Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

NEWSLETTER

July 2026

RTEA - Proud of its Union Heritage

Lorem ipsum

Welcome to your July 2026 Newsletter.

John Lane

I am saddened to begin this month's newsletter with the news that several members and a member's wife passed away in June. Please read their individual tributes in this month's newsletter. Their stories show that they treasured their families and were known and appreciated in their local community.

ALAN STEVENS

You will notice there is no tribute at this time for Alan Stevens, who passed away on the 30th June 2026. Alan had requested that there be no funeral service. Alan served on our committee for many years until ill health prevented him from continuing. We plan to hold a special condolence motion, during which members are invited to speak about Alan. The July General meeting will be on Thursday, 23RD July 2026.

Our sympathy and condolences go out to Alan's wife, Toni, and family. Toni, we greatly appreciated Alan, and you will always find friendship and support within our midst.

UPCOMING SOCIAL EVENTS

Our planned social events during July and August highlight the importance of our Association in helping us stay closely connected with our former workmates as we grow older. To foster these bonds, we organise social events at least once a month, providing opportunities to maintain and strengthen our connections.

For example, we have two functions in July and August, the first is lunch at the Manly Club with a visit to the nearby Manly Museum beforehand. Then there is the always-popular lunch at the Sydney Rowers Club. We always have standout attendance there. I do not know if it is the fish and chips or the attraction of travelling there via the Rivercat ferry service. Then there are our General Meetings, the one in August at Emu Plains, which we hold for members who live in the Western Suburbs and Blue Mountains. Come take advantage.

GAMBLING REFORM

As you know, I have been trying to convince the federal government to implement reforms to gambling advertising. The reforms I am seeking are consistent with those recommended by the late Peta Murphy and her parliamentary colleagues on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs. The Standing Committee, with representatives from government and opposition parties, made 31 recommendations in its report ***"You win some, you lose more".***

The key recommendations included a total ban on all forms of online gambling advertising in Australia and the establishment of a national online gambling regulator responsible for licensing and regulation, with an explicit mandate to reduce community harm. He has placed the interests of the gambling industry and major sporting organisations ahead of the public interest.

Now I am seeking the support of the Trade Union movement for the upcoming Labour Conferences to debate this issue and to make public statements in support of gambling advertisement reform.

BANKSTOWN MUSEUM CLOSURE

We have news that Telstra has decided to close the Bankstown Museum. I have, for years, tried to get the National Museum to host an exhibition showing how our early Australian colonies quickly adopted new communication technologies, beginning with the telegraph network, then through the ages of telephony, and ending with today's digital era.

I believe there is a remarkable story here about recognising the people, innovations, and infrastructure that helped build the modern nation. The response to date tells me this is not understood or appreciated.

Recently, we held a function at the Sydney Tram Museum at Loftus. What a day was had by all. In hindsight, I wish we had allocated more time there. As I went through their exhibits, I realised what can be achieved if the Banstown Museum had the support of organisations prepared to provide the resources to assist. The Sydney Tram Museum has enjoyed financial support from the State Government, with the rest coming from a keen group of volunteers who know their stuff.

I look forward to seeing you at the Manly Club this coming Thursday, 16TH July and at our July General Meeting a week later.

Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

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Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

We Return to Emu Plains for our August 2025 General Meeting

Thursday, 27TH August 2026
The Meeting commences at 11 am

O'Donoghues Irish Pub
99 Great Western Highway,
Emu Plains

Only 350 metres from Emu Plains Railway Station.
A short walk across the car park

Our General Meeting at Emu Plains offers our members who live in Western Sydney and Blue Mountains the opportunity for a get together with former workmates and to attend a RTEA General Meeting.

Many members travel from Sydney to Emu Plains each year for this meeting. Again, they are most welcome to attend. We will have lunch at O'Donoghues after the meeting.

Members travelling from Sydney can catch a train from Central Station departing at 9.33 am, Strathfield at 9.46 am, Parramatta at 10 am, Blacktown at 10.12 am and Penrith at 10.36 am. The train arrives at Emu Plains at 10.38 am.

