

NEWSLETTER

Retired Members Association
www.cwuretiredmembers.org

JULY 2020

THE RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE AT ITS JULY MEETING ELECTED COLIN MCQUEEN TO THE VICE PRESIDENT POSITION. COL HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF OUR ASSOCIATION FOR CLOSE ON TEN YEARS. HE HAS ALSO SERVED ON OUR COMMITTEE FOR SOME YEARS.

Outside of the *Retired Members Association*, Colin is very active in the community. He has been a volunteer with the State Emergency Service (SES) for over fifty years. We reported in our April 2020 newsletter that Woollahra Council presented Colin with their award for Outstanding Community Service. Col also received the 2019 Maritime Award. These days, Colin's work is predominantly occupied with the training of new SES recruits. Colin is also a Director of the Petersham RSL. Colin will bring a wealth of experience to our committee in the position of Vice President. I thank Colin for accepting the new role, and I am sure all members will join me in welcoming Colin to his new position with the *Retired Members Association*.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

It goes without too much explanation that we have not had a good year with social functions. As I pen this article, while there has been some re-opening, there are break-outs of COVID-19 clusters in New South Wales. I remain hopeful that we can go ahead with our Christmas Party in late November and our trip-away in the same month. Perhaps, by the end of August, we will have a much clearer picture.

The Association has been having both the Committee and General Meetings via Zoom video conferencing. The technology is working well for us. It is particularly pleasing to see many of country members taking the

COLIN MCQUEEN: NEW VICE PRESIDENT

John Lane



opportunity to join our General Meetings. When we are finally out of this pandemic, the Association will need to look at the Zoom technology to continue to bring the general meeting to members outside of Sydney. There are some formidable hurdles to overcome. However, we will do our best to overcome.

We will have our August 2020 Committee with some members together and others via video. This format may serve as a trial for future general meetings.



Retired Members Association

August 2020 General Meeting

Thursday, 27th August 2020
Meeting Commences at 10.30 am.



The General Meeting will take place via Zoom Video Conference Please note there will be no in-person attendance at the FSU.

Members can join the meeting using your PC with a camera and microphone. You have a PC without camera you can still join, just no one will be able to see you.

You can also use a smartphone (iPhone or Android) by downloading the Zoom application.

You can even attend using a home phone or dial in with your mobile. Of course, there will be no video.

Members who receive their newsletter via email, will receive an invitation, you need to reply to email (as per the details in the email).

Members who have replied will receive a link for the General Meeting on the Wednesday afternoon/evening prior to the General Meeting.

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ABC FUNDING: MORE REDUCTIONS AHEAD

Paul Rewhorn

BEFORE I COMMENCED WRITING THIS ARTICLE ON ABC FUNDING, I HAD JUST FINISHED WATCHING AN EPISODE OF ABC'S "BACKROADS" FEATURING THE TOWNSHIP AND COMMUNITY OF OMEO IN THE MOUNTAINS OF VICTORIA. LIKE ALL EPISODES OF "BACKROADS", IT FEATURED BRILLIANT PHOTOGRAPHY, EDITING AND STORYTELLING.

The programme gives viewers an insight into rural communities, their history, and sometimes features the eccentric individuals who live within the community. Most of all, the show highlights the sense of community that thrives within-country towns, individuals working together for the better good.

Only ABC is prepared to produce a programme like Backroads. Commercial media shy away from making such a programme. They would assume the programme will be uncommercial and would not attract viewers. Often, they are proven wrong, as the success of the Backroads series shows. I could go on list other ABC productions, unique in concept going onto become very popular over the decades.

Of course, there is more to the ABC than popular productions like Backroads; the ABC has been there for generations to support Australians in emergencies such as the recent bushfires. The ABC has also brought to the attention of Australians the corruption in the Banking Financial Services Industry and abuse in age care; just two examples in recent years. Australians know the ABC delivers unbiased news. The loss of seventy staff in the ABC News Division will further undermine our democratic process.

Unfortunately, ABC's ability to produce innovative programming and deliver essential services will decline as a result of inadequate funding. Our newsletter has reported on ABC funding problems over recent years. First, we had the Abbott government funding reduction of \$200m in the 2014 budget and the later requirement for efficiency dividends over successive years. Now there is a further \$84m reduction to take place over the next three years. The efficiency dividends have been in the range of two to three per cent per year and have had an adverse impact as they accumulate.

The federal government's perception that ABC and other public services can continue to do more with less is not only had an adverse on the ABC; we see the same in education, health and age care; just a few examples. Usually, the continued funding decline ends with a crisis. The government need to pour millions of dollars just to correct an immediate problem. Avoided if there had been adequate funding in the first place.

