

National Seniors

AUSTRALIA

PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS BRANCH

ConnectionS/Newsletter
December 2025/January 2026

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas with your families and friends.

A special thank you to my hard-working committee and those outside the committee who willingly put up their hands to help when needed.

Thank you to all members who come to our meetings and attend the activities and special events we organise for you.

To all of you who have health issues or lost a loved one we send you peace and comfort and know that we care.

May 2026 bring us all joy and happiness and importantly good health.

Joan Lundstrom



What's in this Newsletter...

President's Report

Trip to the Hunter Valley

Call from the 500 Club

"How to Plot a Hit in Two Days"

Readers' Corner

Birthdays

A BRAVE New Internet Experience

A Christmas Cracker

To everyone who helped put together this Newsletter:



The Newsletter Team - Denise, Erica and Judith

President's Report - Joan

Branch Events - John, Denise

Members' News - Erica, James, Lee

Readers' Corner - Anne Jackson

Birthdays - Ron

♥ Lynda

NATIONAL SENIORS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2025 –2026

President - Joan Lundstrom
Secretary - Lesley Cooney

Vice President - Teresa Iwinska
Treasurer - Erica De Carlo

BRANCH EVENTS

HAVOC IN THE HUNTER

Our recent Hunter Lights trip was full of challenges, with some excitement. The date was set some months ago, expecting fewer visitors and better weather; oh well! not all good plans come to fruition. Thirty members set off from Port on a 30° day, full of enthusiasm for a fun few days. Our planned presentation on the Hunter's history was cancelled at short



notice, but we still met up at the Hunter Valley Information Centre for lunch. Thankfully, the venue was air-conditioned as the temperature had, by then, reached 38° degrees. After some shopping at the Centre, we moved on to the Audrey Wilkinson winery for a winetasting and presentation.



As the temperature continued to rise, ominous storm clouds hovered overhead. It was a slow, scary twenty-minute drive to the winery as winds howled, lightning strikes became persistent and heavy rain and hail fell. However, once there, we were seated in a large, private room in this beautiful winery. For almost two hours, our Irish presenter, Brian, guided us through a very entertaining tasting - good on the Irish! He was full of fun and fervour for his role as guide and of course there were the wines. By the conclusion of the tasting, the weather had subsided, but we were not aware of what lay ahead!

Arriving at our accommodation, we found out that fallen trees had caused a blackout across the Pokolbin area and we would not have power until 2.00 a.m. the next day. Not good news as this also affected our booking at Harrigan's Hotel and our visit to the Xmas lights that night. As it turned out, nor would there be visits to these two venues the following day. Following discussions, five members decided to return to Port. That night, thanks to Joan's investigatory powers, the remainder dined at the Blaxland Inn, which, though only a few kilometers from our hotel, was not affected by the power outage; a nice night with friends after a harrowing afternoon.



Most of us slept badly: no aircon, no lights, no internet but thankfully no accidents or incidents either. Next morning, most members vacated their room, had breakfast at the Blaxland Inn and headed home; some stayed on to visit the lights, take a vintage train trip or just to explore the area. Brave adventurous souls! Stops on the way home included the Binnorie Dairy for cheese tasting, the Chocolate Factory, and the Maitland Art Gallery where the "**Shared**" display was beautiful and informative.

We have lodged a complaint about accommodation services and payment although we had a good time getting to know each other better and sharing experiences. Unfortunately, we were unable to hear the wonderful '**NS All Stars**' performances as the Xmas dinner was also cancelled. John and Teresa would like to thank everyone for their support and patience.

BRANCH EVENTS

THE 500 CLUB

Perhaps you have played cards with your children or grandchildren, all the fun card games. Perhaps you may like to learn a new game and join a small group of National Seniors who meet on the Monday after the monthly meeting to play 500.

Beginners are very welcome and, if there are enough people wanting to learn a separate day can be organised to do this. In the meantime 500 can be learned on your computer, tablet or phone by downloading the app. and playing against the computer - also a good way to brush up on skills.

Denise - 0416282507

MEMBERS' NEWS

HOW TO PLOT A HIT IN TWO DAYS



Late October saw us thoroughly entertained at the Ensemble Theatre, Kirribilli with the hilarious play "How to Plot a Hit in Two Days", starring Georgie Parker and four other energetic, loud-mouthed, imposing actors. The audience, and I, laughed non-stop at this cracking Australian story.

