



Welcome to your Newsletter

John Lane

Welcome to your October 2023 newsletter.

It has been over a week since we returned from our trip to Merimbula on the NSW South Coast. We had plenty to see as our bus travelled throughout the region. The weather was kind to us except for the Thursday night when we planned for an outdoor barbecue. We moved inside; the problem was solved. The fine weather returned on Friday morning as we returned home.

We stayed at the South Seas Motel in the centre of Merimbula township. Sally, the motel proprietor and her staff made us all feel very welcome. Sally has just taken ownership of the motel, and if our stay is any indication, the motel has a bright future.

Then there was Nigel, our bus driver, always there to assist and make our trip all that more enjoyable. He gave excellent commentary; even in the evening, he would take us to and from where we were having our evening meal.

The trip's highlight was whale watching in Twofold Bay near Eden. It seemed we would not see many whales until halfway through the cruise. Suddenly, all that changed when we spotted a whale and her calf. The two whales gave a tremendous display of breaching and gliding on their backs on the water's surface.

Fortunately, we discovered two exceptional photographers in our midst. I am speaking about Bill Bertram and Bob Bartley. Bill took some fantastic shots of the whales as they surfaced. At the bottom of this article, there is a photo collage. Bill took these fine images.

Bill and Bob Bartley have posted their photos on a shared Google Drive.

I understand that fellow travellers have access to them, and in the next few weeks, we will curate the images to share with the general membership.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Well, we only have one more function for the year: our Christmas Party. The Christmas Party will be on Thursday, 30th November 2023, at the Petersham RSL Club. Last year, as we were coming out of COVID-19, inflation was a serious problem. You may have found the lunch expensive. However, this year I believe we have been able to provide a less expensive lunch and with more courses.

It would be great if as many members as possible could attend Christmas lunch. To help us with reservations, I would like members to look at our advertisement in this month's newsletter. There you will find all the details. I ask that you let Alan Bassman know if you decide to attend. You'll be able to pay for the lunch via electronic funds transfer.

I look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

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Telecommunications Historical Association NSW (THAN Inc.)



The Telecommunications Historical Association NSW (THAN Inc) operates the Communications Museum, Sydney.

We are located at 12 Kitchener Pde, Bankstown for Heritage Telstra Ltd. The Museum is usually open on a Tuesday and Wednesday from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

We are looking for volunteers to assist the Museum in the areas listed below:

- Administration
- Documents and Procedure Development
- Finance
- Script writer for guided tours
- Photography for cataloguing
- Web development
- Tour guide
- Welder for shelving and crates
- Library
- Research - our library, internet and elsewhere

If you'd like more information, you're welcome to contact us at tmuseum@bigpond.net.au.

We'd be delighted to hear from you.

RETIRED TELECOMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

Office Bearers

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Welcome to your Newsletter (Cont'd)

Last month, at the September General meeting, Richard from the Senior Rights Service gave an excellent talk on the organisation's role. The Senior Rights Service is a non-profit community organisation for Seniors, ensuring they receive proper care whether they live in an aged care facility or are in their home.

The Senior Rights Service can assist in resolving problems or complaints with aged care providers or refer you to other agencies that can provide additional support if necessary.

This month's newsletter has an article about the Seniors Right Services, including their contact details. The article gives you a lot more information. A section also explains your senior rights; the information is well worth knowing. Remember that the Seniors Rights Service provides free consultancy.

Finally, a reminder that we are having our October 2023 General Meeting this Thursday, the 26th of October, at the Petersham RSL. We provide Zoom to reach our membership; however, it would be even better if you could come along in person. The club has new caterers. We can all enjoy a great lunch after the meeting.

I look forward to seeing you there.

One more reminder to make your booking for our Christmas lunch. Thank you.



Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

OCTOBER 2023 General Meeting

Thursday, 27TH OCTOBER 2023

Meeting Commences at 11.05 am

The October 2023 General Meeting will be held at the Petersham RSL Club (301 Trafalgar Street, Petersham, an easy 150m walk from Petersham Railway Station).

While the General Meeting will have Zoom Video coverage, you are encouraged to join with us in person at the Petersham RSL. The Club has an excellent bistro where you can get together with other members over lunch.




The Meeting will also be held via **ZOOM**
Access details will be emailed to members on
Monday afternoon, 23RD October 2023



**Taking
Bookings
Now**

RTEA Christmas Lunch

**12 pm, Thursday,
30TH November 2023**



This year, our Christmas lunch at the Petersham RSL is an excellent opportunity to catch up with fellow members over a three-course lunch. There will also be lucky door wine prizes. The cost is \$60 (cheaper than last year and more courses).

