

National Seniors

AUSTRALIA

ADELAIDE NORTH-WEST BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

May 2026

Meeting at 1.30 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month at
Lockleys Baptist Church house, 244 Henley Beach Road, Underdale (parking at rear)

COMMITTEE

President..... Brian Mibus (0417 887701)

Vice-President....Trevor Molde (0417 838740)

Secretary Kathy Hancock (0432 101372)

Treasurer..... Dawn Thomas

Activities Coordinators

- Outings Annie McCall
- Speakers..... Heather Dowling

Committee Jeanette Molde

Jenny Mathews

Mavis Smith

Newsletter Trish Mibus (0407 605091)

2026 CALENDAR

DATE All dates are Wednesdays	ACTIVITY	AFTERNOON TEA
May 27, 6.00 pm	NIGHT MEETING – SEATON HOTEL – Get-together – No guest speaker	-
June 10, 12 noon	LUNCH – PALAIS HOTEL, SEMAPHORE	-
June 24, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – To be advised	Mavis Smith
July 8, 12 noon	OUTING – CHRISTMAS IN JULY – REX HOTEL	-
July 22, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – ORANGE SKY – Mobile Laundry	Kathy Hancock
August 12, 12 noon	LUNCH – SAILMASTER TAVERN, NTH HAVEN	-
August 26, 1.30 pm	GUEST SPEAKER – DENISE MC KENZIE, West Torrens Council – Ageing WELL.	Trish Mibus

REMINDER

Our May meeting (Wednesday, May 27) is a night meeting for dinner at the Seaton Hotel at 6 pm.
(No afternoon meeting on this day)

Our April Guest Speaker

Rod Barton, Australian Intelligence Officer and Author 'The Life of a Spy'

Rod Barton spoke to us about the Life of a Spy where, over the years, he worked with British Intelligence and the American CIA.

Rod was born in Elizabeth, South Australia and studied Microbiology and Biochemistry at university before moving to Canberra to be a Patent Pattern Examiner, looking at new inventions in microbiology. He worked in this position for 12 months before deciding to apply for a new job advertised as a Junior Scientist in the Department of Defence in Canberra.

Rod went for an interview and found that there was high security. He was taken to Building L and ushered to a room with a large steel door. He was ushered in and the door was locked behind him. Inside was a person who asked him to sit then told him there had been a mistake and he had been sent the wrong job specification, pushing the correct job specification across the desk. The document was marked 'Confidential' and headed 'Joint Intelligence Organisation'. What they needed was a nuclear specialist. Rod had done some nuclear study at university and amazingly he won the job. This was in the early 1980s.

Rod was sent to the United Kingdom and worked on nuclear weapons. They wanted a specialist in weapons, but he knew enough to work with them for two years to become a nuclear weapons specialist. He produced government reports, made assessments and supplied briefings on the weapons.

Rod went to Swan Island in Port Phillip Bay which was a Spy School where he learnt coding, about letter drops and pickups and other spy operations.

Then came reports of chemical and biological weapons being used in the fighting between Laos and Vietnam. Reports of Laos dropping Yellow Rain on Vietnam came in, with people becoming ill and some dying. It was put down to the Yellow Rain which the Americans said the Russians were supplying to Vietnam.

Rod led an investigation to Thailand. It was too dangerous to go into Laos, so he followed the Mekong River along the Thai border, speaking to survivors crossing the river from Laos to find out the true story. The CIA didn't want him investigating, so he got support from French Intelligence. He went to the refugee camp at Ban Vinai in Thailand to hear stories

from the refugees, but the information was inconsistent, so they needed more. He spoke to Laotian fighters at the Police camp after they crossed the river.

Rod brought some Yellow Rain evidence back to Australia to be analysed at a chemical laboratory at Maribyrnong in Victoria. The samples were looked at under the microscope and were found to be pollen grains that had been through the digestive tract of bees, in other words 'bee poo'. The bees eat the pollen and when they are swarming away from their hive they defecate it as 'yellow rain'.

