

**W**ELCOME TO THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER, THE FIRST FOR THE 2018 YEAR. I HOPE EVERYONE HAD A PEACEFUL AND HAPPY TIME OVER THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR SEASON. IT IS A WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR TO RELAX WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. I CERTAINLY ENJOYED THE TIME WITH MY FAMILY.

The Retired Members Association committee and executive were back in harness and had a planning meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018 to map out our direction for the forthcoming year. The meeting discussed the

*Financial Report for 2017*. Treasurer, Bob Hamblion will present the report at our annual meeting. A copy of the Treasurer Report is in this month's newsletter (see page 4).

Our Social Secretary John Lane gave a detailed presentation of plans for social events and guest speakers for our general meetings throughout 2018. This month's newsletter has a calendar of social events planned for 2018 (see page 6). **The first social event is a lunch at the Mosman Rowers Club on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March.** The lunch should give us an opportunity to enjoy

some of the last of the warm weather and Sydney Harbour views. I trust this year; the weather will be kinder. You will find full details (including the ferry timetable), in this month's newsletter.

## A Message from the President

Vince Haywood



## Annual Meeting: 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018

Our annual and general meeting will be on **Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018**. A reminder perhaps for our newer members or members who may not have already attended our meeting, the venue for the annual meeting is the **Financial Sector Union (FSU), Level 2, 321 Pitt Street, Sydney**. **The meeting commences at 10.15 am.**

As per our Association's rules, all positions are declared vacant and elections take place for all executive and committee vacant positions. Nominations remain open until just before the meeting; if you would like to stand for a position, please feel free to do so. Please contact our **Secretary, Bruce Muirhead for a nomination form**. Nomination forms will be available at the annual meeting.

While on the subject of meetings, we hold our monthly general meetings on the **fourth Thursday of each month (except December and January)**. **The meetings commence at 10.15 am. The meetings are held at the Financial Sector Union (FSU), the same as for the Annual Meetings. There are two important exceptions, these are for the months of May and July when the general meeting locates to Woy Woy and Emu Plains respectively.** The newsletter will publish advance notice for all our general meetings.

All members are most welcomed to come along, and I would like to extend a special invitation for newer or any member who may not have previously attended a meeting to come along. After each meeting, we get together in an informal setting for lunch.

Retired Members Association

**Annual General Meeting  
Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018  
10.15 am**

(full details on page 2)

## Sydney Trains and the Right to take Industrial Action

Retired members in Sydney would be aware of major disruptions to Sydney's train network since the introduction of a new timetable in October. The new timetable offers additional services (about 1500 extra weekly services). Yet it seems there is little slack in the train network if there is an incident.

The head of *Sydney Trains*, Mr Collins told the government before the implementation of the new timetable, the rollout would be tight. One evening, a storm erupted over Sydney disrupting the rail network; preventing passengers from entering platforms because of severe overcrowding. The next morning due to a shortage of drivers and guards, services were cancelled across the network. It is plain the running of the train network is relying heavily on staff working overtime.

**Mr Constance is on record as welcoming the introduction of driverless trains, a clear indication of the minister's attitude to both Unions and Sydney Rail staff.** The Rail, Tram and Bus Union of NSW had sought talks with the Transport Minister, Mr Constance about the new timetable problems and its impact on members. Mr Constance declined a meeting.



## Retired Members Association

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**Important Notice****Retired Members Association  
2018 Annual Meeting**

Our Annual and General meetings will be on  
**Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 at 10.15 am.**  
At the annual meeting, Treasurer Bob Hamblion will  
present our 2017 Financial Report.  
A copy of the report is in this month's newsletter.

Also at the annual meeting, elections will take  
place for all executive and committee positions.

Nominations remain open until just before the meeting;  
if you would like to stand for a position, please feel free  
to do so. Please contact our Secretary, Bruce Muirhead  
for a nomination form. Nomination forms will be  
available at the meeting

**The venue for the annual meeting is the  
Financial Sector Union (FSU), Level 2,  
321 Pitt Street, Sydney.**

**Lance Lloyd**

The *Retired Members Association* is sad to  
inform members that Lance Lloyd passed  
away on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018. A  
funeral service for Lance was held on Tuesday,  
16<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at the the West Chapel,  
Northern Suburbs crematorium.

