER SYNDROME

#### **Mark Tregellas**

I have been honoured in my life to receive two bravery awards for two separate incidents—both of them for saving the lives of others in dangerous circumstances. On special occasions, I wear my bravery awards alongside my police and military medals. Mostly I feel immense pride. But at times, I feel a bit like an imposter. Although I know, I'm not. The citation states I am *worthy of recognition* because I did something that Australia considers *an act of bravery. However*, I never considered myself brave or even heroic. I was just a police officer doing my job as best I could.

Sometime after receiving my second bravery award, I learned that it's okay to feel uncomfortable. There is actually a condition called *Imposter Syndrome* that explains that feeling of not being worthy. Imposter syndrome was first identified in 1978 by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Ives. It's the idea that you have only succeeded due to luck and not because of your skills, talent, or qualifications.



Photo: Mark Tregellas at the dawn service at Captain Stevens Point, Mallacoota (2018).

My first bravery award involved saving the life of a 150kg local man having a psychotic episode. He had covered himself and me in petrol and attempted to pull us both, and a jerrycan of fuel, into the campfire. I fought him for what seemed like forever when in actual fact was only seconds. Standing before the Governor-General, who pinned a medal on my chest and commended me for bravery, I felt like it was all too much of a big deal. Everyone was making a fuss and slapping me on the back, calling me a hero. But, as I said, I felt a bit like an imposter.

Then many months later, I attended my first ABA conference in Canberra. Talking with other awardees, hearing their stories and the dangerous situations they overcame made me feel inspired, amazed, and at times very sad but humbled. For years I had thought of myself as an imposter and that saving that man's life was just – pure luck. That was until the ABA members explained that my having 30 years of experience handling critical incidents and 40 years of martial arts training probably had more to do with me resolving that incident successfully than just luck. I realised that the ABA was a collection of individuals brought together by circumstances that most people never face and almost always traumatic. My feeling of being an imposter changed at that conference. I learned that while some ABA members may have faced varying levels of trauma and anxiety, the self-doubt I felt was apparently perfectly normal. Our experiences are unique to each of us. I found my tribe when I found the ABA. I found a group of like-minded individuals who value others, without question, and genuinely feel pride in their accomplishments. It's what makes the ABA such a unique and special association. That's why I am proud and grateful to be a member.

### **QUEENSLAND PRESIDENT News**

#### Sally Gregory

Welcome to the middle of 2021. It's still been a challenge moving forward with COVID restrictions off and on again. This, of course, makes it more difficult for us to plan our fun ABA get-togethers. But we'll get there! For those of you who are new to the ABA family, welcome! You'll find us to be an innovative lot. We found new and exciting ways of keeping connected through all the lockdowns. Online zoom meetings played a big part in maintaining our



connections. Our Australian Bravery Awardees Facebook Group page now has a whopping 245 group members. Some are yet to officially join the ABA family, so we hope you get those membership applications in the mail or email. The Awardees Facebook Group is a closed group for rescuers and their supporters only – a safe space to chat with others who may have walked in your shoes. Drop in anytime for a chat, an idea, or a joke. You'll find the conversations and the humour uplifting. You can find us on Facebook by looking for the group called Australian Bravery Awardees. Last month, we were joined by ABA member Keith Banks BM, who shared some of his harrowing real-life experiences as an undercover cop. He's even published a bestselling book called "Drugs, Guns & Lies, My life as an undercover cop."

In other news, thanks to the <u>Rotary E-Club of Global Trekkers</u>, two of our ABA Brave Youth, Jade-Elle Brown and Cayla Sweeny, will attend the <u>Borderline Youth Camp</u> in July 2021 at Lake Moogerah (Queensland). The girls will be accompanied by Ruby Brown, who is kindly sponsored by our ABA. Anyone interested in being part of Rotary's fabulous work worldwide is invited to join me on Thursday morning at 9am via zoom. The Global Trekkers are an awesome E-Club with members in 8 countries. They focus on supporting youth education, building a sustainable environment and creating food security to rise against hunger. Great fun, fellowship and doing good — without leaving home. Please pencil in the **02-03 October** for our Fun Kids (and adults too) Campout at Mike and Lovey Pearson's ranch at Ormeau (Qld). This is a BYO camping experience. If you prefer glamping, contact Mike, who may have a spare bed in the big house. This event is notoriously fun. In the past, the BIG BONFIRE attracted a lot of attention from local firefighters.... oops! Email Mike: <u>Mikepearson1@bigpond.com</u>

Have a great winter, everyone, and we'll see you at an ABA get-together soon. Be kind to yourself – you're so worth it!

