

Order of Australia Association
Hunter Regional Group
New South Wales Branch



A Brief History
1985 – 2025

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Order of Australia Association - Hunter Regional Group

Member of the New South Wales Branch

1985 - 2025

Introduction

This brief history was originally prepared from information provided by Mrs. Mary Doughty AM, a former NSW Branch Regional Groups Coordinator, in April 2010. We are grateful to her for the information on the establishment of The Order of Australia, The Association and the establishment of the NSW Branch.

Additional information is from records held by Lieutenant Colonel Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED (Retd) since he became the Hunter Regional Group Convenor in November 2003. Laurie also researched documents in his personal files received from the Hunter Regional Group over the years since he became a member of the OAA in 1986. Where possible, he endeavoured to contact previous office bearers and local convenors to obtain additional information.

Professor Geoffrey Kellerman AO also provided additional information and dates for some of the functions.

This historical summary was originally prepared based on the best information available, as it was felt important to record as much local history as possible while the early office holders and convenors were still able to recall events.

Additional information has been sourced from *The Order* magazine, Edition 78, Feb/Mar 2025, issued for the 50th Anniversary of the Order of Australia.

Establishment of the Order of Australia

The Order of Australia honours system was first suggested, by the Hon. Gough Whitlam, in question time in Parliament in 1967. In December 1974, when Gough Whitlam became the Australian Prime Minister and was received at Buckingham Palace, he outlined to the Queen his proposal to cease using the Imperial Honours System in Australia and replace it with an Australian honours system. The proposed Australian system was based on an already established Canadian awards and honours system. Queen Elizabeth II approved the proposal on 14 February 1975.

The establishment of the Order of Australia was announced by the Governor-General Sir John Kerr GCMG, GCVO, QC (AK 1976) on Australia Day 1975. On 14 February, the constitution and legal aspects were proclaimed by the Queen in the Australian Government Gazette. The first Order of Australia awards were conferred on the Queen's Birthday in June 1975. The Order celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2025.

Twice yearly, on Australia Day and the Queen's/King's Birthday, Companions (AC), Officers (AO) and Members (AM) are appointed to The Order and medals are awarded. The additional levels of Knight (AK) and Dame (AD) were added in 1977 but later abolished by the Hawke government.

The Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) was established in 1977.

The awards of Knight and Dame were brought back by Prime Minister Tony Abbott in March 2014. The honour was known as a Knight or Dame in the Order of Australia and was the nation's highest award. It was automatically bestowed on the serving Governor-General. Up to four could be awarded each year by Her Majesty the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. This decision was rescinded again in November 2015.

The Australian honours system has two divisions, the General Division and the Military Division. Later it was decided that distinguished persons who are not Australian citizens could be recipients of Honours in the General Division (Honorary).

The Order of Australia is different from the Imperial Honours in an important aspect: the method of selecting recipients. There is a Council of The Order. Nominations may be made to the Council by any person or organisation. The Council makes its selection from such nominations and recommends these to the Governor-General who makes the awards, with the approval of the King (previously the Queen).

The Insignia the recipients receive were designed by Australian Stuart Develin AO CMG in 1976 (designer of Australia's first decimal coins). The design uses the livery colours of the Commonwealth of Australia Coat of Arms – gold and royal blue. An individual ball of wattle blossom features in a simple convex golden disc with a rich texture of beads and radiating lines accentuating the ring of blue enamel, representing the surrounding sea. The disc is surmounted by an enamel Crown of St Edward, signifying the Crown as Head of The Order.

The blue and gold theme continues in the ribbon, with a central band of scattered golden wattle blossoms. The Military Division is differentiated by the addition of a narrow gold band at each edge of the blue ribbon. The crown is the Crown of St Edward, used at the coronation of the King or Queen.

Medals of the Order of Australia



Commander of the Order of Australia (AC) Officer of the Order of Australia (AO)

Member of the Order of Australia (AM)

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Establishment of The Order of Australia Association

The first recorded steps to set up the Order of Australia Association were taken by Alderman Ken Cavanough AM of Blakehurst NSW. On 31 January 1976, he wrote to Mr. David Smith, Secretary to the Governor-General, suggesting the formation of an association of Award recipients.

He was advised that the formation of such an association would be looked upon favourably by the Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowan. The first recorded meeting of people recognised in the Order was organised by Mr. Bob (Robert) Hicks AM MBE, when a dinner was held in Melbourne on 14 February 1978. This was followed by another dinner in Melbourne in February 1979.