Lance was 67 years old and understood to  
be a 1967 Technician in Training. Lance had  
worked at Dalley Street Exchange and later at  
North Sydney DDN. Lance was a keen surfer,  
boating enthusiast and loved fishing.

People who worked with Lance would  
describe him as diligent and earnest in his  
approach to his work.

The Association extends its deep sympathy  
and condolences to Lance's family, former  
workmates and friends.

**Get-together with Brian Charlton  
to Remember his best mate  
Sally**

**Location:** Loftus Café (Ph 95421104)  
**Address:** Corner National and Sixth Avenues  
Loftus (easy 500 metre walk from Loftus Station)

**Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018 (from 11 am)**  
**BYO: Drinks and Refreshments**  
**Partners most welcomed**

**RSVP: Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2018**  
**Contact:** Steve Flynn  
0417374275 (mob)  
sflynn45@bigpond.com



## ***A Message from the President*** (cont'd)

The *Rail, Tram and Bus Union of NSW* is also seeking to progress a pay claim with *Sydney Rail*. The Union had planned a 24-hour strike and overtime bans. The *State Government* took the Union to the *Fair Work Commission* and was successful in having the industrial action ruled unlawful. The *Fair Work Commission* has ruled out industrial action for a period of six weeks. ***Let's hope the Sydney Trains and the State Government will use this period for genuine negotiations.***

The *Fair Work Commission* ruling shows how little power the Unions have these days to pursue a pay increase and improve living standards for its members.

Wage stagnation in Australia is becoming a major problem, if not addressed, will continue to inflict severe hardship for many in the community. Inequality will produce the political instability we are starting to see in other developed nations. Governments should be on notice.

### ***Trans-Pacific Partnership: Rises from the Ashes***

Like a *phoenix*, a bird in Greek mythology that regenerates from the ashes of its predecessor so has the ***Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)*** agreement. This time, minus the USA. The formal signing of the agreement will occur in March. Like the case of the previous TPP agreement, there is the reluctance for a prior release of the agreement's terms and conditions.

Also, the federal government is not likely to do any economic modelling to determine the exact benefits of the revised TPP. Why, is not understood, as this agreement is much smaller in scope, given that USA represented 60 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the original TPP agreement. Also, Australia has existing individual bilateral agreements with many of the larger countries who are also part of the new TPP agreement. You cannot claim twice for the trade advantages if they already are part of an existing bilateral free trade agreement with Australia.

I can be somewhat sanguine when it comes to the elimination of tariffs between countries. Over past couple of decades, Australia on its own initiative has reduced most of its import tariffs. A reason why we no longer have car industry and for the decline in our manufacturing base.

My main concern is whether the new agreement will include an ***Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)*** provision. Let me say, the inclusion of an ISDS is an affront to this country's rule of law. An ISDS provision gives multinationals and foreign companies the power to override parliament legislation because of their perceived breach of the TPP agreement. The foreign corporations are able to sue the federal government, even when it is acting in the interest of the community. For example, the Australian parliament may legislate special industry assistance, social welfare measures, health or safety law with which a foreign company views as contrary to the TPP agreement. Some of these foreign companies may come from a country with little in the way of a social safety net for its citizens.

A case in point, the newsletter has reported this before; *Phillip Morris* used the *Hong Kong and Australia Free*

*Trade Agreement* to sue the federal government in relation to its plain packaging of cigarette packets legislation.

*Phillip Morris*, a cigarette manufacturer, a company incorporated Australia, conveniently moved their company's incorporation to Hong Kong to take advantage of the *Hong Kong and Australia Free Trade Agreement's* ISDS provisions. The case was held in secret in Singapore and cost Australia \$50m to defend. Lawyers speculate that if *Phillip Morris* had been successful, Australia could have been exposed upward to a billion dollars in damages. Fortunately, Australia won the case. But there is more, *Phillip Morris* had before taken the federal government to the *High Court of Australia*, where it also lost. ***If that is not an affront to Australian rule of law, nothing is!***