Warmest wishes—Sally G.



Search for **@australianbraveryassociation** on Facebook or in Messenger. https://www.facebook.com/groups/50189583164

Visit our *Australian Bravery Awardees* page for private and discreet discussion <u>https://www.facebook.com/groups/AustBraveryAssoc/</u>

# MY MEMORABLE MOMENTS WITH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH



#### **ABA Member Chris Harding**

I had the honour to serve his HRH, The Duke of Edinburgh, as part of the Royal Guard at Balmoral while serving with the Queen's Own Highlanders during the Queen's Silver Jubilee year. This was 20yrs after my Father piped the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh onboard HMS Maidstone. For me, the Duke was down to earth, and he loved talking to people no matter what their background. His humour and wit quickly put you at ease. I would like to share with you some memorable moments I had with the Duke.

Her Majesty the Queen Mother and The Prince of Wales were dining with the Royal Guards Officers. I had to organise dinner, which meant heading to Balmoral for Grouses as they were to be the main course. Entering the Game Larders with the Head Gamekeeper, I had the pick of the bottom row of birds as the top row was reserved for the commercial market. As I placed the birds into the Land Rover, Prince Phillip suddenly appeared from nowhere. He was dressed in his plus fours (trousers that end four inches below the knee), leaning on a wooden staff. Not quite sure what to say, I heard the word "Sir" slip past my lips.

"What're the birds for?" the Prince asked.

Clearing my throat, I replied, "I'm doing Her Majesty the Queen Mother's dinner party, Sir."

The Prince smiled and asked rather candidly, "Do you have a girlfriend?"

Somewhat confused, I responded, "Yes, Sir."

The Prince smiled, and as he readied himself to depart, he said, "I suggest you don't see her for a few days!" And with a wave of his royal hand, he was gone.

Back at Victoria Barracks, I immediately set myself to the task of plucking and drawing the birds. The stench was horrendous and penetrated every pore of my body. Recounting the Prince's advice, I knew at that moment why I would not be popular with my girlfriend if we caught up any time soon. I smiled and continued plucking feathers!

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The Queen Mother was hosting a cocktail party. After going through the usual formalities with the Head Butler, I met with one of Her Majesty's Footmen. We were tasked to cover the Ballroom carpet holes with planters. As we moved towards the stairs leading up to a balcony lined with Royal Stags (six-pointers), I noticed the antlers on one of the stags literally hanging by a thread.

"You really do need to get that fixed," I pointed out the problem to the footman. I thought he was standing behind me until I caught a glimpse of his shadow retreating down the corridor. Shaking my head, I continued with my inspection.

Back in the kitchen, I took stock of supplies for the party when the footman tapped me on the shoulder and asked: "So did he say anything?"

#### "Who?" I said, puzzled.

But before he could reply, the door burst open. I was summoned back to the Ballroom. When I arrived, the Head Butler stood at the top of the stairs with a maintenance guy holding a ladder. He handed me some gaffer tape.

"As you're so friendly with His Royal Highness, you can fix the problem!" he said.

Apparently, it was not the footman standing behind me when I barked instructions about fixing the antler, nor was it the shadowy figure I glimpsed retreating down the corridor.

It was Prince Phillip... Boom!

Hours later, with the antler secured, I returned to the kitchen only to find Prince Andrew perched on the edge of the cutting table devouring a sandwich. It must be my day of memorable moments with Crown Princes, I thought, as I listened to Prince Andrew chatting casually about his day. That was until we heard footsteps bounding towards us and the distinct sound of Prince Phillip's voice. Jumping to attention, Prince Andrew hurriedly passed me his sandwich, raised a finger to his lips, signalling silence before ducking into one of the Larders to hide. Then, the door opened, and Prince Phillip's presence filled the room. Scanning the kitchen curiously, his eyes finally rested on mine. I stood rooted to the spot with a half-eaten sandwich in my right hand and a dumbfounded look on my face.

"Don't you get a proper meal?" he asked, looking from me to the sandwich.

"Er... yes, Sir,' I replied. "It's been a busy day."

Prince Phillip perched himself on the very spot that Prince Andrew had vacated moments before and proceeded to chat about life in the castle. My eyes shifted slowly from his to the larder, wondering if Prince Andrew was still in hiding. Prince Phillip's story continued. I learned that one of his pet hates was going to the bathroom in the middle of the night. A rather odd conversation, I thought, except that castle's are filled with odd conversations.