Petersham RSL Club's address is 301 Trafalgar Street, just a 200m easy walk from Petersham Railway Station platform, parallel to the railway.

On the Petersham station's concourse, looking towards the City, the club is on your right. Walk towards the pedestrian crossing, cross and then turn right and walk parallel to the railway for about 60m.

Please note that there is now a lift at Petersham Station.

An electronic payment can be made (see adjacent for bank details details). The cost is \$60 per person. Once you have made your payment, please **remember to text or email John Lane to let him know the number of guests accompanying you to the lunch.**

The preference is for you to pay via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

When using EFT, type your surname in the details.

If EFT is unavailable to you, please pay at our General Meeting or post your cheque to Alan Bassman, Treasurer (see page 2 of the newsletter for Alan's address). Also please remember to make the cheque payable to the "Retired Telecommunications Employees Association".

Great Southern Bank

BSB 814-282

eSaver Account No: 10642769





ROBODEBT AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Paul Rewhorn

Last month, I wrote an article about RoboDebt, a federal government scam perpetrated on the Australian community that cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation, traumatised thousands of welfare recipients, and, in some cases, ended in self-harm for some of its victims.

I finished my last article with a section titled “Social Attitudes”. I pointed out that the RoboDebt scam was implemented even as prominent legal experts, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and welfare advocacy groups were raising concerns about RoboDebt’s legality.

ROYAL COMMISSION’S FINDINGS

This month, I want to finish with the Royal Commission’s findings concerning the Australian Public Service. The Royal Commissioner, Catherine Holmes, was scathing about the lengths public servants were prepared to oblige ministers in their quest for savings and dismayed at the public service’s dishonesty and its conspiracy to prevent the Scheme’s lack of legal foundation from coming to light.

ONE INDIVIDUAL

I could write at length about how the public service failed in its duty to provide frank and fearless advice to government ministers. Instead, I will focus on Kathryn Campbell, Secretary of the Department of Human Services, from March 2011 to September 2017. Ms Campbell played a role-playing defence in the illegal debt recovery scheme known as RoboDebt. At two Senate committee inquiries, Ms Campbell controversially shifted the blame of RoboDebt to the victims and refused to accept that people had died by suicide after receiving illegal RoboDebt notices despite evidence to the contrary.

Ms Campbell may consider that she did no wrong. However, the Royal Commission’s Report had two

adverse findings against Ms Campbell. First, for misleading the cabinet about the Scheme and second, for taking steps to prevent the unlawfulness of RoboDebt from being uncovered. Ms Campbell was Secretary of Social Services from September 2017 to July 2021 and the Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary until July 2022. Later, she was appointed to a defence portfolio as an advisor to the AUKUS project. There is a project expected to cost \$450 billion dollars that is going to need fearless and frank advice.

Following the Royal Commission findings, Ms Campbell was suspended in July 2023 and resigned later that month. Whether she will face prosecution remains to be seen.

WE NEED A POWERPOINT

I came across this article in the Guardian. The article tells how Kathryn Campbell contacted the consultancy firm PwC in January 2017, asking for an external review of the RoboDebt processes, given her concerns about the delivery of targets under RoboDebt. Subsequently, her department engaged PwC. PwC was to provide a report following their independent review of the RoboDebt scheme.

PwC provided the department with an eight-slide PowerPoint presentation. However, PwC never provided a 100-page report that was to have accompanied the PowerPoint slides. The Royal Commission found that the PowerPoint slides’ content came nowhere near the 100-page report that detailed the extent of the RoboDebt problems and an assessment that RoboDebt was a failure.

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ROBODEBT AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE (Cont'd)

WHY DID PWC NEVER PROVIDE THE 100-PAGE REPORT?

The Royal Commission could not find any records about how the engagement with PWC had ended but noted that it had received evidence that Ms Campbell spoke to a firm member and informed them that the just the PowerPoint presentation would satisfy the “report” with the inference that she did not want her or ministers to see the nasties contained in the 100-page report. Ms Campbell’s engagement with PWC would have cost the taxpayer \$853,859. Fortunately, after considering the Royal Commission’s findings, PWC decided to refund the \$853,859.

There you have the sordid story of a public servant prepared to waste nearly a million dollars for just eight PowerPoint slides and the government going after an individual on welfare for as little as a hundred dollars. I should mention that Ms Campbell was paid \$900,000 annually, twice the prime minister’s salary.