Alderman Cavanough's efforts were eventually successful when 70 people met in Sydney on 21 September 1979 and it was agreed that a steering committee be formed. This committee linked it with the Victorian group, and it was agreed that a circular invitation be sent to the twelve hundred existing award recipients. This led to the first national meeting which was held at the Australian National University on 26 January 1980, followed by the first National dinner that evening. Sir Colin Syme AK (the most senior award recipient in Australia) became the first National President, Mr. R. Gordon Jackson AC (AK in January 1983), the first National Chairman and Mr. Ken Cavanough AM, the first National Secretary.

Two draft constitutions by Major General Paul Cullen AO, CBE, DSO and bar, ED (later AC and Honorary Life Member) and Mr. Ken Cavanough AM were submitted to this meeting for consideration by all states. It was agreed at this meeting that the Association should be a national association with branches in

all States and Territories. The aim of the Association was agreed to be "To foster love and pride in Australia and to uphold the high principles and prestige of the Order of Australia".

Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen AK, GCMG, GCVO, QC agreed to become Patron of the Association, as has every Governor-General since then. Through the Secretary of the Order, he also gave permission for the use of the emblem of the Order by the Association.

Order of Australia Association Membership

Membership of the Order of Australia Association is open to all recipients of an award in the Order of Australia, in both the General Division and Military Division. It is also open to Honorary recipients in the General Division.

New South Wales Branch

At a meeting held in the Sydney Town Hall on 22 July 1980, it was moved by Major General Paul Cullen AO, seconded by Mr. Wallace Whitelaw OAM that The NSW Branch of the Order of Australia Association be formed. The agreement was unanimous. Major General Paul Cullen AO was elected as the first President and Alderman Andrew Briger AM, as Vice President. It was agreed that His Excellency Sir Roden Cutler VC, AK, KCMG, KCVO, CBE, Governor of NSW, be asked to accept the office of Patron of the NSW Branch. The Governor of NSW accepted, and this tradition continues to the present day.

Regional Groups

Although many social functions were conducted by the NSW Branch these were usually held in Sydney. In the early years of the Association, the holding of regional functions depended very much on the enthusiasm of individual members who were prepared to undertake responsibility for organising events. The NSW Branch Committee was always most supportive and was represented at all such functions which usually bore the name of the locality or district in which they were held.

The first regional function in NSW was held in Tamworth on 21 September 1984. Functions were held at irregular intervals in the following years. NSW Chairman Graham Swain AM in 1997 stressed the need for setting up regional groups across the state, as he was concerned that the cost of visiting Sydney for Branch functions had become prohibitive, and many members were not well enough to undertake the travel.

A new Memorandum and Articles of Association for the Order of Australia Association was passed in 1993 and implemented in 1994, with By-law 3 governing the way regional groups operated (later amended in 2003). The NSW Branch "Regional Coordinator" is responsible for contact with Regional Convenors. A set of guidelines was produced for holding social functions in the name of the Order of Australia Association NSW Branch.

In 2002, Regional Coordinator Keith Phipps OAM suggested a regional banner be presented to each well-established group to celebrate the work of these groups. The NSW Branch had these banners manufactured and presented, and they are now prominently displayed at regional functions. In 2026, there are fifteen active and well-organised regional groups in NSW.

The Hunter Regional Group

The forerunner to the Hunter Regional Group was formed in 1985 and held its first function, a dinner, on 15 March 1985. It is understood that this dinner was held at the Newcastle Tattersall's Club in Watt Street, Newcastle.

The committee organising the dinner included:

- Dr. John Westphalen AM RFD ED, Chairman
- Dr. Peter Hendry AO
- Dr. Owen James AM
- Ms. Diane Williamson, Honorary Secretary

The formal Inaugural Dinner of the Order of Australia Hunter Regional Group was held at the Tattersall's Club Newcastle on Friday 25 July 1986. The Guest of Honour was Mr. David Smith AO, CVO and Mrs. Smith. David Smith was the Official Secretary to the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Secretary of the Order of Australia.

Several Members attended the Newcastle Australia Day Council Dinners held in 1986, 1987 and on 23 January 1988 at the Newcastle City Hall.

A church service and morning tea were held on 1 May 1988 arranged by Dr. John Westphalen AM, RFD, ED. Another dinner was held at the Newcastle Club, Newcomen Street, Newcastle on 28 April 1989.

On Australia Day 1989 and 1990, members joined with the Newcastle Australia Day Council to attend a church service at Christchurch Cathedral.

An informal reception was held on Saturday 17 November 1990 at the Newcastle Club. The Principal Guest was Rear Admiral Swan AO, Chairman of the NSW Branch. John Westphalen AM, RFD, ED was the local Regional Group Chairman. Miss Diane Williamson was the Honorary Secretary, a

position she held for about 10 years. Dr. Owen James AM was the host at the Newcastle Club. A cocktail party was organised by Miss Diane Williamson for 27 April 1991 at the Newcastle Club.