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How much will the cuts hurt? As Media Watch reported on June 29

- Only 42 episodes a year of programmes like *Four Corners* and *Media Watch*, instead of up to 45.
- *Australian Story*, already down to 35 episodes a year, will be forced to run up to four repeats.
- *Foreign Correspondent* will be cut again, now down to 22 episodes. In 2016 it was 30 episodes.
- Already struggling on reduced budgets, the above two programmes will also lose money and travel less.
- ABC News will shed 74 jobs, while Entertainment & Specialist — responsible for drama, children's programmes, and shows like *Gruen*, *The Weekly* and *Mad as Hell* will lose a further 53 jobs
- The successful website ABC Life, a regular target for ABC critics, is another casualty, dumped and re-branded as ABC Local, with the loss of nine journalists who helped bring a new younger audience to the ABC.
- Fran RN Breakfast will also suffer, losing two senior reporters.
- ABC's top-rating radio news bulletin at 7:45am is to be axed, to the dismay and anger of its many fans.
- Meanwhile, ABC spending with independent producers will be cut by \$5 million a year, or around 5 per cent, most of it lost from factual programming, which produces popular shows like *War on Waste*, *Love on the Spectrum* and *Old People's Home For 4 Year Olds*.
- Less original TV on our screens and no new shows after 9.30pm.



AGED CARE IN AUSTRALIA

Paul Rewhorn

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING CONCERN OVER THE QUALITY OF AGE CARE IN AUSTRALIA. PERHAPS MORE THAN THREE YEARS, REMEMBERING THE KEROSENE BATHS. BACK IN 2017, SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S OAKDEN AGE CARE FACILITY WAS CLOSED FOLLOWING EVIDENCE OF RESIDENT ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

Just before the ABC's, Four Corners was to air a two-part investigation of the treatment of elderly Australians in aged care residents; Prime Minister Morrison announced a royal commission into the aged care sector. Mr Morrison was not going to have another electoral backlash like over his long-term opposition to establishing a royal commission into the banking and finance sector; after all, he was facing an election in six months.

Forward just over twelve months after its establishment, the aged care royal commission released its interim report, branding the system as "cruel and harmful". The report called for an urgent overhaul, finding services fragmented, unsupported and often unsafe. In response, the government promised more funding would flow before Christmas 2019. The federal opposition argued the new financing was only restoring some of the funding previously cut by the government. The budget documents show clear evidence of this.

Much more funding will be needed to reduce the numbers waiting for either placement in aged care residence or assistance for the elderly to remain in their home. The private sector is increasingly moving into the ownership and management of aged care residences.

The private sector is peeling out a profit in aged care; this is increasing the cost of aged care and causing the standard of care to sub-standard levels. The private sector, despite strong evidence to the contrary, continues to oppose minimum standards for residents to staff ratios and the mandatory availability of qualified nurses. Today, aged care staff are underpaid, over-worked and lack essential training; many carers work at two or more jobs because of the high proportion of their work is casual and part-time.

Indicative of the treatment of carers in aged care residents, Unions applied before the Fair Work Commission (FWC) for carers to receive leave if they needed to isolate themselves because of COVID-19.

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While doing some research for the aged care article in this month's newsletter, I came across a Combined Pensioner and Superannuants Association (CPSA) article about the Federal Government Health Department's myagedcare website.

The article reports that myagedcare (myagedcare.gov.au) website will include a Service Compliance Rating system for Australian nursing homes; for those searching for an aged care provider on their website.

While we all hope for aged care to improve, the rating system for Australian nursing homes should disturb us.

The CPSA article makes a comparison between the Michelin Red Guide for restaurants and the Service Compliance Rating system for Australian nursing homes. The Service Compliance Rating system uses dots, four of them. The bold type is an interpretation.

One dot - the nursing home is under one or more sanctions and that the care is inadequate. **In other words, avoid!**

Two dots - the nursing home is operating under a notice of compliance. A misnomer, because, it is a notice of non-compliance: significant improvements are needed. **Again avoid!**

Three dots - the home has some areas where it should improve. **Avoid!**

Four dots - there are no known areas for improvement. **Enter if you must.**

Now compare this with Michelin Guide with its three-star ratings.

One star: a very good restaurant in its category.

Two stars: excellent cooking, worth a detour.

Three stars: exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey.

The CPSA article makes the correct point that unlike the Michelin Red Guide, the Service Compliance Rating system does not offer a rating of excellence. Instead, it rates how dreadful is a nursing home. **Missing are at least two more dots, one for good and the other for excellent.**



ABC FUNDING: MORE REDUCTIONS AHEAD (CONT'D)

The Communications Minister, Paul Fletcher suggests there has been no reduction to ABC funding. He points to the budget's small dollar amount increases to occur over the next three years. The minister conveniently ignores the issue of real financing, that factors in inflation. ABC Friends makes the valid analogy of employer who increases employee wages by \$10 a year and has the temerity to suggest they have all received a wage increase, so what is the problem.