While this article is critical of the public service’s role in RoboDebt formulation, we need to realise that both the Coalition and Labor, when in government, have a history of side-lining the public service. Instead, they surround themselves with personal political advisors, private constancy firms (PwC) and paid lobbyists who have easy access as they develop policies. At the same time, the general public and small advocacy groups have to navigate through a narrow portal to make representations to a minister.

The era when the federal government had an Australian Public Service that served the government of the day with integrity and providing “frank and fearless” advice on public policy is well and truly over.



End of an Era: CWU NSW T&S Branch

Message from Lee Walkington of the CWU NSW T&S Branch.

The NSW and Vic Branches of our former union are about to amalgamate to become one branch.

I have been tasked with organising a function to celebrate (come wake) **for former members of the CWU NSW T&S Branch** as an end of an era function and so I have chosen the Petersham Bowlo. It is a fairly relaxed venue and we will be outdoors under cover. Since I am doing the work and since it is the end of an era then all former members of the ATEA/CWU are invited to attend. With that in mind this message is sent to RTEA members who were ATEA Members during their working life in PMG/Telecom/Telstra.

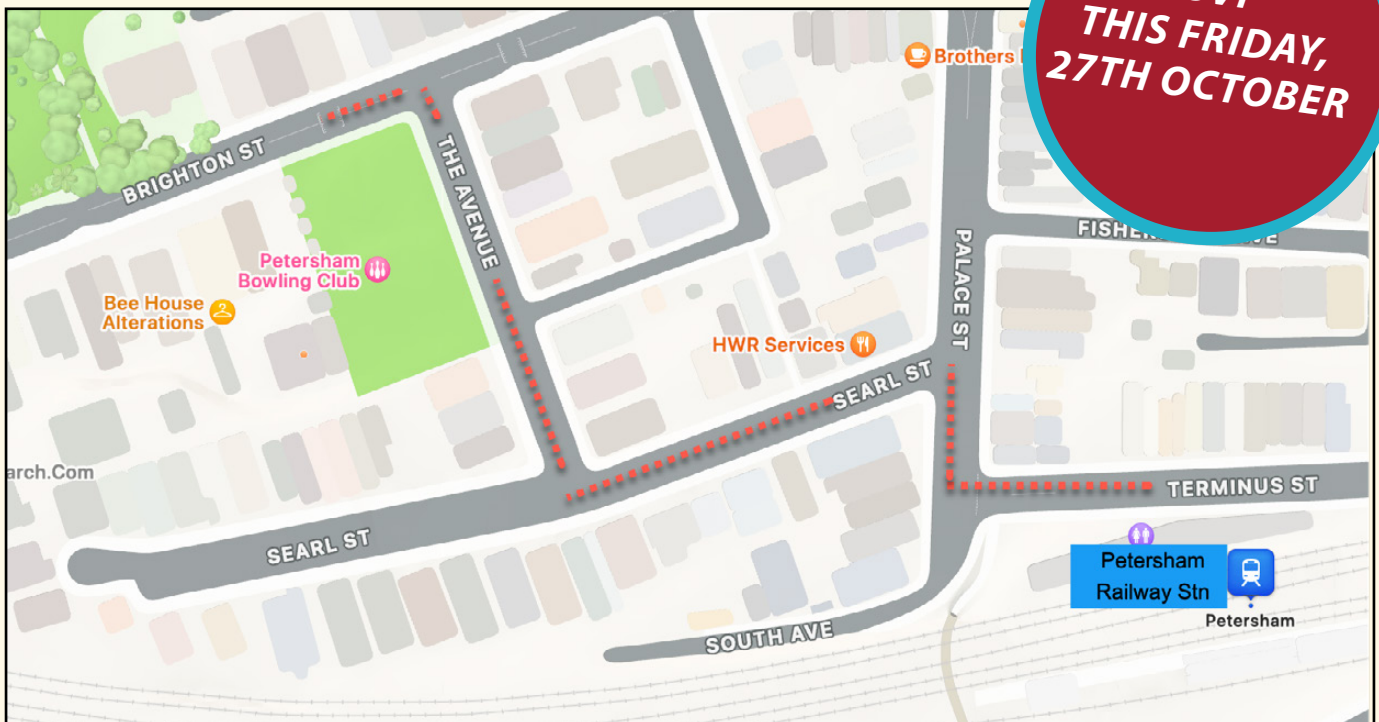
Partners are also most welcome.

The function will be on Saturday, 4TH November between 1 pm and 5 pm.

The location is the Petersham Bowlo (not be confused with Petersham RSL), located at 77 Brighton St, Petersham NSW 2049. A short distance from Petersham Railway Station.

If you wish to attend you can contact Lee on 0419 605 000 or leewalkington@hotmail.com for further details.

