

# National Seniors

AUSTRALIA

PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS BRANCH

ConnectionS/Newsletter  
November 2025

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Travel is wonderful and Graeme and my six-week holiday to the UK was no exception. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Judith and Teresa for standing in as President while I was away. By all accounts, they were fun and interesting meetings.

I would also like to thank the rest of my hardworking committee who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make the meetings and the activities a success.

The festive season is fast approaching so let us all have some fun and join us for our Christmas lunch on our last meeting day on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

**(Joan Lundstrom)**



To everyone who helped put together this Newsletter:

The Newsletter Team - Denise, Erica and Judith

President's Report - Joan

Members News - David, Judith, Keith

Birthdays - Ron

Branch Events - Mike, Lee, Ron (Melbourne Cup photos)

Lynda ❤️

## What's in this Newsletter...

President's Report

Speakers' Corner

Members' News

Birthdays

Branch Events: Spring Walk,  
Melbourne Cup

Be Connected

**I'M NOT A HOARDER, I'M A  
"THIS-MIGHT-BE-USEFUL-LATER  
SPECIALIST."**



## SPEAKERS' CORNER IN OCTOBER



Last month's "Something About Me" speaker was David Walters who talked about his days in the RAF during the Cold War. Growing up during the Blitz, David developed an interest in aircraft and flying at an early age. He joined his school's Air Training Corps and won a RAF flying scholarship which meant that, at seventeen, he had a pilot's licence before he could drive.

In 1953, he joined the RAF as a Pilot-Under-Training (PUT). He spent two years training in piston-engines and then jets, before joining 89 Squadron at RAF Stradishall as a night-fighter pilot with his navigator/radar operator, John Larkin.

One of his duties as a night-fighter was to intercept hostile aircraft, flying the latest RAF jet, the Venom NF3. In reality, this meant practicing intercepts over the North Sea with fellow crews. Manoeuvring over the sea in the dark was testing; the aircraft had no ejection seats. In fact, the Venom NF3 was an inadequate aircraft overall; it had been ordered by the RAF as an interim defence before it was properly tested. It was taken out of service within a few years but not before David and John became two of its many accident statistics. One October night in 1956, as his logbook showed, the engine cut out and he had to attempt a forced landing back at base. David was lucky to escape with a broken back and burns; his navigator, John, was killed. While David did return to active duty after convalescence, he had to leave the RAF permanently some years later after being diagnosed with Meniere's Disease, a balance problem that meant he could fall over anytime without warning; nothing to do with alcohol, he hastened to add.

Much later he reconnected with the RAF at 6 AEF (Air Experience Flight) at Abingdon near Oxford. Here, he gave youngsters the type of flying experience that he himself had when he was at school.

Our guest speaker was Nathan Lynch, a director at Wauchope Physiotherapy and Sports Rehab Centre. One of his particular interests is back pain, a leading cause of disability. He posed lots of questions in a lively, interactive presentation. What type of sports did we play? Impressive! How many had experienced back pain in the past month? About fifty percent, which tallies with the general population in Australia. Does bad posture cause back pain? Science says not. There is no perfect posture; it's more important to keep moving and not stay in one position for too long (e.g. more than six hours).



What causes back pain? Nathan picked up on one of the causes our members suggested - incorrect lifting. According to current research, there is no perfect way to lift heavy or awkward weights; instead our fitness levels should match the activity. Do disc bulges cause back pain? Research says that many people have these or dis-herniation without pain. Nathan added junk food (it can cause inflammation), fatigue, anxiety and depression as additional causes of back pain.

Fitness and improved balance are key to preventing back problems and, like a child, we should test our balance frequently with stretching exercises or Tai Chi because the benefits of exercise on

## **SPEAKERS' CORNER (cont.)**

balance are gone within forty-eight hours. Many factors increase the risk of falls: gender (more females fall), age, living alone, multiple medications, vision problems, lack of sleep. About thirty percent of falls can be prevented: eliminate trip hazards at home such as loose rugs; use walking aids; wear tight fitting shoes with low heels and rubber soles; get eyes tested and talk to the doctor about medication.

Phil Gardiner thanked Nathan for highlighting the misconceptions that we might have had about the causes of back pain and how to tackle them and the danger of falls.

## **MEMBERS' NEWS**

### **ADVENTURES IN MADAGASCAR WITH DAVID JOHNSON**

After a flight of just over three hours from Johannesburg, across the Mozambique Channel, sixteen intrepid souls arrived in the Madagascar capital of Antananarivo, high in the central plateau of the island.