Members traveling from Katoomba can catch a train departing at 9.16 am and Springwood at 9.55 am. The train stops at all stations between Katoomba and Emu Plains. The train arrives at Emu Plains at 10.22 am. Both trains services arrive at Emu Plains in sufficient time for the short walk to O'Donoghues Irish Pub for the meeting's 11 am start time.

zoom

The Meeting will also be held via ZOOM
Access details will be emailed to members on
Monday afternoon , 25TH August 2026

Vale Raymond Frank Redden

The Retired Telecommunications Employees Association is saddened to announce that Ray Redden passed away on the 3rd July 2026.

Ray was 90 years old.

Ray was a member of our Association for close on 32 years and received its OBE (Over Bloody Eighty) Award in 2019. The Association may have inadvertently embarrassed Ray by giving him an award upon reaching 80 at his local golf club. Fellow members were under the impression that Ray was seventy-five. Perhaps Ray had decided to day nothing that would dispel their impression. Looking at the photo of Ray with this tribute, you can understand why.

Ray worked in the PMG/Telecom/Telstra as an instructor, then in the Newtown area. In his early years, he also played first-grade Rugby League for the Newtown Club between 1957 and 1961.

After retiring from Telstra, he worked as a driver on the former Sydney Monorail. An amusing anecdote was Ray meeting up with a fellow former instructor, Barry Robinson. Ray handed the monorail controls to Barry for a quick trip around the city loop.

A funeral service for Ray will be held in the West Chapel of Woronora Memorial Park, 121 Linden Street, Sutherland, on Tuesday, 14th July 2026, commencing at 11.30 am.

The Association extends its condolences and deep sympathy to Ray's wife, Yvonne, children Kathryn, Darren and their families.

In Memory of Dianne Leonie Robinson

On Friday, 19th June 2026, Dianne Robinson, wife of Barry Robinson, a current committee member, passed away after a long period in care. Many members knew Dianne as she often attended our social functions, especially our annual trips, and many also attended her funeral service on 29th June 2026.

Dianne was born and raised in Sydney's inner west, an area where she remained close throughout her life. She was known for her cheerful nature and optimistic outlook.

She met Barry as a teenager, first at a dance studio and later at social gatherings in Ashfield. Their friendship grew, and they married in 1965. They celebrated their sixth anniversary just days before Dianne's passing.

Barry and Dianne established their first home at Greenacre. Throughout their marriage, they shared many interests, including powerboat racing; Dianne was a crew member for Barry and an official timekeeper at the Cooks River Motor Boat Club. Travel was another passion. First, through Barry's work, they explored New South Wales, often living on the road in their Ford Transit van while Barry trained staff across the state. Later, they travelled extensively throughout Australia with their caravan and enjoyed many overseas cruises, including a memorable 104-day world voyage. Joking with the ship's captain, she said that if he let her stay on board, she would happily go around once again.

After many years of waiting, Barry and Dianne welcomed their son, Alan, a blessing they described as well worth the wait. Her greatest joy was seeing Alan establish his own family with his wife Tanya and watching her granddaughters, Amelia and Chloe, grow into young women she was immensely proud of.

Dianne enjoyed a cup of tea, a Tooheys Old beer, the occasional whisky, and spending time with family and friends.

Dianne remained actively involved in her community. She worked in administration at the Ashfield RSL, where she assisted elderly and disabled veterans with their meals. Her compassion, willingness to help, and ability to make people feel welcome left a lasting impression on all who knew her.

In later years, Dianne faced many health challenges with courage and dignity. She was fortunate to have the loving support of Barry and her family.

Our deep sympathy goes to Barry, their son Alan, daughter-in-law Tanya and grandchildren Amelia and Chloe. Barry can be assured of our support in the times ahead.

Vale - Ken Edwards

Member Bob Speer requested that the following tribute be published in our newsletter to his friend Ken Edwards.

Ken was diagnosed with Lung Cancer last January, followed by some Chemotherapy at the Coffs Harbour Hospital. His wife of 62 years, his daughter, a Registered Nurse, and his son nursed him at home. Kenneth (Ken) Leslie Edwards passed away on 23rd June 2026.