From 1988 until about 1995, cocktail parties were held each year at the Newcastle City Hall, hosted by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor John McNaughton (later AM), but no other functions were held. The Hunter Regional Group was not very active from 1995 to 1999.

A midday function, including a meeting of the Hunter Regional Group members, was held on 21 September 1999 at West's Leagues Club, Lambton to revitalise the local Association, to elect a new committee and plan future functions. The new committee was Kevin McDougal OAM Chairman, Nance Adams OAM, OStJ Secretary and Professor Geoffrey Kellerman AO Treasurer.

A luncheon was held on 22 January 2000 at West's Leagues Club, Lambton with Mr. Kevin McDougal OAM as the Convenor. No functions were held for the next few years.

In November 2003, following a visit to the NSW Branch Annual General Meeting by Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED, and Peter Toms OAM RFD, an approach was made to the Regional Groups Co-Ordinator Mrs. Mary Doughty AM, to reactivate the Hunter Regional Group, and a function was planned for January 2004.

A current membership list was obtained from the NSW Branch Secretary and Laurie Kelly carried out a great deal of research to identify other people in the Hunter region who had received awards but were not members of the Order of Australia Association.

The area allocated as the Hunter Regional Group was for postcodes covering an area from Newcastle south to Doyalson, north to Bulahdelah and west to Scone. Consideration was given to establishing an upper Hunter region based in Muswellbrook, but this did not eventuate.

A new committee was formed in 2003 to plan future functions which included:

- Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED, Convener
- Professor Geoffrey Kellerman AO, Treasurer
- Nance Adams OAM OStJ
- Val Harvey-Hamilton OAM
- Robert Hicks OAM
- Kevin McDougall OAM
- John Miner OAM
- Peter Toms OAM RFD

The committee agreed to the following guiding principles: that all persons living in the area covered by the Hunter Regional Group would be invited to all future functions, whether or not, they were current members of the Order of Australia Association. New members who received awards would be contacted by the Regional Convener and congratulated and encouraged to attend the Hunter Regional Group events and join the Order of Australia Association.

It was agreed that the cost of all functions would be kept as low as possible, as many older members had limited income. It was also decided that, where sufficient funding existed, new recipients would be invited to the annual morning tea at no charge in the year they received their award. This was later discontinued due to the rising costs of functions.

The committee members agreed that, as a general rule, the Hunter Regional Group would not carry out fund raising for charities or specific projects. It was recognised that most members had commitments to various fund-raising organisations that they have worked with for years, which often resulted in them being recommended for their awards.

Because of the large geographical area and the age of many award recipients, the committee agreed to investigate the possibility of holding functions in the Port Stephens area and the upper Hunter. The boundaries of the Hunter Regional Group are within the postcodes 2238 – 2360 (some exceptions).

After three years of inactivity a successful luncheon was held on 24 January 2004 at the Cardiff RSL Club, attended by 119, including award recipients, their family, friends and supporters.

This was followed by a morning tea held at the Western Suburbs Leagues Club on 6 July 2004. With the assistance of Kevin McDougall OAM, the then President of West's, a very reasonable cost was achieved. This function was attended by 115 award recipients and guests.

In November 2006, a letter was written to the President of the British Empire Association asking if members in the Hunter Region would like to attend our functions. Unfortunately, due to privacy requirements, names and addresses could not be provided. Our invitation was passed on to members inviting them to contact Laurie Kelly if they were interested. However, no one made contact.

The Order of Australia Association NSW Branch Banner was presented to the Hunter Regional Convener, Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED acknowledging that the Hunter Regional Group was now a viable group. The presentation was made by Mr. Wolfgang Grimm AM, the then NSW Branch Chairman, at the annual luncheon on 29 January 2005.



Presentation of the Order of Australia Association Banner by Mr. Wolfgang Grimm AM, Chairman NSW Branch, to Hunter Regional Convener, Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED. 29 January 2005

The banner was passed on to subsequent Regional Conveners: Mrs. June Cameron AM on 2 February 2013; Mr Peter Corcoran AM in 2022; and Professor Maree Gleeson OAM in May 2025.

Recent NSW Branch Regional Group Coordinators have been Ron Sharpe OAM (2009 to 2013), Garth Doyle OAM (2013 to 2019), Ron Sharpe (2019 to 2020), Christopher Dunne (2021 to 2023) and David North OAM (2024-current). They attended or have been represented at many luncheons and morning teas in the Hunter Region. Their ongoing contribution is appreciated.