### ***Federal Anti-Corruption Commission***

As I am preparing this article, I hear that *Opposition Leader, Mr Bill Shorten* has promised to legislate for the establishment of a *federal anti-corruption commission* if Labor wins the next election. Mr Shorten said a federal integrity commission was needed to restore public confidence in the political system ***"because the most corrosive sentiment in democracies around the world"***

Until this announcement, calls for a federal anti-corruption commission came from the *Greens* and some of the minor parties. *Labor and Coalition* have together opposed calls. Labor's position may have changed after *Australian Federal Police officers* raided Union offices in October with reporters from the media in place. Then there were the Federal Police raids on the Labor offices and ministers' home on the eve of the last federal election.

Mr Shorten suggests the anti-corruption commission is modelled on the *NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)*. ICAC has been very successful in exposing both corrupt Labor and Liberal ministers. It will be interesting to see the federal government's response to Mr Shorten's proposal.

### ***Remembering Ralph Britten***

Last year, the February newsletter's front page had a tribute to Ralph Britten who had sadly passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Ralph is still being sadly missed by our members. Ralph will be always be remembered and appreciated for his tireless work on behalf our Association and most all for the friendship he extended to fellow members.

I have enjoyed reading each month in the newsletter, Ralph's experiences when he started with the *PMG* in the 1950s. You will find this month's chapter very funny. Paul Rewhorn tells me there is one chapter remaining for publication in the *March 2018 newsletter*.

Well, I am sure an interesting year awaits, the *Retired Members Association* continues on and we would love to see you at a meeting or correspondence via email or post to our Secretary. I hope to see you at our Annual Meeting.





## Retired Members Association Financial Balance Statement - 2017

### Balance Sheet As At 31.12.17 for C.W.U. RMA (NSW)

	2017	2016
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>	<b>\$25,553.93</b>	<b>\$26,502.88</b>
Represented by:		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
C.U.Au Current Primary SaverA/C	\$59.54	\$149.29
E Saver A/C	\$4,190.24	\$5,805.10
Cash to be deposited		\$40.00
<b>Cash at Call</b>	<b>\$4,249.78</b>	<b>\$5,994.39</b>
Investment A/C 1	\$10,646.89	\$10,387.79
Investment A/C 2	\$10,299.64	\$10,000.79
<b>Term Deposits</b>	<b>20,946.53</b>	<b>\$20,388.58</b>
<b>Accrued Interest</b>	<b>\$432.62</b>	<b>\$394.91</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$25,628.93</b>	<b>\$26,777.88</b>
Unpresented cheques	\$75.00	\$275.00
<b>Less Liabilities</b>	<b>\$75.00</b>	<b>\$275.00</b>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$25,553.93</b>	<b>\$26,502.88</b>

### Income & Expenditure Statement, For Year Ending 31st. Dec 2017

<b>Income</b>		
News letter mailout	\$860.00	\$1,150.00
Badges	\$35.00	\$120.00
Donations	\$235.00	\$70.00
Dues	\$260.00	\$380.00
Investment Income	\$673.22	\$838.68
Social Outings	\$4,965.00	\$4,990.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$7,028.22</b>	<b>\$7,548.68</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
June Crossing Motel Deposit		\$2,300.00
Lithgow Buslines	\$2,150.00	
Stationery	\$198.03	\$255.87
CRUMA Affiliation Fees	\$100.00	\$50.00
CPSA Membership	\$50.00	\$50.00
SCOA Membership	\$42.00	
Badges	\$32.67	\$152.46
Alzheimers Aust.	\$250.00	
Prostate	\$250.00	
Melanoma	\$250.00	
Accountant Gift	\$109.00	
Donation / Gift Ifka Antoni	\$82.00	\$75.00
Donation / Gift Amelia Clancy.	\$55.95	\$25.00
CWU for Postage	\$912.70	\$1,260.90
Repayments / Refunds	\$395.00	\$100.00
Secretary Allowance	\$50.00	\$50.00
Socials	\$2,641.50	\$3,137.00
www.Domaine Hosting, Bulkmailer	\$180.00	\$120.00
Welfare Expenses	\$75.00	\$75.00
Social Reseach	\$150.00	\$150.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$7,973.85</b>	<b>\$7,801.23</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(\$945.63)</b>	<b>(\$252.55)</b>

R.W Hamblion Treasurer

This is to certify that I have checked the books of the CEPU, RMA and found them in order. A.R.Fairbairn.