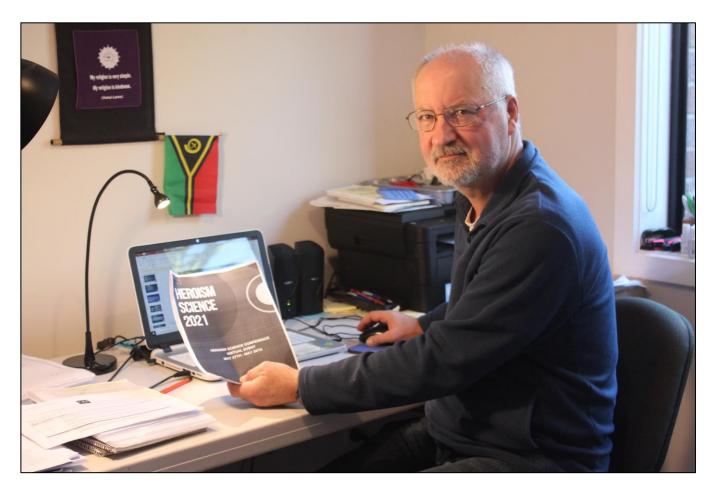
"The castle's corridors echo every sound you hear, you know," I heard him say. Flushing the chain, well, everyone knew Prince Phillip had been to the loo. An odd conversation.

"Indeed, Sir," I replied.

Noticing I had not touched the half-eaten sandwich, Prince Phillip arose. With a nod of his royal head, he said, "Well, don't let me stop you from enjoying your sandwich." And once again, with a wave of his royal hand, he was gone. I finished off Prince Andrew's sandwich even though I hated tuna, then made my way to the larder.

# POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH AMONGST AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY AWARD RECIPIENTS – PART 1.

#### **ABA Member Tom Voigt**



PhD Candidate and ABA Member Tom Voigt has been invited to present to the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Heroism Science Conference, being hosted as a 'virtual' event by the University of Limerick in Ireland. The theme of the conference is titled 'Exceptional Leadership and Heroism: Protecting Communities and Saving Lives'. Tom will be giving a 30-minute address on the first part of his PhD research project. It focuses on results from his quantitative data collection dealing with Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) amongst Australian Bravery Award recipients within a public health context. For those ABA members who attended the September 2020 ABA Zoom meeting, Tom presented a sneak preview of his research. 65 ABA members had completed a 21 question self-assessment tool or survey in 2019, the 'Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)'. Of these, 37 (57%) were civilians, and 28 (43%) were non-civilians. Of these 28 non-civilians, 24 were Police Officers at the time of their Bravery Award incident.

While many people are aware of and familiar with the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the concept or idea of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) following life-threatening events and/or trauma is not as widely known or understood. PTG has been described as a process in which <u>some</u> individuals, who have been impacted by trauma or a highly traumatic event, experience a level of change, leading to a level of growth in the aftermath of trauma.

PTG has been defined as follows:

"The individual not only survived but has experienced changes that are viewed as important and that go beyond what was the previous status-quo. Thus, post-traumatic growth is not simply a return to baseline. It is an experience of improvement that for some people is deeply profound (Tedeschi & Calhoun 2004)".

Within his research, Tom explored levels of growth (PTG) in both civilians and non-civilians and looked at various aspects related to PTG. Whilst Tom's PhD research is focused on looking at the unintended consequences of bravery, both positive



Photo: Tom and Debbie at Government House 2020

and negative (especially amongst civilians), the fact that almost half of the 65 returned PTGI selfassessment tools were completed by non-civilians. This has allowed Tom to compare PTG scores across both groups. Unlike most other research into PTG, Tom's research is unique. Rather than solely focusing on a specific disaster or incident or a particular group such as the Military, Police or Emergency Service workers, his research explores different types of incidents, gender differences and different groups of Bravery Award recipients. Using the 21 question PTGI survey tool with a Likert scale scoring option of between 0 and 5, the maximum possible PTG score would be 105. The lowest possible PTG score would be 0. Of the 65 ABA members who completed the PTGI tool, there were six (6) with a PTG score of 2 or less (extremely low) and six (6) with a PTG score of 75 or higher (very high). The PTG score for the overall group of 65 ABA participants was 41.03. This would suggest a moderate level of growth. However, when comparing civilians to non-civilian, there was quite a marked difference. Civilians have a much higher average PTG score of 49.73 by comparison to those non-civilians with an overall PTG score of 29.5. For Police Officers, their overall PTG score was also very low at 32.2. Some other researchers have suggested that Police and Emergency service workers record lower PTG scores due to their frequent exposure to trauma. Quite a number of other studies of Police Officers and PTG scores in the USA have reported similarly low levels of PTG, with average PTG scores of 36.7, 42.5 and 43.1 being recorded. Certainly, it is strongly suggested that this is an area where further research would be warranted. Perhaps the most surprising result from Tom's research was the finding that civilians involved in violence-related incidents recorded a significantly higher PTG score of 59.43. PTG scores were even higher for those civilians in incidents where a gun or firearm was involved. These recorded an average PTG score of 65.5, indicating very high levels of growth. Other researchers have shown that individuals involved in natural disasters or 'Acts of God' versus man-made incidents often report much lower levels of PTG. Moreover, that people are more accepting of the cause of natural disasters versus incidents of man-made violence.