Or reply to webadmin@rtea.net.au





What Did It Feel Like To Be OLD?



Member Contribution

An article from an unknown writer.

*The other day, a young person asked me:
What did it feel like to be old?*

I was very surprised by the question since I did not consider myself old. When he saw my reaction, he was immediately embarrassed, but I explained that it was an interesting question. And after reflection, I concluded that getting old is a gift.

Sometimes, I am surprised at the person who lives in my mirror. But I don't worry about those things for long. I wouldn't trade everything I have for a few less grey hairs and a flat stomach. I don't scold myself for not making the bed or eating a few extra "little things". I am within my rights to be a little messy and extravagant and spend hours staring at my flowers.

I have seen some dear friends leave this world before they had enjoyed the freedom that comes with growing old.

Who cares if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4 in the morning and then sleep until who knows what time?

I will dance with me to the rhythm of the '50s and '60s. And if later I want to cry for some lost love, I will!

I'll walk down the beach in a swimsuit that stretches over my plump body and dive into the waves, letting myself go despite the pitying looks of the bikini wearers. They'll get old, too, if they're lucky.

It is true that through the years, my heart has ached for the loss of a loved one, for the pain of a child, or for seeing a pet die. But it is suffering that gives us strength and makes us grow. An unbroken heart is sterile and will never know the happiness of being imperfect.

I am proud to have lived long enough for my hair to turn grey and retain my youth's smile before the deep furrows appeared on my face.

Now, to answer the question honestly,

I can say: I like being old because old age makes me wiser and freer!

I know I will not live forever, but while I'm here, I will live by my own laws, those of my heart.

I will not regret what wasn't, nor worry about what will be.

For the time that remains, I will simply love life as I did until today; the rest I leave to God.

Writer Unknown.



Seniors Rights Service

At our September General Meeting, our Association was fortunate to have Richard, a representative from the Seniors Rights Service. Richard addressed the meeting, telling of the role and services provided by the Seniors Rights Service

Richard explained that the Seniors Rights Service is a non-profit community organisation dedicated to ensuring older people in New South Wales are safe and properly cared for.

The Seniors Rights Service can assist by:

- ↳ **Listening to your concerns?**
- ↳ **Providing information about rights and responsibilities.**
- ↳ **Helping resolve problems or complaints with your aged care service providers.**
- ↳ **Speak with your service provider if required.**
- ↳ **Refer you to other agencies that provide additional support if necessary.**
- ↳ **The Seniors Rights Service is available to anyone in New South Wales using or seeking to access aged services. An aged care service can be in your own home as well as in residential age care homes.**
- ↳ **Persons can also contact the service if they have questions or are concerned about the aged care of a family member. The service is provided free of cost.**

What are your Aged Care rights?

All Commonwealth funded Aged Care services in Australia are required to adhere to this charter. You have the right to:

1. safe and high-quality care and services
2. be treated with dignity and respect
3. have your identity, culture and diversity valued and supported
4. live without abuse and neglect
5. be informed about your care and services in a way you understand
6. access all information about yourself, including information about your rights, care and services
7. have control over and make choices about your care, and personal and social life, including where the choices involve personal risk
8. have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of your daily life, financial affairs and possessions
9. your independence
10. be listened to and understood
11. have a person of your choice, including an aged care advocate, support you or speak on your behalf
12. complain free from reprisal, and to have your complaints dealt with fairly and promptly
13. personal privacy and to have your personal information protected
14. exercise your rights without it adversely affecting the way you are treated.

SENIORS RIGHTS SERVICE

Gadigal land
Suite 201 / 418A Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
info@SeniorsRightsService.org.au
1800 424 079 | 02 9281 3600

I have included with this article contact details for the Seniors Rights Service. I would suggest if you are looking for documents about Your Will, General Power of Attorney, Enduring Power of Attorney, Guardianship and Advanced Care, you go to "Documents" on their website - <https://seniorsrightsservice.org.au/legal-services/future-documents/>. You will a whole range of information by going under "Information" on their website



YO-HO-HO!!

The Silly Season has rolled around again, and it is time to have a couple of drinks with some old workmates.

* This year the Country Installation Office Party will be conducted as follows:-

At:- Crystal Palace Hotel

On:- 14th December 2023

When:- 1200 for 1230hrs

Peter Clarke 0419 394 349

Email:- hipshot@bigpond.com

Merry Christmas

&

HAPPY NEW YEAR

APPRENTICE TECHNICIAN,
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

CLASs

★ ★ OF ★ ★

1984

(ATT)

I am Greig Sheridan who is trying to contact the 72 ATTS (Apprentice Technicians, Telecommunications) who commenced at North Strathfield on the 31st of January 1984 for a 40th Year reunion in February 2024.