Since being formally reorganised in December 2003 to January 2026, the Hunter Regional Group has arranged 62 celebratory events consisting of 20 luncheons and 23 morning teas in the Newcastle area, 18 morning teas at Port Stephens and 1 morning tea at Muswellbrook. It has moved from a non-functioning group to one of the strongest regional groups in the NSW Branch.

The Port Stephens morning teas have been held at the Shoal Bay, Fingal Bay and Salamander Retirement Villages operated by Harbourside Villages with the assistance of local coordinators Ron Jordan OAM, Bart Richardson OAM and Ian Lovell APM. The morning teas have been provided free of charge and small attendance fees have been donated back to the Harbourside Villages as a contribution to their Aged Care Trainees Scheme (\$4,867 to 2025).

In 2006, a Muswellbrook morning tea for upper Hunter residents was arranged with Brigadier John Colvin AM RFD ED (Retired) who at the time was the Mayor of Muswellbrook.

Due to coronavirus pandemic restrictions, the morning teas scheduled for Port Stephens in July 2020, Wallsend in July 2020 and February 2021 were cancelled.

Since 2004, luncheons and morning teas have been held at West's Leagues Club and predominantly at Cardiff RSL Memorial Club. They have been successful events, but the room size limitation necessitated a relocation in August 2025 to Wallsend Diggers RSL Club.

Photographs

The committee arranged for photographs to be taken of new award recipients and other groups of people attending the functions. Initially, committee member Val Harvey-Hamilton OAM took photos and posted them to the relevant people. Major Charlie Stevens OAM RFD ED (Retd), Bill Hanley OAM and Alan Carter OAM have also taken photos at functions.

The Group was fortunate to have the voluntary services of a professional photographer, Mr. Graham Hynds, of Newlight Photography between 2010-2023. Photographs from recent functions taken by Alan Carter were made available for viewing on the Hunter Regional Group website. With changes to the Privacy Act, only official photos will be taken and placed on the new website, with consent from the new awardees.

2011 and 2024 Surveys

In 2011, a survey sought feedback from all members on the functions held to date and to ensure that most people were satisfied. About half of the people on the mailing list responded and most people were happy with the efforts of the committee and the format used at functions. The survey invited recommendations for future guest speakers and invited members to join the committee if they wished. This resulted in two new members joining the committee: Mrs. June Cameron AM and Mr. Neville Sawyer AM.

Following the 2011 survey, the mailing list for members wishing to attend Hunter Regional Group functions was updated, reducing the membership from 300 to 250. By September 2023, the number had increased to 476. Another survey was undertaken in 2024 resulting in the number of members wishing to remain on the mailing list at 252. In January 2026, the membership was 310.

Hunter Regional Group Committee Members

In 2022, Peter Corcoran AM took over the role of Convener from June Cameron AM. Due to the unexpected illness of Peter Corcoran, the role was filled in an Acting capacity by Maree Gleeson OAM from December 2024. Peter resigned from the role of Convener in April 2025 and Maree Gleeson assumed the role officially in May 2025.

In 2022-23, Gerry Collins, Alan Carter OAM and Maree Gleeson OAM joined the committee reflecting the changing needs of the committee. This allowed other long-serving members of the committee to be supported.

Gerry's skills as the Master of Ceremonies at functions has ensured very professional events. Alan's webmaster expertise led to the creation of the Hunter Regional Group website, automation of the RSVPs and improved electronic communication with members. Maree acted as the Liaison Officer with the OAA NSW Branch to ensure the governance of the administration of our Hunter Regional Group complied with the new OAA Constitution introduced in 2024.

The committee is grateful for the long-term efforts of Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED and Major (Retd) Charlie Stevens OAM RFD ED who regularly updated this publication. Maree Gleeson assumed the editorial role in 2025.

Major Stevens served 20 years on the committee as both Secretary and Treasurer until 2024 and Treasurer between 2024-2026. Charlie retired in March 2026. Alan Carter OAM was Secretary for six months 2024-2025 until leaving the committee in March 2025. Mrs Rhonda Scruton OAM joined the committee in May 2025 as the new Secretary.

Stephen Finney OAM maintains the database of members and forwards electronic correspondence to our membership list. Stephen has also taken over the role of webmaster and managing the new website.

Bill (William) Hanley OAM and Ian Lovell APM organise the event guest speakers. Ian also organises the Port Stephens morning teas.

John Gambrill OAM joined the committee in July 2025, and Colleen Potts OAM joined the committee in July 2026 to assist with event coordination.

