Retired Telecommunications Employees Association
NEWSLETTER
October 2026
RTEA - Proud of its Union Heritage

Welcome to your October 2026 newsletter.

John Lane

Welcome to your October 2026 newsletter. My message this month is brief, as I have just returned from our annual trip away to Gilgandra.

Almost from the beginning of our Association, the trip away has been an annual fixture. In recent years, our trip away has changed to a fully inclusive bus coach adventure. Our getaways have remained popular with members; forty-two members booked to go, but three cancelled at the last moment, leaving us with a group of thirty-nine. Our trip made the news and was featured in the local Gilgandra newsletter.

I would like to place on record my gratitude to Bob Bartley, who did a great deal of research to put together an itinerary and a place for our evening meals. Bob grew up in Gilgandra and therefore was keen to show our group what Gilgandra and surrounding communities had to offer.

We have used the same bus coach company in the past few years. We have always had great service, and this year was no different, thanks to Gerard, our driver. Like Bob, Gerard had extensive knowledge of the area and told us amusing stories about his family throughout the trip.

Next month's newsletter will report more about the trip away to Gilgandra, but suffice to say, this year's trip away to Gilgandra and Beyond took us across the Blue Mountains and into the country towns of central western New South Wales. We explored historic Mudgee and Gulgong before settling into Gilgandra for six nights. In Gilgandra, we learned about the 1915 Cooee March, visited the Rural Museum, and enjoyed the town's colourful murals. Excursions to Gularambone and Coonamble brought more street art and local characters, while dinner at country hotels, especially the Armatree Hotel, gave us a taste of country life.

Each day brought a new adventure: we visited Tooraweenah, Emu Logic, and the Arthur Butler Aviation Museum, while another outing took us through the volcanic landscapes of the Warrumbungles, culminating in a guided tour of Siding Spring Observatory. In Dubbo, we explored the Royal Flying Doctor Service, admired the intricate layouts at the Model Train Club, and wandered the Regional Botanic Gardens. Sharing meals and good company was a highlight of each day, and a farewell barbecue at our motel provided a fitting conclusion to the week before our journey home through Mudgee and the Blue Mountains. Leaving us with plenty to remember and talk about on our way home.

21 October, 2026

The Retired Telecommunications Employee Association Visited Gilgandra

The Retired Telecommunications Employee Association took their annual trip to Gilgandra this year

Contributed By Molly Shannon

RTEA spent seven days exploring Gilgandra and surrounding towns. Photo by Gilgandra Weekly: Molly Shannon.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our trip away is not the final highlight on our calendar—there's still more to look forward to in 2026. A reminder: our Christmas Party will be held at the Petersham RSL on Thursday, 19th November. I am pleased to report that, despite these challenging times of inflation, we have managed to keep the price unchanged for the third year in a row. Members have enjoyed the Christmas meal at the Petersham RSL in previous years, and we will again have lucky door prizes to add to the festivities. For the main course, you can choose between pork or barramundi, but we do need your feedback. Below this message, and inside the newsletter, you'll find a link directly below to inform us that you will be attending together with your choice of main menu.

Well I hope to see many of you at the Christmas Party and November General Meeting before the end of the year.

See inside the newsletter for details about our special guest speaker attending our November 2026 General Meeting

Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

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Visit to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music

On Thursday, 17th September 2026, members of the Retired Telecommunications Employees Association visited the On Thursday, 17th September 2026, members of the Retired Telecommunications Employees Association visited the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, located within or near Sydney's Botanical Gardens.

Founded in 1915, the conservatorium is one of Australia's oldest and most prestigious music schools and is now the music school of the University of Sydney. The Conservatorium's main building is heritage-listed as it is a Greenway Building.