At the moment, we're still in the discovery phase. However, we have marked **Saturday, 3rd of February 2024**, as the most likely date for a catch-up to be held somewhere in Sydney.

We are using a Facebook group: [\(https://www.facebook.com/groups/attjanuary1984/\)](https://www.facebook.com/groups/attjanuary1984/) as our primary contact means, and I am also maintaining a separate e-mail list of those who don't use Facebook.

We are also looking for instructors who taught us across North Strathfield, Rhodes and North Sydney training schools.

For more information or if you would like to make contact, you can reach Greig Sheridan on 0402 033 044 or email gs@gisyd.com.



Is Bigpond closing?

Paul Rewhorn

The CPSA (Combined Pensioner and Seniors Association), in their newsletter published on 22nd September 2023, reported that Bigpond and Optus email services may close in the foreseeable future.

Probably years ago, when you signed up for the Internet, you also set-up an email service with the same telecommunications provider (like Telstra or Optus). You are likely to have used the same email address for years - **(billsmith@bigpond.com)**. An email service attached to your internet service provider is perhaps not a bad thing for a telecommunications provider as it impedes you changing your internet service over to a new telecommunications provider.

The CPSA article noted that TPG already closed its email service this month, leaving their customers to find an alternative email provider and then make the email address swap.

Some TPG customers may have elected to stay with TPG. They will continue to have access to a free email service provided by a messaging company that TPG has contracted to take over the email service offering. Currently, there is no information about what the email service cost once the year expires.

The CPSA article predicts that Telstra and Optus will likely make a future announcement like TPG. Telstra has been exiting out of Bigpond since 2013, with periodic reports of upcoming closure since 2016. The CPSA article suggests that now that TPG has shown a roadmap to close their email service, Telstra and Optus may soon follow their lead.

You probably heard the saying, *“Do you want the good or bad news first?”*

The CPSA article suggests that once you have a new email service:

- ↳ **You may receive fewer spam emails.** The reason is that most online email providers are better at catching spam. Also, your new email address is less likely to be on databases built over the years using your previous email address.
- ↳ **You will have more flexibility when shopping around for new internet providers.** Your email and internet services are no longer tethered – you can change your internet provider without worrying about your email service.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW IF YOU CHANGE PROVIDERS?

If you choose to leave Telstra’s internet service, you can continue with Bigpond email service free for a year. After a year, it will cost \$79 a year. OptusNet users have three months to access email service. After that, the service is gone forever.

ALTERNATE OPTIONS.

Without not wanting to promote any particular email service provider, there are free providers. All the listed providers are online, meaning you can view your email messages on your personal computer or laptop. When you reply or message on one device it shows on all your devices.

- ↳ Gmail (google Google)
- ↳ Outlook (Microsoft)
- ↳ Yahoo mail (yahoo).
- ↳ Apple has an email service for customers with an iPhone or Mac computer.

While I mentioned the above services are free, they do additional charges based on your email storage requirements; worth considering when researching.

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Is Bigpond closing? (Cont'd)

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN CHANGING YOUR EMAIL SERVICE

Many members might use their full name as their email address, such as johnsmith@bigpond.com. However, the above-listed online email providers have a large and worldwide customer base. Therefore there is a chance your new email provider has already allocated your email address. I have used a familiar name in the examples that may get around the problem.

- ↳ You could swap first name and surname: **smithjohn@<new domain name>**
- ↳ You could add a dot between your first name and surname: **john.smith@<new domain name>**
- ↳ You could add a number or non-alpha character at the end of your address: **john.smith48@<new domain name>**

Changing from an email address that you have used for a long time is not easy. You need to consider who you will need to inform others of your new email addresses, such as friends, family, bank and other services. Most important, do not forget to let the RTEA -Retired Telecommunications Employees Association know your new email address.

While there are no immediate plans to close your current email service. Still perhaps, now is the time to start an address book/contact list that includes email addresses, highlighting the addresses that you need to inform, if you later decide to change your email service. Remember this is an opportunity to rid yourself of those annoying businesses who send you frequent emails with content or promotions of no interest to you.

You should check with your service provider regularly to see if they soon plan ditch their email service.

TRUNK SERVICE CHRISTMAS REUNION LUNCH



Greetings, former colleagues from Trunk Service! We invite you to join us for a Christmas lunch at the Combined Services Club (7 Barrack Street, Sydney), on Thursday, 14th December, starting at 12 p.m.

For further details contact:

Tod Mirgis 02 99391935
Warwick Brodsky 0412729051