Current Hunter Committee as of May 2025

- Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Laurie Kelly AM RFD ED (Committee member & Past Convenor 2004-2012) From 2003
- Mr. Stephen Finney OAM From 2009
- Det Supt (Retd) Ian Lovell APM From 2017
- Mr. William Hanley OAM From 2018
- Mr. Gerry Collins From 2022
- Professor Maree Gleeson OAM, Convener From 2023
- Mrs. Rhonda Scruton OAM, Secretary From 2025
- Mr. John Gambrill OAM From 2025
- Ms. Colleen Potts OAM From 2026

Past Committee Members since 2003

- Mr. Peter Toms OAM RFD Committee member 2003 to 2009
- Mr. Kevin McDougall OAM Committee member 2003 to 2010
- Mr. John Miner OAM Committee member 2003 to 2015
- Mr. Robert Hicks OAM Committee member 2003 to 2018
- Major (Retd) Charles Stevens OAM RFD ED (Committee member, Secretary, Treasurer, Historian) 2006 to 2026
- Mr. Neville Sawyer AM Committee member 2012 to 2019
- Mrs. Ruth Gorton OAM Treasurer 2017 to 2019
- Mrs. Nance Adams OAM OstJ Committee member 2003 to 2020
- Mrs. Val Harvey-Hamilton OAM Committee member 2003 to 2020
- Professor Geoffrey Kellerman AO Treasurer/Committee 1999 to 2022
- Mrs. June Cameron AM Convenor 2012 to 2022
- Mr. Peter Corcoran AM Convenor 2022 to 2024
- Mr. Alan Carter OAM Committee/Secretary 2023 to 2025

The Hunter Regional Group committee continues to work together to uphold the ideals of the Association and promote friendship amongst those who have Awards in The Order, particularly those living in the Hunter.

Following this brief history of the Association and the Hunter Regional Group is a summary of functions held by the Hunter Regional Group, based on available records.

Any additional information or corrections from members with other archival material is most welcome.

Emeritus Professor Maree Gleeson OAM
Convenor, Hunter Regional Group
Order of Australia Association NSW Branch
Updated: March 2026

Summary of Functions held by the Order of Australia Hunter Regional Group A member of the NSW Branch of the Order of Australia Association

Date	Function	Location	Cost	Number Attended
15 Mar 1985	Dinner	Tattersall's Club, Newcastle		
	Convener: J. Westphalen, AM, RFD, ED. Secretary: D Williamson			
26 Jan 1986	Dinner	Newcastle City Hall		
	Group table as part of Newcastle Australia Day Council			
25 Jul 1986	Dinner	Tattersall's Club, Newcastle		
	Convener: J. Westphalen AM, RFD, ED, Secretary: D. Williamson, Guest speaker: David Smith AC, AVO (Secretary of The Order)			
26 Jan 1987	Dinner	Newcastle City Hall		
	Group table as part of Newcastle Australia Day Council			
23 Jan 1988	Dinner	Newcastle City Hall		
	Group table as part of Newcastle Australia Day Council			
26 Jan 1988	Church Service	Christchurch Cathedral Newcastle		
	Members invited as part of Newcastle Australia Day Council Group			
1 May 1988	Church Service Morning Tea	Christchurch Cathedral Newcastle		
	Church service followed by morning tea at Newcastle Club, Newcastle			
1988	Cocktail Party Reception	Newcastle City Hall	Nil	
	Convener: J. Westphalen AM, RFD, ED, Secretary: D. Williamson, Hosted by: Lord Mayor, Councillor John McNaughton			
26 Jan 1989	Church Service	Christchurch Cathedral Newcastle		
	Members invited as part of Newcastle Australia Day Council Group			
28 Apr 1989	Dinner	Newcastle Club, Newcastle		
	Secretary: Miss D. Williamson			
1989	Cocktail Party Reception	Newcastle City Hall	Nil	
	Convener: J. Westphalen AM, RFD, ED, Secretary: D. Williamson Hosted by: Lord Mayor, Councillor John McNaughton			
26 Jan 1990	Church Service	Christchurch Cathedral Newcastle		
	Members invited as part of Newcastle Australia Day Council Group			
17 Nov 1990	Reception	Newcastle Club, Newcastle		
	Convener: J. Westphalen AM, RFD, ED, Secretary: D. Williamson, Host: Dr. Owen James, Guest Speaker: Rear Admiral Swan AO, Chairman NSW Branch.			
1990	Cocktail Party	Newcastle City Hall	Nil	
	Convener: J. Westphalen AM, RFD, ED, Secretary: D. Williamson Hosted by: Lord Mayor, Councillor John McNaughton			
27 Apr 1991	Cocktail Party	Newcastle Club, Newcastle		
	Secretary: Miss D. Williamson			
21 Aug 1992	Reception	Newcastle City Hall		
	Convener/Secretary: Miss D. Williamson, Hosted by: Lord Mayor, Councillor John McNaughton			
30 Jul 1993	Reception	Newcastle City Hall		
	Convener/Secretary: D. Williamson, Hosted by: Lord Mayor, Councillor John McNaughton			
21 Sep 1999	Meeting	West's Leagues Club, Lambton		
	Convener: K. McDougall OAM			
22 Jan 2000	Luncheon	West's Leagues Club, Lambton	\$30	
	Conveners: K. McDougall OAM & Nance Adams OAM OstJ. Guest speaker: Mr. Norm Barney – Local Historian.			
24 Jan 2004	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	119
	Convener: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. No guest speaker.			
6 Jul 2004	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Lambton	\$10	115
	Convener L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. No guest speaker.			