### Equity

Opening balance (1 January 2017)	\$26,502.88	\$26,863.64
Surplus/(Deficit) 2017	(\$945.63)	(\$252.55)
<b>Closing balance (31 December 2017)</b>	<b>\$25,553.93</b>	<b>\$26,502.88</b>



**I AM PLEASED TO INFORM MEMBERS THAT THE PREPARATION OF OUR SOCIAL FUNCTION CALENDAR FOR 2018 IS WELL ADVANCED AND I CAN ALREADY REVEAL THE LOCATION FOR OUR TRIP AWAY THIS YEAR. I WILL COME TO THE TRIP AWAY A LITTLE LATER, KEEPING YOU IN SUSPENSE JUST A LITTLE LONGER.**

This month's newsletter has details of our social events throughout 2018 (see page 5). However, I would ask that you regularly check the newsletter as each social function draws near, just in case there are late minute changes. I am still researching the feasibility of rivercat cruise followed by a bus tour around Parramatta. Also, there is the possibility of a tour of the *Sydney Conservatory of Music*. I will keep you informed. If you have any suggestions for a social event, I will be pleased to hear from you.

## Upcoming Social Events

John Lane



Our first social event for 2018 is a lunch at the Mosman Rowing Club on **Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March**. Last year, we had excellent numbers despite the wet weather. Again, we will try the walk from the Cremorne Wharf to the club (about fifteen minutes) and hopefully, we will not get soaked this time. Members who do not wish to do the walk can take the ferry onto the Mosman Bay wharf from where you will have a much shorter walk to the club. You will find all the details for this social event in this month's newsletter (*see notice just below*).

## We are off to Moree

I hope you have not jumped to the end of this article to immediately find out the location of this year's trip away, if you have please remember to go back and check on our upcoming social events.

As I mentioned earlier, I can announce at this early stage that this year's trip away will be a bus coach trip to Moree. The trip will be all inclusive of travel, touring and accommodation costs (the exception is the meals to and from Moree). I am still in discussion with the coach company and soon have more details of the trip's full itinerary and cost. The trip away will take place between **Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> October and Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> October**. I look forward to providing you with all the details, once available.

Well, I look forward to seeing you throughout the year at our social functions and again if have any suggestions for a social function, I will be pleased to hear from you.

## Retired Members Association Mosman Rowers Club Lunch

3 Centenary Drive, Mosman Bay

**Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

Lunch commences about 12 pm

The intention is for us to disembark at Cremorne Wharf then take the picturesque walk to the club. Members and friends who do not feel up to the walk can stay on the ferry and disembark at Mosman Bay then take the short walk to the club.

Ferry Departs  
Circular Quay  
(Wharf 2) at **11am**.  
Later Ferries depart at  
30 minute intervals





# Social Functions: 2018



## Lunch at the Mosman Rowers Club

This popular lunch will be held in late Spring at the Mosman Rowers Club situated on the Sydney Harbour foreshore and just a short walk to and from Ferry Services.

**Starts at 12 noon on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018**



## Lunch at the Manly 16ft Sailing Club

This lunch was very popular last year. We had at the last minute to book extra tables. The day starts with ferry trip from Circular Quay to Manly.

**Starts around 12 noon on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018**



## Tour of the Garden Island Museum followed by lunch at Watson Bay

We will tour the Garden Island Museum and then have lunch at Watson Bay. The March Newsletter will have details of start time and public transport times.

**19<sup>th</sup> April 2018**



## Lunch at the Davistown RSL

Our lunch at Davistown RSL should interest our members who live on the Central Coast. Of course, our Sydney members can take a fast train service to Woy Woy to join the ferry. The day starts with a ferry cruise from Woy Woy to the Davistown RSL.