Ken was born in Albury. After some time as a Junior Postal Officer at the Albury Post Office, he joined the 1961 group of Technicians in Training. Returning to Albury as a second-year trainee. After moving around the Wagga Wagga Engineering Division, he was promoted to the position of OIC Macksville MFD in 1988. After serving as IPM at Kempsey Telecommunications Branch, he was promoted to Network Operations Manager, Coffs Harbour, from which he retired.

Ken was a keen sportsman supporting Collingwood in the AFL. He was a keen player of social and competitive tennis. After COVID, he took up pickleball, which he enjoyed immensely, playing twice a week for a few years.

Ken married Maryanne Hall in Albury, and they had two children, Janelle and Marc.

Ken was more than a great bloke; he was a dear friend and a cherished mentor to many, a proud family man and a dedicated member of the many communities in which he and his family lived.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Maryanne; Janelle and Troy Atkinson; Marc Edwards and Jacqui; and grandchildren Lani, Sophie and Luke.

Per Ken's wishes, that there was no funeral service.

Vale Tony Mulligan

It is with deep sadness that the Retired Telecommunications Employees Association advises members of the passing of member Tony Mulligan on Sunday, 31st May 2026

Tony was aged 83. Tony had been a member of our Association for over 29 years.

Tony had been unwell for quite some time. Despite being very unwell, he bravely attended our Autumn Leaves function at Springwood with his wife Lyn just days before his passing.

Lyn wrote, "Blessing that he's now out of severe pain and suffering, but our hearts are broken into a trillion pieces. He was dearly loved."

Tony was a 1958 Technician-in-Training who worked at Bondi Exchange and in the Eastern Suburbs before he transferred to the Lower Blue Mountains exchanges at Glenbrook and Springwood around 1977, where he had just moved.

A Celebration of Tony's life was held at Springwood Sports Club on Friday, 19th June 2026. The theme was red, Tony's favourite colour.

The Retired Telecommunications Employees Association extends its deep sympathy to Tony's wife, Lyn, and family members.

Retired Telecommunications Employees Associaton

Our annual luncheon at the Sydney Rowers Club is one of the highlights of the RTEA social calendar that always attracts an impressive turnout of members. We invite you to join us for a relaxing day of good food and the opportunity to catch up with fellow members and friends. The club is easy to reach by public transport particularly via a Rivercat ferry; a convenient venue for everyone

Sydney Rowers Club

Thursday, 20TH August 2026

Meet between 12 pm and 12.30 pm

The Sydney Rowers Club on the Parramatta River, is 150 metres from the Abbotsfort Wharf (613 Great North Road, Abbotsfort Point). Sydney Ferries have service from Circular Quay. to Abbotsfort. The $2.50 concession fare for seniors and pensioners applies.

We have reserved a table, if you like to join us for lunch. please e-mail, text or phone John Lane (see contact details on page 2 of the newsletter.)

Ferries from Circular Quay

Dep 11.07 am Arr 11.44 am Wharf 5

Dep 11.27 am Arr 12 .04 pm Wharf 5

Return Ferry from Abbotsfort

1.47 pm, 2.07 pm 2.27 pm (a 37 minute trip)

REDFERN MAIL EXCHANGE

REMEMBER THE PEOPLE. REMEMBER THE PLACE.

REUNION?

WORK AT THE REDERN MAIL EXCHANGE?

We are checking for interest for a reunion.
Interested in attending a reunion?

If there are sufficient numbers and interest, a reunion will be organised.

PUT YOUR HAND UP

CONTACT GEOFF SCHUBERT

0419 635 564

geoffjoy3@bigpond.com

Gilgandra and Beyond TripAway

We are excited to share that bookings for our Tripaway are higher than we expected. Thank you. We still have a few spots left - please book soon to avoid missing out

If you would like to join us - use the nearby link which has brochure showing the Itinerary, inclusions and price. Contact John Lane if you decide to join us.- see page 2 for contact details

For payments, you can use the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). If EFT is unavailable to you, please pay at our General Meeting to Alan Bassman.

