

WESTERN AUSTRALIA SELF FUNDED RETIREES INC.

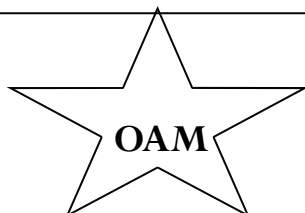
State and Federal Advocates for Fully and Partly Self Funded Retirees



WASFR NEWS

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

SUMMER 2017



HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS
TO PRESIDENT RON DE GRUCHY
ON OBTAINING
THE MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA
IN THE AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS.
THE CITATION READS:
“SERVICE TO SUPERANNUATION INDUSTRY,
SENIORS AND CITY OF JOONDALUP”

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I guess it is fair to say that a number of events have occurred throughout the world since we last went to print. The UK voting to leave the EU, Donald Trump becoming President of the USA and the return of the Turnbull government 6 months ago are probably the highlights. In this country, the changes that took place on 1 January 2017 relating to the Age Pension Assets Test are still drawing criticism from many sources. The latest news is about another suggestion that the family home should be included in the Assets Test! This is not new. Over the years, several different 'think tanks' have said that it is unacceptable that retirees, living in million dollar mansions should be entitled to a part Age Pension. I wonder just how many retirees are actually in that position. On one hand, some people would agree that being in receipt of a part Age Pension and living in a \$3 million house seems wrong. Maybe it is. The fact that the pensioner has worked all his/her life, paid taxes, but only has a relatively small amount of cash/other assets, should also be taken into account. The family home could be one inherited from parents, could be quite old, yet the value has risen purely due to the passage of time. These people could well be 'asset rich' but 'income poor'. Possibly, there might be a sentimental attachment involved. There is also the matter of forcing someone to move from familiar surroundings to a new location in their declining years.

The fact is that it is extremely doubtful that any government or opposition would publicly countenance going down such a path—political suicide!

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT *(Continued from Page 1)*

Having said that, we all should be on guard in case some organisations (no names) decide to get some publicity and start supporting inclusion of the family home over a set limit, in the Assets Test.

Earlier, we said that we were experiencing difficulty in getting in to speak with federal politicians. It did seem that word had been sent from Canberra that they should avoid speaking to the public. Requests for interviews were continually being fobbed off, and we were beginning to consider taking some action in order to let the general public know that their politicians were hiding behind closed doors. Fortunately those doors have now opened up somewhat, and we have been successful in talking to Julie Bishop's CEO, Mathias Cormann's CEO, Ken Wyatt, Christian Porter, Dean Smith, Ian Goodenough, Anne Aly and a member of Senator Michaelia Cash's office who did not seem to be very interested in items under discussion. Apart from that meeting every other interview went quite well.

The interview with Christian Porter covered a lot of ground even though time was cut short. Of particular interest was the matter of deeming rates (not changed for 18 months even though the Reserve Bank Cash Rate had been reduced three times during that period). Mr Porter went to some pains to attempt to justify his decision not to change the rates, and also commented that his own parents had suggested to him that the rate be lowered. We discussed the government's backflip on deciding NOT to abolish the work test for those aged between 65 and 74 (which was originally announced in the May Budget), but, apart from saving money, Mr Porter could not come up with a valid reason for going back on a decision made only months earlier.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, we continue to campaign for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme threshold limits, problems with Aged Care, indexation of Comsuper pensions, fairness with the NDIS scheme, allowing those over 75 to contribute to superannuation and abolition of the work test.

Some of you may be aware, but for those who are not, WASFR has joined forces with the Superannuated Commonwealth Officers' Association (WA) Inc (SCOAWA) in lodging a joint Federal Pre-Budget Submission. The theory behind this move is that a submission from more than one organisation should carry a bit more clout with the politicians. As the objectives of SCOAWA are similar to ours, it was quite easy to come up with a list of issues common to both. The executive summary of this submission is on Page 3. This document has been distributed to several federal politicians, including Treasury.

Let's see what happens now!

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YOUR COMMITTEE**President:**

Ron de Gruchy OAM: Ph. 9447.1313

Vice-President

Position vacant

Secretary:

Sharon Goodchild

Treasurer and Editor:

Margaret Harris: Ph. 9381.5303

Committee:

Colin Atkinson

Rahima Bannerman

Joe McPhail

Ian Moller

Vera Payne (Membership and Speaker
Liaison)

Rosemary Stevenson

Meetings:

Meetings start at 10.00 am and are held at Cambridge Bowling Club, Floreat Sporting Precinct, Floreat on the Second Friday of each month excluding December and January.