29 Jan 2005	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$28	117
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Professor Trevor Waring AM. Psychologist Newcastle University.			
6 Jul 2005	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Lambton	\$10	
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Kevin McDougall OAM. President Western Suburbs Leagues Club.			
28 Jan 2006	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$30	130
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Rear Admiral (Retd) Peter Sinclair AC.			
5 Jul 2006	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Mayfield	\$10	120
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Dr. Peter Hendry AO. Prisoner of War.			
28 Aug 2006	Morning Tea	Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre	\$11	30
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Host Councillor: John Colvin AM, RFD, ED, Mayor of Muswellbrook. Guest speaker: Mr. Bernie Banton AM. Asbestos spokesman and victim.			
27 Jan 2007	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$32	120
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Mrs. Michelle Edmunds. Cochlear Implant Club.			
1 May 2007	Morning Tea	Harbourside Haven Shoal Bay	\$10	40
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Host: Mr. Bill King OAM. Guest speaker: Councillor Geoff Robinson. Donation of \$300 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
18 Jul 2007	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Lambton	\$10	100
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speakers: Phil Williams, Business Manager, and Glen Ramplin, Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. Pasha Bulka, ship rescue.			
2 Feb 2008	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$32	111
	Convenor L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Mr. John Risby. Former BHP General Manager Steep Division.			
11 Jun 2008	Morning Tea	Fingal Haven Retirement Village	\$10	32
	Convenor L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Host: Alan Hudson OAM. Guest speaker: Commodore Peter Phillipson ESM. Port Stephens Coastal Patrol. Donation of \$230 to Harbourside Haven Traneeship Fund.			
23 Jul 2008	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Mayfield	\$10	110
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Dr. David Nye. Newcastle Airport Corporate Affairs.			
31 Jan 2009	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	125
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Tony Tamplin. Newcastle Police Media.			
11 Jun 2009	Morning Tea	Fingal Haven Retirement Village	\$10	47
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Host: Mr. Bart Richardson OAM. Guest speaker: Flight Lieutenant Michael Duggan (RAAF Williamtown). Donation of \$377 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
23 Jul 2009	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Mayfield	\$10	140
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Maree Gleeson. Director, Hunter Medical Research Institute.			
30 Jan 2010	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	114
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest Speakers: Alan and Hazel Budd. Mercy Ships Australia. Donation of \$780 collected at luncheon for Mercy Ships Australia.			
23 Jun 2010	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$10	35
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Host: Mr. Bart Richardson OAM. Guest speaker: John Clarke. Local fishing historian. Donation of \$280 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
21 Jul 2010	Morning Tea	West's Leagues Club, Mayfield	\$12	120
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Major (Retd) Grahame Hall RFD, ED. Fort Scratchley Historical Society.			
5 Feb 2011	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$38	112
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Master of Ceremonies: Val Harvey-Hamilton OAM. Guest speakers: Greg and Sylvia Ray. Author and Newcastle Herald Reporter.			