Great Southern Bank
BSB 814-282
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Hearing Aids, Government Assistance and Compensation Claims

The good news the federal government has a "Hearing Services Program" for eligible retirees.

BACKGROUND

At recent meetings of the ***Retired Telecommunications Employees Association***, members discussed hearing aids, government assistance, and whether compensation claims may be available against a former employer. In many members' cases, this would be Telstra.

Many members, particularly those who worked in telephone exchanges, where they were exposed to high noise levels from electro-mechanical switches, such as Crossbar and Step-by-Step equipment.

GOVERNMENT HEARING SERVICES PROGRAM

The Australian Government's Hearing Services Program provides subsidised hearing services and devices to eligible Australians with hearing loss. For eligible retirees, this may include access to fully subsidised standard digital hearing aids through an accredited provider.

Eligibility can include people who are Australian citizens or permanent residents, are aged 21 years or older, and meet one of the following criteria:

- hold a Pensioner Concession Card, or are the spouse of a cardholder;
- hold a Veteran Gold Card, or are the spouse of a cardholder;
- hold a Veteran White Card for hearing-specific conditions, or are the spouse of a cardholder;
- are a member of the Australian Defence Force in an eligible category; or
- Are referred by an eligible employment or rehabilitation provider.

Members should check their personal eligibility before making any purchase decisions.

WHAT ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS MAY RECEIVE

Eligible participants may receive the following services, generally through an accredited provider:

- a comprehensive hearing assessment;
- access to a range of fully subsidised standard hearing aids, such as behind-the-ear or in-the-ear models;
- professional fitting and follow-up support;
- annual review, adjustment and maintenance support; and
- Replacement or upgraded devices after the relevant program period, commonly five years, where eligible.

Some providers may charge a small annual fee for batteries and maintenance. Providers may also offer devices with additional features, such as advanced noise reduction or Bluetooth connectivity. If you choose a device above the fully subsidised range, you may need to pay the difference between the government subsidy and the device's cost.

Members are encouraged to compare providers, costs, available devices and follow-up services before agreeing to an offered hearing aid solution and after sales services.

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Hearing Aids - Government Assistance (Cont'd)

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

If you have private health insurance, you may be eligible for further financial support. For example, Medibank has an $800 pa limit for hearing aids, but you are advised to check with your private health provider on conditions and actual payment amounts before agreeing to purchase a more expensive hearing aid.

COMPENSATION CLAIMS

Some members may believe their hearing loss is linked to workplace noise exposure and may wish to explore whether a compensation claim is available. Industrial deafness claims can be complex and may depend on work history, medical evidence, the extent of hearing loss, applicable thresholds and the relevant workers compensation rules.

You and your legal professional will need evidence showing the extent to which your hearing loss is due to industrial hearing loss and natural hearing loss that occurs as we age. Some providers may be able to help with industrial deafness, not them personally, but they may be able to recommend a legal firm with particular expertise in industrial deafness claims.

MEMBER FEEDBACK

If you have experience making a hearing loss compensation claim, the Association would like to hear from you so we can better inform members.

Support Colin McQueen in Dry July

Our committee colleague Colin McQueen is once again taking part in Dry July, giving up alcohol throughout July to raise funds for Australians affected by cancer. The RTEA Committee, who will be treading carefully around Colin during July, and encouraging members to support Colin in this worthwhile initiative.

Dry July is one of Australia's best-known fundraising campaigns. Every dollar raised helps provide practical services that make a real difference to people undergoing cancer treatment and to their families and carers. These services include transport to treatment appointments, specialist nursing support, counselling, wellbeing and therapy programs, accommodation close to treatment centres, and other essential assistance during a challenging time.

By participating in Dry July, Colin is helping to improve the lives of people facing cancer, and we commend him for his commitment to this important cause.

If you would like to support Colin's efforts, please consider donating through his Dry July fundraising page. Every contribution, large or small, will help fund services that provide comfort, care and support when they are needed most.

We wish Colin every success with his Dry July challenge and thank him for his support of such a worthy cause. Please use the link to make your donation.