The story is based on "A Country Practice" where its favourite character, Molly Jones, wishes to leave the show. The five-person eccentric, hypothetical-writing crew, in a creative flurry powered by coffee, cigarettes and Fantales, must write the perfect death for Australia's darling. Many plots - kill, or stop or somehow retire Molly are discussed loudly and enthusiastically. A world of T.V. writers who can create order out of mayhem, and finally Molly Jones takes her final breath – hearts are broken. Totally entertained and enjoyed and recommended. **Erica**



December Birthdays

Nola Davies	Sue Gardiner
Helen Lutz	Joan Mitchell
Marie Northcott*	Denise Onslow
Ann Yates	

*A BIG shout –out for a zero birthday

READERS' CLUB



"The White Crow" - Author Michael Robotham

On patrol one night, PC Philomena McCarthy finds a young girl in pyjamas wandering alone. Phil uncovers a deadly home invasion and, three miles away, a prominent jeweller is found strapped to an explosive device in his ransacked store. The crimes seem to be linked and evidence points to Phil's father as the mastermind. Phil is trapped between two worlds, of gang wars and her career, and everyone she loves. She upholds the law; her family break it. Who can she trust - the badge or her own blood? An absorbing read. **Anne Jackson.**



A Prompt from James M^cAdam



brave

A few years ago, James' son, through James, was the first to let us know about the WISE card, long before it was popular. This time he has told James about an alternative to regular search engines such as Google, Safari or Edge. It's called BRAVE. As James points out, "When you log into your search engine the data you enter is often being tracked. For example, you log into Skyscanner to find flights to Europe, then, shortly afterwards, you start receiving advertisements for hotels, tours, etc. If you login in a few days later you may find that the airfares have gone up in price. This is because you are being tracked. They know you want to buy a ticket."

James goes on to say that there is a browser out there that lets you avoid this tracking. BRAVE may or may not be the most powerful search engine on the web but to avoid tracking, he says that it has its uses. For further information just log into <https://brave.com>.



January Birthdays

Malcolm Brown	Suzanne Burrows
Marlene Davar	Vera Gowling
Annie Hall	Hans Koning*
Dennis Leembruggen	Baz Macdonald
Ken M ^c Naught	Dale Rose
John Urquhart	Janet Wells
Duncan Wyndham*	

*A BIG shout-out for a zero birthday

INTO THE HEART OF THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE WITH LEE BROWN

On the Ponant charter flight from Paris to Greenland, my first solo overseas trip, I was both anxious and excited. On arrival at Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, on a landing strip used by the US during the Second World War, our group was divided into French and English-speakers. It took no time for the eighteen English speakers to get acquainted. Over lunch I met Christina, Lynne and Sandra, all experienced expeditioners with Ponant, who supported me, cajoled me and reacquainted me with zodiac cruising.



Our ship, Le Boreal, had capacity for two hundred and sixty but carried only seventy-two guests on this voyage. I soon learned that expedition cruising meant at least one zodiac cruise or landing each day; sometimes two, and sometimes a bow landing onto rocks. The sixteen-strong expedition team were experts in geography, geology, history and nature, and included Gwen, an Inuit guide.

We visited the Inuit town of Ilulissat (it means icebergs in Greenlandic) and hiked to an iceberg. In the afternoon, we floated in local boats among the towering icebergs in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Disko Bay - an introduction to the unforgettable experience of the high Arctic, before sailing on to the remote and isolated bays and harbours in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. The landscape there included towering cliffs, active glaciers, spectacular fjords, blooming tundra and floating icebergs. On Baffin Island, we stopped for a visit to a small Inuit community at Pond Inlet. While we were ashore watching a cultural concert, thirty local Inuit toured our ship and dined with the captain. Our guide explained that the sea would freeze by the end of October and the town would be isolated; darkness would last from November until towards the end of January.



Our itinerary depended on weather and ice conditions. Thanks to our captain and crew, there was only one very rough sailing day in the nineteen we spent cruising the Canadian Arctic. Our first Polar bear sighting was a mother with cub wandering along the shoreline. We had to maintain a 200-metre distance from any animals and my iPhone camera was not good enough to capture clear photos from that distance. Fortunately, other guests with zoom lenses were happy to share. One evening, as we were finishing dinner, the captain announced that he had stopped the ship so that we could watch a nursery group of Beluga close to shore and a juvenile polar bear on the edge, trying to catch a baby whale for dinner. The dining room emptied quickly.

The expedition team went ashore first each day to assess the safety of the area and station the guides, armed with flares and guns. Meanwhile I was in my cabin putting on my expedition gear: two layers of thermals, two pairs of socks, rubber thigh high boots, neck warmer, woollen cap,

waterproof overpants, expedition jacket and finally a life jacket and two pairs of gloves. It was a necessity to maintain warmth in zero degrees temperature, even with the milder weather on our trip.