22 Jun 2011	Morning Tea	Fingal Haven Retirement Village	\$10	35
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Host: Mr. Bart Richardson OAM. Guest speaker: Len Lollback. SES Co-Ordinator. Donation of \$280 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
12 Jul 2011	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$15	110
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Mr. Ed Tonks. Local Historian.			
4 Feb 2012	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	124
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Craig Hamilton. Radio announcer and motivational speaker.			
20 Jun 2012	Morning Tea	Harbourside Haven Shoal Bay	\$10	45
	Convenor: C Stevens OAM, RFD, ED. Host: Mr. Bart Richardson. Guest speaker: Mr. Bart Richardson OAM. Ex-Prisoner of War, Malaya and recent visitor to Japan as part of Japanese/POW Friendship programme. Donation of \$250 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
17 Jul 2012	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$15	123
	Convenor: L Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Master of Ceremonies: Mrs. June Cameron AM. Guest speaker: Ms. Karen Howard. Chairman Urban Medicare Local – GP Access.			
2 Feb 2013	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	125
	Convenor and Master of Ceremonies: Mrs. June Cameron AM. Guest speaker: Bart Richardson OAM. Visit to Japan on POW Friendship Program			
12 Jun 2013	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$10	31
	Convenor: Mrs. June Cameron AM. Host: Bart Richardson OAM. Guest speaker: Squadron Leader Michael Duggan. Donation of \$250 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
16 Jul 2013	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$16	110
	Convenor and Master of Ceremonies: Laurie Kelly AM, RFD, ED. Guest speaker: Mr. Ron Ramsey, Director, Newcastle Art Gallery.			
1 Feb 2014	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$37	142
	Convenor and Master of Ceremonies: Mrs. June Cameron AM. Guest speaker: Dr Jeanette Dixon AM. Living and working in Space			
25 Jun 2014	Morning Tea	Fingal Haven Retirement	\$10	32
	Master of Ceremonies: Alan Hudson OAM Guest Speaker: Louise Watters. Retirement Village management Donation of \$250 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
23 Jul 2014	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$16	110
	Convenor and Master of Ceremonies: Mrs. June Cameron AM Guest speaker: Gary Webb. Australia's ports and their importance to the economy/continued well-being.			
21 Feb 2015	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	144
	Guest speaker: Lieutenant Colonel Amanda Williams, Commanding Officer, 8 Combat Service Support Battalion – Modern Army			
24 Jun 2015	Morning Tea	Harbourside Haven Shoal Bay	\$10	35
	Convenor: Mrs. June Cameron AM. Host: Bart Richardson OAM. Guest speaker: Squadron Leader Michael Duggan. Upgrading RAAF Williamtown. Donation of \$250 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
15 Jul 2015	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$15	125
	Guest speaker: Neil Slater. ANZAC Memorial Walk.			
20 Feb 2016	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	170
	Guest speaker: Joanne McCarthy. Role of Journalism today.			
22 Jun 2016	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$10	20
	Guest speaker Mrs. Marti McClelland. Silk hobby and stage career. Donation of \$200 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
20 Jul 2016	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$15	140
	Guest speaker: Professor Graham Vimpani AM. Impact of media violence on children and young people.			
18 Feb 2017	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	160
	Guest speaker: Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie AC DSC CSM. World War I centenary and the living spirit.			

21 Jun 2017	Morning Tea	Harbour Haven, Shoal Bay	\$10	28
	Guest speaker: Richard Jones OAM. CEO, Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. Donation of \$200 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
19 Jul 2017	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	130
	Guest speaker: Colleen Wardell OAM, Secretary, Order of Australia Association			
17 Feb 2018	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$35	115
	Guest speaker: Michael Cassel. Hunter Development Corporation			
20 Jun 2018	Morning Tea	Fingal Haven, Fingal Bay	\$12	23
	Guest speaker: Councillor Paul Le Mottee, Port Stephens Council. Donation of \$150 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
4 Jul 2018	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	118
	Guest speaker: Dr Kirsten Molloy, CEO and Co-Ordinator of the Hunter Valley Coal Chain.			
16 Feb 2019	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$40	143
	Guest speaker: Super Hubert OAM, entertainer and fund raiser.			
19 Jun 2019	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$12	19
	Guest speaker: Wing Commander Tim Ireland. Deputy Director, Air Combat Transition Officer, 3 Squadron RAAF Williamtown. Donation of \$200 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
17 Jul 2019	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	113
	Guest speaker: Nick Talley AC. Leading clinician, educator and researcher.			
22 Feb 2020	Luncheon	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$40	137
	Guest speaker Professor Alex Zelinsky AO. Vice Chancellor and President University of Newcastle.			
2020 / 2021	No functions were held during the time of Covid 19 restrictions. Contact was made with Awardees where possible.			
16 Jun 2021	Morning Tea	Harbourside Haven, Shoal Bay	\$12	27
	Guest speaker: Councillor Giacomo Arnott. Port Stephens Councillor, NSW Fire Brigade, Industrial Lawyer. Donation of \$280 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
17 Jul 2021	Luncheon	Wallsend Diggers RSL Club	\$45	90
	Guest Speaker: Mike Rabbitt OAM. Chanel 3 NBN presenter.			
12 Mar 2022	Luncheon	Wallsend Diggers RSL Club	\$45	100
	Guest speaker John Di Gravio OAM. Fortress Newcastle project.			
22 Jun 2022	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$15	23
	Guest speaker: Gary Raymond APM OAM. Retired Police and Ambulance Officer. Granville train disaster. Donation of \$230 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund.			
23 Jul 2022	Luncheon	Wallsend Diggers RSL Club	\$55	90
	Guest speaker: Hilton Grugeon AM. Hunter Businessman.			
18 Mar 2023	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	118
	Guest speaker: Rosemarie Milsom. Art and Life.			
28 Jun 2023	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$15	37
	Guest speaker: Ron Land. President Port Stephens Koala Hospital. Donation of \$490 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund			
26 Aug 2023	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	82
	Guest speaker: Clare Collins AO. My journey into food and nutrition research and healthcare practice – A Cook's Tour.			
2 Mar 2024	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	112
	Guest speaker: Gary Raymond APM OAM. Police recollections			
2 June 2024	Morning Tea	Salamander Haven Village	\$15	25
	Guest speaker: Bob Bush. The Bush Poet. Donation of \$305 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund			
27 July 2024	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	97
	Guest speaker: Bob Skelton. Minmi Magster			
1 Mar 2025	Morning Tea	Cardiff RSL Memorial Club	\$20	146
	Guest speaker: Margaret O'Leary OAM. The Lost Boys – Fromelles Association			