Lunchtime Concert

The building was built as part of Governor Macquarie's plan to revamp Government House; Macquarie recognised the need for sufficient room to house servants and horse stables. On 4 July 1817, he instructed a former convict, Francis Greenway, to prepare plans for the accommodation and stables. Work commenced on the stables on 9 August 1817. Macquarie laid the foundation stone for the stables on 16th December 1817. Interestingly, while Macquarie sought funding from the Colonial Office in London, however, the building construction commenced without formal approval. Over the next few years, Governor Macquarie had some explaining to the Colonial Office.

The building was converted into a conservatorium in 1916. Members were shown parts of the early construction during their visit.

Brickwork of the original building

Artifacts recovered during building expansion

Major extensions to the Conservatorium began in 2001, including the addition of new basement rooms and a new entrance on the south side. The project was carefully designed not only to expand the Conservatorium, but also to protect the surrounding botanical gardens. By excavating deeply around the original building, the construction avoided encroaching on the gardens.

Part of our visit was a lunchtime concert in the Conservatorium's hall. The lunchtime concerts are held weekly and are open to the public with a gold coin donation.

NEUROMUSIC COLLABORATIVE

Members may recall a presentation by the Brain and Mind Centre, which is part of the University of Sydney. An important initiative of the centre is its NeuroMusic Collaborative, a world-first study to see whether musical training can slow cognitive decline and help prevent dementia. The NeuroMusic Collaborative is currently recruiting volunteers aged 60-90 to participate in its research.

Particularly if a prospective volunteer has:

- Noticed changes in their memory
- Not had three or more years of formal musical training.
- Not played a musical instrument or sung in a musical group in the last six months.
- Are interested in participating in keyboard or choral singing lessons.

If you are interested in participating and checking your eligibility, you can visit the NeuroMusic Collaborative website: https://neuromusic.sydney.edu.au or call 02 9351 0755.

Vale: Alby Hinchcliffe

Member Les Gilbert has written the following tribute to his friend Alby Hinchcliffe, who was a member of the Retired Telecommunications Employees Association for over thirty-five years.

15th January 1936 - 22nd August 2026

It is with great sadness that I inform you that Alby Hinchcliffe passed away in the early hours of 22nd August 2026 at the Bupa nursing home in Sutherland.

Alby is survived by his wife, Gwen; his two daughters, Michelle and Sharon; and his son, David. He also had nine grandchildren and a great-granddaughter born recently.

Alby started his career as a Technician Assistant in the PMG in 1957 at City North Exchange, where Gwen also worked as a switchboard operator. He was too shy to ask Gwen out, so he asked another technician to see if Gwen would like to go on a foursome trip to the Bungonia Caves with him. She accepted, and that began a wonderful, lifelong partnership. They married in October 1960 and eventually bought a house, settling in the southern suburb of Loftus, where Gwen still lives.

Alby wanted to advance to improve his financial position, so he sat the Open Technician exam and was promoted to Technician in the early sixties. One of his first trainees was Steve Flynn, who remembers Alby taking him under his wing after he was posted to City North following his first year of training. Alby guided him and took the time to help him learn the ropes. He was a great mentor for many young Technicians in Training coming through the system at that time. Later, Alby moved out of the city and/Senior Technician at the start of the Crossbar era in the early sixties, was promoted to Acting/Senior Technician. He was involved in MEI-2 equipment installations at Revesby, Lakemba, Peakhurst, Hurstville, Blakehurst, and Kingsgrove exchanges.

He also joined the specialist team under Roy Power, sent to help complete the new REG/ELP-H4 installation at Holbrook in 1969/70, which had fallen behind schedule. Alby returned to Sydney in 1971 after the Holbrook cutover and was stationed in the Sutherland Shire doing Exchange Installations at Miranda, Sutherland, Cronulla, and Kurnell. He also helped install ARE-11 equipment at the new Menai exchange during 1976-77. He stayed around the Sutherland Shire until he retired from Telecom/Telstra in 1992.

Alby was instrumental in bringing together a group of technicians for camping trips to Sofala, a former gold town. We camped by the Turon River and really roughed it on four-day weekends during March and November for almost 15 years. It was probably the best way to build team spirit amongst the technicians, and Alby was right in the thick of it.