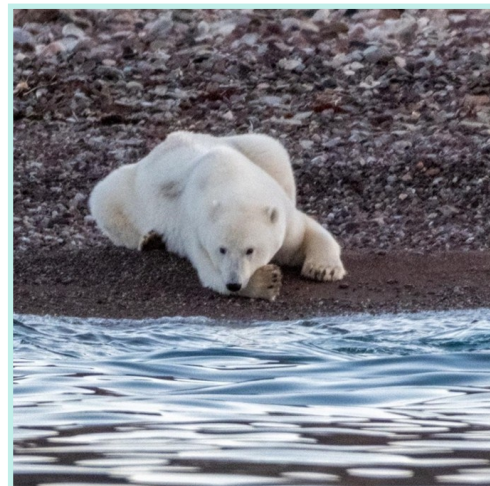
On my first expedition landing we had to climb a hill to visit the ruins of a settlement on the other side. I looked at the slush, snow and ice and questioned what I was doing on this trip. Using



walking poles for the first time, I was the slowest but I learned that I would do what I could without putting myself in a situation where I might have a fall. On other expeditions, I used my poles to traverse ice, snow, mud, rocks, tundra grasses and plants.

For many years, explorers had tried to find a sea passage through the Arctic to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. On Beechey Island we visited the site where British explorer, Sir John Franklin, in 1845, was ice bound with two ships waiting two years for the ice to break up: all one hundred and twenty-nine crew members died, from cold, starvation, scurvy and accidents. The ships were only recovered in 2014 and 2016. The Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, was the first person to successfully sail through the Northwest passage between 1903 to 1906. The passage is only open from July to September each year, depending on ice conditions.

Mostly our days followed the same pattern: one or two zodiac explorations each day, followed by pre-dinner talks from the team on what we had seen and what we might see the next day. We were treated to beautiful, French culinary meals, afternoon tea, five-course dinners with unlimited champagne and other drinks. According to the Captain, we saw twenty-four polar bears as well as seals, whales, walrus, Arctic foxes, Beluga, lemmings, birds. We were especially lucky to spot a pod of narwhals, naturally shy creatures. Narwhals are known as the 'unicorn of the sea'. The male narwal's hypertrophied tooth is a tusk used to hunt fish. All Arctic animals have adapted to the cold environment; polar bears have black skin under the white fur to retain body heat. The polar bear we saw eating a seal was eating the fat and blubber for energy. The skin and leftovers were taken by the Arctic fox who, over winter, moults and grows white fur for warmth and camouflage.



There was always a glow in the night sky, and I never tired of waking to the amazing scenery passing by my cabin window – landscapes of towering cliffs, glaciers, icebergs, all with beautiful reflections. I would venture onto my balcony to take photos and videos, before giving in to the sub-zero temperatures and hurrying back into the warmth. I learned a lot about the Arctic on this trip and about myself, returning with a sense of achievement that I had ventured solo to the other side of the world. **Lee**

CHRISTMAS FUN

Once again, it was party time at our annual Christmas lunch, this year held at the Mercure. Seventy-four of us met to celebrate the festive season together in our usual rousing style. The room was beautifully decorated with trees, white-clothed tables, baubles, lights and, of course, with members in all their finery; it made for a very pleasant atmosphere in which to have fun.

Erica and David welcomed us all at the door; Judith and Keith sparkled with wine greetings to get the party atmosphere started; Lee and Joan found seats for everyone; but Dee was in charge - no doubt about that - and she and Joan did a marvellous job keeping us all under control (sort of) for the next three hours so that the afternoon ran smoothly and to time. Between courses of festive food, the entertainment began. Wynne and Dee started the laughter with a skit by Pam Ayres,



followed by a ditty from Lee about Santa's problems with political correctness. The pass-the-parcel game left recipients with some very strange gifts and some pretty ones too. The afternoon's entertainment finished with an old-fashioned sing-a-long of Aussie Carols led by Ian and Kevin.



There was just time to draw the raffle and auction Trevor's Christmas trees before the clock struck three and everyone had to say their Christmas goodbyes. A big thank-you to everyone who donated prizes, silly and not-so-silly, to the raffle; most prizes came from the Committee who did a remarkable, but totally random, job of winning them back. Lesley set the auction price for the tree with her winning bid of \$35. All eight trees were sold at this price, raising \$280 for our charity, Care Flight. Thank you to Trevor for making these pretty table decorations.



The biggest thank-you goes to our Events Sub-Committee, who planned the whole function meticulously and did their very best to ensure that everyone had a good time on the day. Thank you to Joan, Erica, Judith, Lee and Teresa. And to Dee, who isn't even on the Committee, for

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

her amazing repartee and quick-witted response to any little hiccups along the way—the day just wouldn't have been the same without her.



SOME OF OUR LUCKY RAFFLE WINNERS and PARTY PEOPLE