**Starts at 12 noon on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018**



## Autumn Falls Lunch at the Springwood Sports Club

The Autumn Falls lunch has a long tradition for the *Retired Members Association*. It gives our members in west Sydney and Blue Mountains to catchup over drinks and a meal. For Sydney members there is the fast train service from Central Station and along the rail line to Springwood Station. The venue is the Springwood Sports Club. The April Newsletter will have a reminder along with train timetable information.

**Starts at 12 noon on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018**



## Lunch at the Sydney Rowers Club

Our lunch at the Sydney Rowers Club completes the trilogy of our harbourside dining for 2018. For our members coming by train, there is a 30 minute Rivercat service from Circular Quay to Abbotsford. The club is just 100m from the wharf.

**Starts around 12 noon on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2018**



## Social Function at Barangaroo

This is a new social function for Retired Members. It is still in the planning stages. The newsletter will have more details as this social event draws closer.

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

## Additional Social Functions and News

As well as the above social functions, the Retired Members will be having its **Christmas Party lunch on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at Petersham RSL**. **The Association will be having its May and July monthly general meetings at Woy Woy and Emu Plains respectively**. Like all general meetings, at these locations, they will be held on the fourth Thursday of the month. Meeting notices will be published prior to the meetings in the newsletter.





## Goulburn District Reunion

Employees from PMG, Telecom and Telstra

Goulburn Division,  
Goulburn DTB,  
Country Wide (includes NDC & Country Installation)

Wednesday,  
11th April 2018  
From 11 am

Goulburn Soldiers Club  
15 Market Street,  
Goulburn

### Contacts

Bob Speer	0408 863 900
Ross Kirkby	02 4821 4754
John Bradley	02 4861 3700
Ron Willson	02 6226 2266
Allan Barker	02 4871 1161

## 1958 Technician in Training 60th Year Reunion



### West Port Club, Port Macquarie on Friday, 16th March 2018

There will be light luncheon commencing from around 10 30 am. Contact John Loudon for more details, via email [johnl42@iprimus.com.au](mailto:johnl42@iprimus.com.au) or mobile 0409 030 911. Notification of attendance, although not essential, however will assist the organiser.

Customary at our five yearly reunions, other impromptu outings will be held over the period Thursday, 15th to Sunday, 18th March.

Two West Virginia rednecks were out hunting, and as they were walking along, they came upon a huge hole in the ground. They approached it and were amazed at its size.

The first hunter said, "Wow, that's some hole. I can't even see the bottom. I wonder how deep it is?"

The second hunter said, "I don't know. Let's throw something down there, listen, and see how long it takes to hit bottom."



The first hunter said, "Hey, there's an old automobile gear box over there. Give me a hand and we'll throw it in and see."

So they picked up the gear box, carried it over to the hole, counted one-two-three, and heaved it in. They were standing there looking over the edge of the hole and listening when they heard a rustling behind them.

As they turned around, they saw a goat come crashing through the underbrush, run up to the hole, and, without hesitation, jump in head first. While they were standing there, staring at each other in amazement, they peered into the hole, trying to figure out what that was all about.

Just then an old farmer sauntered up. "Say there," said the farmer, "you fellers didn't happen to see my goat around here anywhere, did you?"

The first hunter said, "Funny you should ask. We were just standing here a minute ago, and a goat came running out of the bushes doing about a hundred miles an hour jumped head first into this here hole!"

The old farmer said, "Naw, that's impossible. I had him chained to a gear box."



## CHAPTER FIVE

In the last two months of Ralph's memoirs, he has described the various areas that composed the York Telephone District. They give an interesting description of Sydney during the 1950's. This month, we continue the description of the various work areas within the York Telephone District.

As well, Ralph mentions a few humorous incidents. The first incident involves the use of the element Mercury, there were no Occupational Health Safety rules in the 1950s to get in the way of a good prank.

### Tommy McDonnell Turns the Table on Adversary.

Probably now is the time to tell a true Tommy McDonnell story. It would be an understatement to say that Tommy and Charlie Winch did not see eye to eye. Tommy had a "please explain" paper from Charlie Winch almost every day. Charlie always boasted there was no fault in any telephone that could get past him or he could not fix. This is explained why he was the acting senior technician.