Finally, the highest significant level of PTG recorded from this study was reported by female ABA recipients whose average PTG score was 65.9 versus the average PTG for all males at 37.5. Coincidentally, all-female ABA participants in this study were civilians. For male participants, the difference between civilians with an average PTG score of 45.28 and non-civilians with an average PTG score of 29.5 was once again quite stark. Whilst the first part of Tom's research is focused on post-traumatic growth, which is seen to be a potentially positive outcome, the second part of Tom's research interviews 24 ABA Bravery Award recipients and 24 Key Significant other people. This research will seek to highlight and identify those unintended consequences of acts of bravery, including what might be seen as negative consequences and outcomes. Tom hopes that these results will be ready to present in 12-months. For those interested in reading or learning more about Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), Tom has recommended a very good paperback as follows: Jim Rendon (2015), Upside: The New Science of Post-Traumatic Growth, Touchstone Publishing.

Contact Tom Voigt: https://au.linkedin.com/in/tom-voigt-28949240

# SOUTH AUSTRALIA News

#### **Bill Lowther SC**

Recently, six recipients received honour awards and recognition for three acts of bravery. I had the pleasure of meeting these awardees at Government House, where I gave each of the recipients a letter of congratulations for their acts of bravery. I also extended an invitation for them to join the ABA. So, thus far, we already have one person who is seriously considering my invitation. The following are a summary of those rescues.



Photo: Christopher, Adrienne and Sarah Williams, with Mitchell and his partner.

Sarah Williams was fishing for squid on Lady Bay at Normanville when a 4.5-meter great white shark knocked her kayak. She flew into the air and into the water, where the shark began circling her and continued to hit the kayak. Mitchell and Chris were 100 meters away in a tinny when the shark attacked. Chris motored towards Sarah, and Mitchell pulled her to safety. Both men were recognised with Commendations for Brave Conduct.



Photo: Ben McKenzie and Lee Dobson.

On January 27, 2019, Ben McKenzie and a friend Lee Dobson were fishing at the Murray Mouth when they heard a woman scream. Two young boys had been swept away in a strong rip. Ben immediately dove into the water and swam 20 metres out to one of the boys who was clearly at the brink of exhaustion. After getting hold of the first boy, Ben reached down and felt for the second boy who was clinging onto the first boy's ankle. He quickly dove down into the water and pulled the second boy up. Lee Dobson also entered the water and assisted in keeping the distressed boys afloat. Both men struggled to stay afloat in the surging rip. Fortunately, a surfer arrived on a bodyboard to help. Another male on a jet-ski also came and towed the exhausted group to the safety of the shore. The jet

ski rider who assisted in the rescue was Mark Tiss. Ben McKenzie and Lee Dobson both received commendations for bravery in the Australian Bravery Awards.

On 26 August 2020, Year 11 Emmaus College students Cody Batchelor and Joshua Woodley were recognised with Commendations for Brave Conduct. They rescued Trish Woodham (76) and her dog from drowning in the Coromandel Valley Lake in July 2019. While riding their bikes along the riverbank, the boys had heard a woman scream. She'd slid into the water shortly after attempting to rescue her dog. Unfortunately, both the woman and her dog got caught in the bushes. She was lucky the boys just happened by. I was honoured to meet them at Government House.



Photo: Joshua Woodley, police officer (name unknown), Cody Batchelor and William Lowther SC.



#### **ABA GALLERY**

**HOW TO NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR A BRAVERY AWARD** The Australian Honours System is administered independently of the ABA through the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat located at Government House in Canberra. While the ABA plays no role in determining awards, it can provide information to members and interested parties on the nomination process. **Nominate** someone for an Australian Bravery Award: <u>https://www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards/nominate-someone-award</u>

# **AUSTRALIAN BRAVERY ASSOCIATION**

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# **Vice-Patrons:**

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Contact us: <u>AustralianBraveryAssociation@gmail.com</u>