ABC Friends quotes figures from Sydney and RMIT Universities that reveal a \$783 million shortfall in ABC funding 2014-2022. Other research by Per Capita confirms the Universities' research. The reality of the funding reductions comes with ABC Managing Director David Anderson confirming the ABC will absorb cumulative budget cuts that amount to \$105.9 million per annum by the time we reach the 2022 financial year. Up to 250 ABC staff now face the sack including 70 staff in the News division.

The ABC staff now face a challenging future. The COVID-19 crisis has hit hard the Arts and Entertainment industry having a devastating impact on people within the industry. Many of whom do not qualify for Job Seeker payments.

The May General Meeting discussed the ABC funding. There was a consensus that the *Retired Members Association* should assist ABC Friends in their resistance to the funding cuts to the ABC. In a few days, we will send an email to members asking them to write to the Prime Minister's Office stating their opposition to the funding reductions. There will be a link in the email to assist members.

AGED CARE IN AUSTRALIA (CONT'D)

The FWC granted the application, on the Union's second attempt, showing just how often the FWC will side with employers. Aged care operators opposed the Union's pandemic leave claim.

The aged care royal commission has made recommendations to improve age care in Australia. Let us hope their final report will make recommendations that will deliver a high quality of care and quantify staff levels and training and what this desired level of care will cost the Australian community.

Sadly, ahead of the royal commission's final report, the current COVID-19 pandemic is telling us just how inadequate age care is, particularly in the private age care residences. The resurgence of COVID-19 in Victoria is having a devastating impact on elderly Australians. In Victoria age care residences have the highest number of COVID-19 clusters; fifteen in total and with four residences having over a hundred infections. Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has stated that he has no confidence in the private sector's management of age care residences during the current crisis. The federal government has had to send defence personnel and other nursing staff into many residences to manage the emergency.

Outside of the residences, anxious relatives are receiving little in the way communications about their aged relative health. Newmarch House in Sydney should have served as a warning of how inadequate the preparedness in the private sector was. At Newmarch, there were over seventy infections, and nineteen residents lost their lives. Yet only sixteen per cent received hospitalisation.



Welfare News

Peter Hack

ARRIVED BACK HOME IN TEMORA ON FRIDAY, 24TH JULY., AFTER AN ENFORCED STAY IN THE "BIG SMOKE" BECAUSE OF A COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN BALMAIN. THEN CAME MY HEALTH INCIDENT REQUIRING MANY TESTS. FORTUNATELY, THE TESTS ALL CAME BACK NEGATIVE. THE DOCTORS HAVE PUT THE HEALTH INCIDENT DOWN TO A SLIGHT STROKE. AFTER A COUPLE OF WEEKS OF BEING TOLD NOT TO DRIVE, I AM NOW BEHIND THE WHEEL.

I have spoken to **Ross Keys**, who is undergoing more treatment and a stint in hospital. Medication is improving his condition. He still must undergo more treatment; however, he remains in good spirits.

Colin Wilson had a spell in hospital and a changed of medication which has helped him.

I called Peggy and **Col Cooper** on Sunday, 2nd August. They were having lunch while I called them. I passed on our best wishes to them and from Ron Milosh who had enquired.

I also had the opportunity to talk with **Cath Hickey. Husband John** is going to North Shore hospital for a MRI. The hope is the MRI will assist with the diagnosis for his back and hip pain.

John has restricted mobility currently. Unfortunately, John has had a recent fall and is now confined to bed; he has been able to sit and eat his meal.

Vince Haywood and I had lunch recently at *The Anglers Rest*. He sent me a photograph showing us enjoying a cleansing ale.

John Lane has updated me on well-being of **Don Hamilton**. Don has spent the past two weeks in Prince of Wales Hospital, where he has undergone major surgery. Don's wife Margaret told John that despite the extent of the surgery, he is in good spirits and most confident in his surgeon and the surgery. Don expects to be back home in the a day or two; he is anxious for this to happen. Margaret is anxious to get him home as well of course. I am sure members wish Don well for a fast recovery.

I have been in contact with an old friend, **Barry Forbutt**. I had not spoken to Barry since 1960 when we were fourth-year technicians in training. Thank you, Bob Speer, for putting us in contact. Back in Temora, we had 6mm of rain, and it is cold. Thanks again for your best wishes during my illness and on my birthday; the 1st August, the horse's birthday.