24 June 2025	Morning Tea	Harbourside Haven, Shoal Bay	\$15	34
	Guest speaker: Ruth Wilson OAM. Author & Balloonist Donation of \$345 to Harbourside Haven Traineeship Fund			
2 August 2025	Morning Tea	Wallsend Diggers RSL Club	\$25	121
	Guest speaker: Wing Commander Cameron Douglas AM (Mil). Air Defence – contesting the threat.			
28 Feb 2026	Morning Tea	Wallsend Diggers RSL Club	\$25	112
	Guest speaker: Martha Jabour OAM Life, Love, and Loss. Supporting family members of homicide victims.			
23 June 2026	Morning Tea	Harbourside Haven, Salamander Bay	\$15	
	Guest speaker:			
1 August 2026	Morning Tea	Wallsend Diggers RSL Club	\$25	
	Guest speaker: Carol Duncan			

Port Stephens Morning Tea 2025
Port Stephens Veterans & Citizens Aged Care
Harbourside Haven Shoal Bay



Hunter Regional Group Committee and OAA Members
 CEO and Representatives of PSV&CAC
 NSW Board Directors David North OAM & Dianne North OAM
 Photo acknowledgment: Dianne North OAM

Order of Australia Association - Hunter Regional Group Committee as of March 2026

Mr. Gerry Collins
ABC rugby league football commentator and journalist.

Mr. Stephen William Finney OAM
Citation: For service to veterans through a range of ex-service organisations in the Newcastle and Hunter region.

Mr. John Wallace Gambrill OAM
Citation: For service to the community, particularly through palliative care programs.

Professor Maree Gleeson OAM
Citation: For service to medicine through the Hunter Medical Research Institute, to education, and to professional associations.

Mr. William James Hanley OAM
Citation: For service to the communities of the Hunter Valley through local government and a range of conservation, commercial, sporting and welfare bodies.

Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Lawrence Bernard Kelly AM RFD ED
Citation: For service as Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, the Royal New South Wales Regiment.

Detective Superintendent (Retd) Ian Lovell APM
Citation: For distinguished Police Service to the people of New South Wales and overseas on behalf of the people of Australia.

Mrs. Rhonda Gai Scruton OAM
Citation: For service to surf lifesaving.

Mrs. Colleen Hilda Potts OAM
Citation: For service to the performing arts in the Hunter region

Websites

Order of Australia: www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards/order-australia
Order of Australia Association: www.theorderofaustralia.asn.au/
Hunter Regional Group: www.hrgooaa.org/

Order of Australia Hunter Regional Group Morning Tea
Wallsend Diggers RSL Club, 28 February 2026
Farewell to Charles Stevens OAM RFD ED



Martha Jabour OAM – NSW Branch Deputy Chair,
Charles Stevens OAM RFD ED,
David North OAM – NSW Branch National Director,
Maree Gleeson OAM – Hunter Convener
Photo acknowledgement: Dianne North OAM

Order of Australia Hunter Regional Group Morning Tea
Wallsend Diggers RSL Club, 28 February 2026
Australia Day 2026 Award Recipients and
First-time Attendees



Back L-R: David North OAM (NSW Director), Aleisha Broadhead AM (Mil),
Robert O'Toole OAM, John Manning OA, Gordon Campbell OAM,
Carol Peterson OAM (AD2025), Gavin Fry OAM

Front L-R: Martha Jabour OAM (Speaker), Katherine King OAM,
Maree Gleeson OAM - Hunter Convener
Jill Stuart OAM, John Kilborn OAM (AD2011)

Photo acknowledgement: Dianne North OAM