Tommy was never in a hurry to get home after work, he played table tennis or had a drinking session at the York Hotel with Reg Whiteoak. One day, he took Charlie's phone home and did a job on it. Without going into the technical detail, Tommy drilled a small hole in the terminal block at an angle and poured mercury into the hole, far enough to short out the line and put the phone off the air. When you turned the phone upside down, the telephone would work OK. Tommy had disguised the terminal block so well that you would never know it had been disturbed. Tommy got into work at 6 am the next day and reinstalled the phone on Charlie's desk.

You can well imagine the fun everybody had watching Charlie at the busiest time of the morning, talking to people and having to hold the phone upside down, it took Charlie a week to realise that the telephone could not be fixed and he had to have it replaced with a new telephone. Tommy had given Charlie's credibility a thrashing.

### Area 3 - Tommy McDonnell

**Area 3**, strangely enough, was squeezed between **Areas 1 and 2**, east of **Area 5** and to the North East of **Area 4**. If you travelled north along George Street from King Street, you passed the **ES&A Bank (English, Scottish and Australian Bank)** then a department store called **Beard Watsons** with **David Jones Men's store** on the corner of Barrack Street.

The delivery dock for the David Jones building faced onto Barrack Street and at the western end of the dock was the base of a circular chute that had a large opening on each floor for goods to be sent to the dock for delivery. One day, Tommy was working on the third floor following a cable run to find where it may have been damaged concentrating on what he was doing, Tom forgot about the parcel chute and finished up at the dock in a rather dishevelled state but not hurt. Charlie never got to hear about that one.

The *Imperial Service Club* was housed between George and York streets.

The Club was a very dignified place with silver service, it was quite a job to even get past the footpath if you were given a job there while Tommy was away. Tommy was OK, they almost saluted him.

Next door was the *National Cash Register Company*, in those days mechanical cash registers were all the go, just as were mechanical typewriters. Many times a telephone technician would be mistaken for a typewriter mechanic. Indeed, some people would get most upset when you went for the phone and not their typewriter machine.

### Removing a Switchboard: the Fast Method



Just opposite was the *Lottery Office* where the various lotteries were drawn each day. We changed an old dilapidated switchboard there in 1958 with a more sophisticated and much smaller one. As you entered this building, the doorway which was located right on the corner of York and Barrack Streets, led you to a wide staircase taking you to the first-floor switch-room.

## The Ralph Britten Memoirs

Part 5



Ralph Britten

Continued on Page 9





## Ralph Britten Memoirs - Part 5 (cont'd)

The next task, after installing the new switchboard was to remove the old one and place it on the truck to take it to the sifting room along with an S7 Form (*the form used for the disposal of obsolete equipment*) attached. It took six people, with countless observers, to get this monster to the top of the stairs let alone place it on the truck.

People were politely asked to get out of the way on the stairs as well as on the porch at the bottom. This turned out to be a very wise move because as we were slowly lowering the monster down the stairs, it began to get away from us. Down the stairs, it went with a resounding crash at the bottom. It turned out to be good planning, as it was much easier loading the pieces onto the truck rather than the monster in one piece.

Between Barrack and Wynyard streets, stood the State Headquarters of two banks, The **Commercial Banking Company of Sydney** and **The Bank of New South Wales**. Tommy spent many hours attending to faults and generally assisting both these large institutions with their telecommunication needs.

### Radio Station 2CH on Fire

I will have more to say about these buildings when we talk about PABXs. Opposite Wynyard Street and on the western side of York Street stood the **Amalgamated Wireless Australasia (AWA) Building** with a magnificent high radio tower atop. This tower was for many years the highest point of any building in the city. Now in 2001 (the time Ralph wrote this article), it is swamped by many large tower type buildings that surround it.

Back in 1956, while I was at the training school, a fire almost destroyed the two top floors where **Radio Station 2CH** was located. The fire brigade in those days did not have ladders long enough to reach these floors, so this prompted some very unusual action to get the water to these floors which they did. however, the delay caused the two floors to be gutted.

Now, naturally enough, the whole building at 47 York Street, Sydney was absolutely soaked with water from top to bottom, paperwork in the various offices was ruined, not only the AWA itself but private companies which rented space on various floors, these companies were virtually put out of business. As far as the communications, all telephone services in the building were off the air. The PABX located on the mezzanine floor was virtually undamaged because of quick action by a number of people who kept the equipment dry.