Bankstown Museum Closes

In February 2024, our Association's members visited the Bankstown Telstra Museum before what was then expected to be a temporary closure, pending relocation to Sydney, Underwood Street, adjacent to the old Dalley Street Exchange. After our visit, many members returned to Bankstown to donate their time to packing exhibits. We understand the collections still remain at Bankstown.

For many years, volunteers gave their time to keep the Bankstown Museum open. They were members of the Telecommunication Historical Association of New South Wales (THAN). In 2019, Telstra established Heritage Communications Ltd (HTL), a registered charity. HTL owned all the artefacts at Bankstown, and early this year it severed its relationship with THAN, shut down the museum, and locked out THAN volunteers, going so far as to change the locks.

TELSTRA'S FUTURE PLANS UNCLEAR

It now appears that Telstra, through its subsidiary Heritage Communications Ltd (HTL), has no plans to continue operating telecommunications museums in New South Wales, Queensland or Victoria. For the many volunteers who devoted countless hours to preserving and sharing Australia's telecommunications heritage, this outcome is deeply disappointing. The closure of the Bankstown Museum is more than the loss of a building. As we understand it, the artefacts from the Bankstown collection are currently in storage on-site, with their long-term future yet to be decided.

There has been no public commitment regarding their preservation, access or whether they will be displayed in another institution. This uncertainty raises concerns about the future viewing and protection of these significant items. The closure thus represents the possible disappearance of one of the few places where Australians could see, understand and appreciate the remarkable story of how telecommunications contributed to our nation's development.

RECOGNITION FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONTRIBUTION

For more than a decade, the ***Retired Telecommunications Employees Association*** has argued that Australia's telecommunications story deserves a place in our national narrative. We have approached Telstra, successive Communications Ministers and the National Museum of Australia, offering our research, historical timelines, presentations and publications. Despite our efforts, we have had no interest shown in an important chapter of Australia's history.

In January 2014, we wrote to then-Telstra CEO Mr Thodey, asking for Telstra's support in convincing the National Museum to feature our communications heritage. While Mr Thodey was non-committal about providing support, he cited Telstra's museums at Bankstown and Hawthorne as evidence of Telstra's commitment to Australia's telecommunications heritage. We also made representations to the then Communications Minister, Mr Stephen Conroy, and to Peter Garrett, who had parliamentary responsibility for the National Museum of Australia.

NATIONAL MUSEUM

Despite introductions from ministers, John Lane's outreach to the National Museum of Australia elicited no interest whatsoever. Most insulting of all, despite receiving federal funding, a Museum representative suggested that if our Association were able to gather the funds, they might review their position.

We again wrote to the National Museum in late May 2024, reminding them of the fundamental role telecommunications has played in our nation's development. From telegraphy linking our then-colonies and other countries in the 19th century, to the introduction and expansion of the telephone network, Australia has kept pace with developments in satellite telecommunications, mobile communications, and the internet. Yet our communications chapter is often overlooked within the nation's broader historical narrative.

We have offered to assist the National Museum of Australia with materials, including our newsletter, timelines, and articles. Like the volunteers at Bankstown, our offers have gone unanswered.

Our Association asked whether the National Museum of Australia might be interested in the materials we have prepared for our newsletter. Our timeline, presentations, and supporting articles could provide a foundation for digital content, educational resources, website material, or future exhibits on the history of communications in Australia.

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Bankstown Museum Closes (cont'd)

Although developed by volunteers rather than professional historians, we would be delighted to share our work if it would assist the Museum in presenting this important aspect of Australia's heritage.

PRESERVATION OF AUSTRALIA'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS HERITAGE

Preserving Australia's telecommunications heritage is more than simply nostalgia for obsolete equipment. It is about recognising the engineers, technicians, operators and innovators who connected a vast continent, supported commerce and emergency services, were vital to Australia in times of conflict, and laid the foundations for today's digital society.

Museums exist to preserve the stories that shaped our nation. Australia's telecommunications story is one of those stories. It deserves more than storage in boxes and silence from those entrusted with preserving our national heritage.

To date, the National Museum has still not responded; we are not holding our breath.