Many of the technicians have passed away, including Jim Phair, Peter Taylor, Greg Gifford, Neville Green, Frank Thompson, Bob Warren, Bill Bryant, Dave Briggs, and myself. Until recently, Alby also attended the twice-yearly reunion at Engadine Hotel for Newtown/Sutherland mungoes and installers, organised by Ross Brinkworth and Cec Burgess. There are so many other stories of Alby's time in Telecom, too numerous to mention.

Alby suffered from rheumatoid arthritis from the early age of 37; it was something that he lived with for the rest of his life. It was sad to see him suffering, but he didn't complain and still joined in most social activities when we got together. He was very active in the API Social club and attended many functions organised by the committee.

Alby had a wonderful, dry sense of humour and was always telling jokes. Many were repeats, but you couldn't help but laugh each time he recited them, watching his facial expressions and antics as he told them.

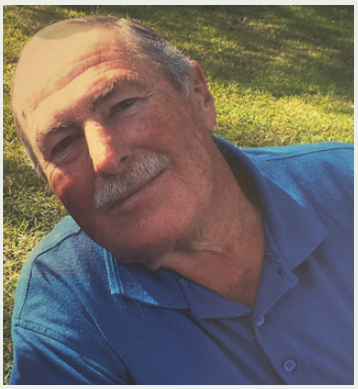
In the last 5 or 6 years, he was mostly confined to his home as his arthritis became more debilitating. He had a fall recently and was taken to Sutherland Hospital and eventually was admitted to a Bupa nursing facility and passed away on 22nd August 2026.

Alby was a great mate to all, and his passing has ended an era of characters we will never see again. He was such a laconic, laid-back, genuinely good bloke, and will be sorely missed by everyone.

Alby, thanks for all the good times and wonderful memories,

R.I.P. mate
Les Giblett

The Retired Telecommunications Employees Association thanks Les for his personal tribute to Alby and extends its condolences and sympathy to Alby's wife, Gwen; children, Michelle, Sharon, and David; and his former workmates.



Retired Telecommunications Employees Association

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

12 PM - Thursday - 19TH November 2026

PETERSHAM RSL

Our Christmas lunch at the Petersham RSL offers an excellent opportunity to catch up with fellow members while enjoying a delicious three-course lunch. There will also be lucky door prizes (bottle of wine)

$65 per person

Same price as the past two years

ENTREE:	*Tomato Brushetta, Garlic Prawns and an Arancini ball*
MAINS:	*Choice of either Roast Pork or Barramundi (tell us on the link with this notice)*
DESSERT:	*Christmas Pudding and Custard*

PAYMENT

You can pay via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). When using EFT, please type your surname in the details. If EFT is unavailable to you, please pay at our next General Meeting to Alan Bassman.

Great Southern Bank
BSB 814-282 **eSaver Account No: 10642769**

INTRODUCE A NEW MEMBER

We are making it easier for you introduce a former workmate as a new member of our Association.

Simply email the newsletter to them, direct them to this page of the newsletter and to click on the link below. The link will open a PDF file that has membership application. They can type their application and form is easy to complete.

There is a SUBMIT APPLICATION button on the bottom left of the application form that will email their application to the Association.

Alternatively, print them the application inside that is inside of this newsletter for them to complete by hand.

John Faulkner
Special Guest Speaker

November 2026 General Meeting
Thursday, 26th November 2026

Former Senator John Faulkner has released "Fishy Business", a book exploring the Sydney Fish Market, the world's third-largest fish market.

For coastal Aboriginal people, fishing and shellfishing were not only a way of life but also formed the foundation of the region's culture. This influence was to continue after the arrival of early European colonists.

John Faulkner brings to life the history of the Sydney Fish Market: its colourful personalities, intrigue, and the remarkable journeys of hardworking families from Europe, Asia, and beyond.

Drawing on his deep personal connections, John Faulkner offers a personal perspective on the vibrant history and community of the Fish Market in "Fishy Business".