Around one hundred and eighty million years ago, as the prehistoric supercontinent of Gondwana broke up, Madagascar split from Africa, and then separated from the Indian subcontinent approximately ninety million years ago. This isolation has allowed native plants and animals to evolve in relative seclusion.

Madagascar shelters over ten thousand kinds of flowering plant, most with no other refuge. Ninety percent of its trees are unique to the island; only a dozen of its over four hundred species of amphibian and reptiles exist



elsewhere. For virtually all the island's mammals, including lemurs, this is their only home on Earth. Even birds, with their power of flight; more than half are only to be found on the island. And somebody asked me

why I would visit Madagascar!

Best estimate is that early settlers arrived between 250 – 550 A.D. from parts of what we now call Borneo. A wave of Bantu-speaking migrants arrived from southeastern Africa around 1,000 A.D. creating a culturally-mixed population that now exists in some eighteen different tribal groups.

Our transport for part of the tour was on two chartered Cessna Grand Caravan aircraft (a 12- and 8-seater). Highways exist in name only and tracks in the bush are worse. One bush track was eighteen kilometres but took an hour and a half to navigate!; another drive of four hundred and twenty kilometres, on the supposed National Highway, was a seven-hour adventure.

Some of us climbed Madagascar's

Stone Forest - strange looking limestone karsts (tsingy) - which reach skyward with

razor-sharp spikes and jagged peaks. Grand Tsingy rises some eight hundred meters and, when the climbing harnesses and carabiners





## MEMBERS' NEWS

appeared, I started to have second thoughts – too late to chicken out now! Five gents made the climb with two guides to instruct. Tsingy in Malagasy language translates as “where one cannot walk barefoot”. The traverse of a suspension bridge was nerve wracking; don't look down and one person at a time on the bridge! Sifaka (lemurs) were observed in the forest below the cliffs.

A traditional, pirogue cruise on the Manambolo River was an experience, although if you fell overboard the river was only about a meter deep. Sunset at Baobab Avenue in Morondava was particularly special. Hundreds gathered for the experience. A return visit at 4 a.m. the following morning was somewhat unsuccessful as an early morning fog prevented a sunrise perspective.



Rainforest walks and a visit to a local village near Ranomafana were enlightening. The poverty of the villagers was an eye-opener for many, but sad in other respects. The villagers have very little knowledge of the outside world but are extremely happy. Visits to a small co-operative, vanilla plantation and lots of other National Parks were overpowering, with their wide diversity of wildlife and flora. And, then, the wide diversity of chameleons with their ever-changing colours. Wow!

### A SPECIAL DAY IN THE CALENDAR



One year ago, many members had the pleasure of watching Judith Clegg marry Keith Reichenbach at

the Rural Fire Station in Lake Innes. Fast forward, and the couple celebrated their first anniversary in a more private but no less romantic way; with fizz and a seafood platter at home. October 10<sup>th</sup> is a special date for the couple: they had their first date that day, which happened to be a Thursday. They became engaged on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the 10<sup>th</sup> a few years later; and then, as Keith had miraculously predicted, they married the first day that the date fell again on a Thursday. Although most anniversaries will not fall on a Thursday, they will be just as special - and easy to remember.



### November Birthdays

Nicholas Cousins  
Louis Hayward  
Teresa Iwinska  
Robyn Morgan  
Alan Stevenson

Jillian Fuller  
Jakob Held  
David Johnson  
Allen Philp

## MEMBERS' NEWS



### IN MEMORY OF SUE

Last month, Committee members Joan, Denise and James, presented past-President Bill with a beautiful rose plant in memory of Sue. The Committee's first thought was to send flowers but flowers are so transitory. We hope that this plant will give Bill cheer whenever he sees it, knowing that we remember Sue as like the rose: a vibrant and colourful character, held in affection by those who knew her;

and red was one of her favourite colours. We hope that when he sees it, he will remember that our small gift also represents the fact that National Senior members here in Port support each other, whenever needed for as long as needed. It only takes a phone call to Denise, our Welfare Officer or to any member of the Committee.

## BRANCH EVENTS

### A SPRING WALK



On a beautiful, but breezy, Friday morning (17<sup>th</sup> October) the National Seniors Walking Group, organised by Helen and Walter, made their way through Dunbogan to Camden Head. Eleven fit and energetic walkers gently strolled around the Kattang Nature Reserve along the 'Flower Bowl' walk. This nicely-shady bush path took us past the Camden Head Lookout

(no whales visible), and then rose to the Charles Hamey Lookout with expansive views along Dunbogan Beach to Diamond Head, and over Laurieton and the Camden Haven Inlet to North Brother mountain. In 1966, the lookout was named in honour of Charles Hamey (1885-1962) who lived in Dunbogan and served on Hastings and Oxley councils.