It was thought that the so called 'victims' of this chemical warfare were people who had come down from the mountains and were subjected to illnesses they hadn't been exposed to before, such as Dengue Fever, Malaria, dysentery, etc. The US President insisted that they were wrong and the Russians were involved in chemical warfare. He indicated that the Americans had hundreds of people working on this. Malcolm Fraser, the Australian Prime Minister, said he didn't believe the American theory and agreed to keep it quiet in Australia. The CIA wrote to Australia criticizing the work of Rod Barton.

As Rod had field experience, he was then assigned to London to liaise with British Intelligence to collect information and send to Australia. When he arrived in London as the Australian Liaison Officer, he was told he was expected to attend the Christmas parties coming up that year. When he asked how many there would be, he was advised that the number had been cut and he would only have to attend 35 and would have to liaise with officers from other countries. Rod found he had to attend three parties each night and after drinking gin and tonic at each party on the first night and having difficulty in remembering the people he met and what each person said, he decided in future he would ask to pour his own drinks and leave the gin out of the gin and tonic. At these events he would excuse himself and go to the toilet and write notes about those he met and what they said, so he could keep the Australian government informed of what was happening. Liaising was a large part of what he did, and he was expected to remember people's names, wives, pets, etc. Rod was also expected to give his own parties which he held in the cellar where Henry VIII met with his groups. The cellar was in the second basement of the UK Defence Intelligence

Building. After 3 months in the UK, he was promoted and came back to Australia in charge of the Science and Technical Section.

On August 2, 1990 Iraq, governed by Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait. The UN gave the Iraqis an ultimatum to get out or face the consequences. The Gulf War commenced on January 17, 1991. A ceasefire was negotiated providing the Iraqis got rid of their nuclear weapons. Rod went to Iraq as the Principal Weapons Inspector for 12 years to disarm and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. He came back to Australia on leave and while here, he received a call from the UN Specialist in Disarmament asking him to go to Somalia (Civil War) and disarm the militia. The Australian Defence Intelligence Organisation and Foreign Affairs were keen to send him.

Rod was based in Mogadishu in Somalia but told them he was not a specialist in guns only larger weapons. He was there at the time the events portrayed in the movie 'Black Hawk Down' was happening. He said it was a horrible time when US soldiers were dragged through the streets by the armies in Somalia. Only 17 US soldiers were killed but over 1,000 Somalis were killed. Rod had to meet with the leaders of the 17 militia groups, but they were not interested in giving up their weapons as they wanted to run the country. Three groups from ISIS now owned two thirds of the country but mostly in the country areas not the cities.

The Americans suggested that they offer \$100 for the militia to hand their guns in, but Rod felt they would end up handing their weapons in and then go and buy more. He talked to the people and decided to offer them vocational training for the disarmament. He went to the town of Baidoa and suggested they do woodwork with people so they could fix their homes, but they wanted agricultural training to help them look after chickens and grow vegetables.

Rod met El Sheik, a UN ambassador, who gathered information on Somalian Groups and brought it back to Rod. Rod was told that one of the militia groups had put a \$100 bounty on his head to try to stop him, but he went ahead with training the people in farming for 6 months if they handed in their guns. While they trained, he supported their families with food.

Another person who helped Rod was Major Andreani who turned up, sent two trucks of guards to protect Rod while he went to the Market Place to spread the word and explain they were doing farming training. Australian troops had been in Baidoa the year before as peacekeepers and the people remembered the Australians with much affection. Word got out to the people.

While in Somalia, Rod received a call from the CIA to head a Chemical or Biological group in Baghdad. There was a chemical weapons plant in Muthanna making nerve gas in one of the few buildings not destroyed in the Gulf War in 1991. Iraq said they didn't have a biological program. There was a suspicious program supposedly using yeast to make animal feed. From the amount of yeast that was brought into the country from Britain and Switzerland there was not enough animal feed to account for it so Rod suspected that they were making Anthrax, but they had to find evidence. This was 1994.

Rod met with Iraqi Ministers and put up a good case for the production of Anthrax. The female doctor who had previously told the meeting that they were not producing Anthrax, broke down and cried. A General present became very angry and Rod later found out the two had just been married and both were very upset that they had been found out. A death threat was put on Rod's life but they did discover the Anthrax bombs and SCUD warheads which were destroyed under UN supervision.

Rod sold his book to the group for a discounted price and personally signed them for us. It was a very interesting talk and all agreed they would like to hear the second part in the future.