Cabling from the PABX to the various floors, including to **2CH** at the top, was via a cable conduit, built into the northern wall, a recess four feet by two feet and six inches, in modern day terms 122 centimetres by 61 centimetres extending from the basement to the very top floor or roof emerging at the base of the tower.

At each floor, a 100-pair cable was terminated on a distribution frame and cables to various sections of the floor were fed. Large solid varnished timber double doors shut off the cable conduit on each floor, these were securely locked for obvious reasons.

I should mention that the top of the tower, housed the technical equipment that enabled **2CH** radio signal to be transmitted to its listeners. Getting back to the fire and the water that had been poured into the building. Obviously, the cable conduit had filled with water. You need imagine a mini telephone exchange (PABX) with a switchboard in an adjacent room, separated by a brick wall, two separate rooms with two separate doors, this probably saved the PABX equipment from the deluge of water.

The cable conduit came through the mezzanine in the switchboard room, the switchboard had four positions and employed five girls who did not mind a wine (with meals of course). The switchboards were located in the centre of the room with a large space behind it for access to the frame in the cable conduit.

The firemen needed to open the conduit doors at each floor to let the water get away and when the one was opened behind the switchboard, empty red and white wine bottles went floating happily down the corridor to their demise.

Many unresolved questions were asked after this incident. A number of weeks were spent there in a repair situation and things gradually returned to normal.

Next door to AWA building and on the corner of York and Erskine Streets was the **Occidental Hotel**, which still stands today (2001). A very pleasant waterhole for the workers in the area. Moving South along York Street and past the AWA Building, you came across a large sports store owned and run by the former great test cricketer **Alan Kippax**. On the corner of Barrack Street was a very old building housing the importing firm of **Arthur Cocks and Company** and **James Hardie** the asbestos cement company. The Head office building was on the opposite corner, the name of the building was **Asbestos House** and the factory was located at Rose Hill near Parramatta, where they had a PABX. We will hear more about this firm later. Between this building and King Street were a number of smaller firms, wholesale clothing firms such as **Charles Parsons and Co.**

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## **Ralph Britten Memoirs - Part 5** (cont'd)

Crossing over to the eastern side of York Street was the **ACA Building** on the corner of King and York Streets where Ernie and Tommy kept their gear in the basement. There was a coffee shop on the ground floor, facing York Street where we all met after getting our pay every second Thursday, all the world's problems were solved here on that day, it was quite an exclusive club.

### **Tommy Needs Urgent Relief**

Moving north now, we pass the back entrance to **Beard Watson's** five-storey department store. Then you would arrive at a very old building where the **Immigration Department** was situated. To get to the inquiry counter of this *Immigration Department* you had to ride a very old, large and dilapidated goods lift which was very unreliable, nobody worried because they had become conditioned to it and it was normal to see anything up to fifteen to twenty well-dressed people travelling in the lift. Sometimes, it was best to walk the stairs because there were only three floors anyway.

A story should be told here that should never go away. It concerns Tommy and Ernie, Tommy had a fault in the switchboard at the Immigration Department, he had spent a couple of hours in the morning trying to fix the problem. The story goes that Tommy went to lunch in disgust, he spent lunch in consultation with other technicians as to how he could repair the problem. After several beers, he returned to the Immigration Department along with Ernie who had volunteered to help him.

They just made the lift before it took off, it was fairly crowded, people had to make room to allow them to enter the lift. Yes, you guessed it! the thing stopped between floors. Well, they had waited for about half an hour for a lift mechanic to arrive, people were becoming agitated, especially Tom who had forgotten to relieve himself before getting into the lift. Tommy had to suffer in silence because as Ernie was deaf, he would have had to shout and therefore tell all in the lift about his problem. Just as Tommy was about to edge to the front corner of the lift and ask the women to look the other way, the lift started to move, and he got to the next floor toilet just in time.



This completes a circuit of **Area 3** and you arrive back at the *National Cash Register Company* with the *Lottery Office* on the other corner of Barrack and York Streets.