A pleasant walk, accompanied by important discussions on multiple topics, was *occasionally* interrupted for the group to examine the rather sparse wildflowers along the path. Quite a few *Actinotus helianthi* (Flannel Flowers) were seen, some *Isopogon anemonifolius* (yellow Broad-leafed drumsticks) and ONE solitary *Patersonia sericea* (Native Iris) flower! Apparently the flowers may become more prolific after some more spring rainfall.

The loop path of about 2.7 kms returned us to the cars, after a pleasant and very social walk – followed by driving just one kilometre down to the Pilot Beach Reserve where we ate our picnic lunches, joined by two more members, and then a couple of late-comers as we were packing for home. Fortunately, the thunderstorms that afternoon did not affect the outing! **(Mike Hall)**

## BRANCH EVENTS



### BE CONNECTED WORKSHOP

Twelve members came to this year's Be Connected workshop at Port Macquarie Library on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Even though we did not receive the \$1,000 grant this year, the committee did not want to disappoint our members and funded the workshop from reserves.

Whilst members took turns to have a fifteen-minute private consultation with our tech expert, Michael Randall, the group looked at new modules that had been added to the Be Connected website such as how to call emergency services from an Android phone's lock screen. We then explored apps that come pre-installed on our phones, including email, internet, message, camera, clock and photos. Over morning tea, one member commented that he will now use his phone to do more than just make calls.

We looked at opportunities where we could use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to our benefit. We asked ChatGPT to plan a day in Port Macquarie, including where to go, what to do and suggestions for morning tea and lunch. We shared the various results, including shopping at Port Central, visiting our beaches by name, morning tea at Bandwagon and dinner at The Stunned Mullet.

A final session with Michael looked at Password Managers, checking that we had one installed on our phones. Our committee will ensure that we apply for the Be Connected grant next year.



### ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL MELBOURNE CUP

Lee, Keith and James started our Melbourne Cup celebrations at our last meeting, dressed for the occasion to remind members to book places at one of the highlights of the year. On the day, sixty-two members joined the revelries at Port Bowling Club. The running list is familiar by now: a welcome drink; a two-course lunch; a never-ending sweep (or so it must seem to our hard-working "bookies", John and Graeme); prizes for best dressed and best hat; and some horserace games; our own singing ensemble, Ian, Kevin, John, Nicola and Teresa to gee the audience along. All orchestrated smoothly by our maestro MC, Dee, working her magic and keeping the fun flowing. Then, finally, the big race itself, over in what seems the blink of an eye.

Added to the day, this year, was the inaugural running of the National Seniors Port Macquarie Cup. While twelve lucky owners anticipated the kudos of the winner's circle, the rest tried to predict the result. That winning owner turned out to be your Editor (embarrassing) who pocketed a very sizeable reward while winners of the result predictions munched on chocolates (but not for long).

The new venue at Port Bowling Club seemed to be a winner: a bright, spacious room, beautifully decorated, as always, by our Events sub-committee whose attention to detail was remarkable. Thank you, Erica, Joan, Judith, Lee and Teresa. You have set the bar high for your next commission, our Christmas party next month. P.S. Thanks also to the spouses - Graeme, Keith, Malcolm and John - who were co-opted, as always, to help.



## MELBOURNE CUP: SOUVENIR PHOTOS



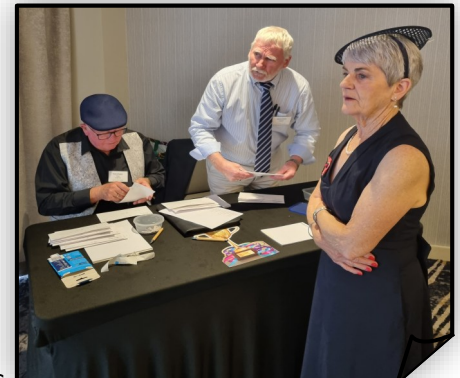
**WINNERS CIRCLE** (l to r): BEST DRESSED DELYSE AND IAN; BEST HAT-MARLENE. HORSE GAME-MAX. OWNERS-LYNDY 1ST, JOAN 2ND KEVIN 3RD (RIGHT)



THE NSPM ENSEMBLE IN FINE VOICE



OUR MERRY MC



THE HARDWORKING BOOKIES



LEE EXPLAINS THE NS CUP



GREETER KEITH