WASFR NEWS

Material for inclusion in the Newsletter should be sent to:

Address:

Margaret Harris

201 Bagot Road, Subiaco, 6008

Phone: 9381.5303

Email: marg39201@optusnet.com.au

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Continued from Page 2)

COTA is holding a Seniors' Forum on 7 February where seniors/retirees are invited to highlight issues of concern prior to the March State election. Several of your Committee members will be attending and it will be interesting to see the outcome of this meeting. As we all know this State does not have any spare funds to spend on additional concessions for seniors/retirees. Nevertheless, this is an election year and it is expected that both parties will do whatever seems necessary to win government. Unfortunately, promises made before an election can often be found 'impossible' to implement once that party is in power. So, what else is new?

We are fortunate in having a very energetic, competent, hard-working Mrs Payne to organise the guest speakers for our monthly meetings. This month it is Professor Lyn Beazley who is to talk about "My Life in Science", and it will be followed in March by Linda Bettenay who is said to be a most interesting speaker. As always, we are keen to have your thoughts on the topics chosen, so please feel free to offer any suggestions you may have for future speakers.

Finally, I should bring to your attention the booklet titled *2017 Age Pension Guide* that is available on line (24 pages) (Google 2017 Age Pension Guide and you will find it). Unfortunately, it is not available as a hard copy from your local Federal Member's office, but if you ask them to print one out for you then I feel certain that they will oblige.

Looking forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings.

Ron de Gruchy
February 2017

**VALE**

It is with sadness that, since our last newsletter, we must report the death of three of our members:

Mrs Heather Yeatman
Mr Robert Smyth
Mr Roy Liversage

Sincere condolences to their families.

SUMMARY OF JOINT FEDERAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION PREPARED BY WASFR AND SCOAWA**Recommendation 1:**

That all Commonwealth superannuation pensions be indexed consistently using the same formula as is used to adjust the Centrelink Age Pension.

Recommendation 2:

That the Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Safety Net thresholds for single retirees be restructured so that access for them becomes available at 65% of the levels applicable to couples/families,

Recommendation 3:

That retirees be enabled to transfer funds into superannuation at the prescribed contribution levels, without having to meet any 'work test'.

Recommendation 4:

That retirees be enabled to transfer funds into superannuation at the prescribed contribution levels irrespective of age.

Recommendation 5:

That the deeming rates be reduced to 1% up to the levels of \$49,200 and \$81,600 with 2% for the remainder.

Recommendation 6:

That the components of a retiree's income derived from an untaxed superannuation scheme and from other sources be assessed separately for taxation purposes as is the case with a retiree who derives an income from a taxed superannuation scheme.

Recommendation 7:

That the interest rate of 5.76% currently being charged for the non-payment of a Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD) be reviewed with the intention of bringing it more into line with either the Reserve Bank's Cash Rate or the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Recommendation 8:

That consideration be given to widening the scope of the NDIS/Disability Care Australia parameters so as to include all Australian citizens, including those over the age of 65 years.

GUEST SPEAKERS

8 JULY 2016 CLARE TAYLOR: CONTINENCE ADVISORY SERVICE OF W.A.

The silence, during which yet again that proverbial pin could have been heard to drop was testament to the level of respectful interest in the very personal subject of bladder and bowel continence, delivered in the quiet, authoritative tones of Clare Taylor, who so obviously knows thereof she speaks.

The record number of visitors attending was perhaps not surprising since 4.8 million Australians have bladder or bowel (or both) problems; 1 in 3 ladies and 1 in 8 men (but the gap is narrowing) and that's only what is reported. GPs say that 65% of people have some trouble with accidental or involuntary loss of urine, faeces or gas.

Myths:

- 1) Nothing can be done. In 70% of cases, it can, and quite simply.
- 2) If I drink less, I will pee less. In fact, the more concentrated the urine, the more irritated the bladder; it is vital to drink enough fluid.

Who is most vulnerable? Women who have had babies (childbirth stretches the pelvic floor to twice its normal size), men over 50 (usually the prostate is the cause), and overweight people.

What are the warning signs?

Bladder: Feeling urgency after a cough, sneeze, laugh or bounce. Frequency: anything less than 2 hours between is not "normal", neither is going more than twice a night (nocturia). For older men, a common problem is difficulty starting the stream, or stop-starting.

Bowel: Ongoing constipation, straining, soiling; none of these is "normal" and the culprit is probably too highly processed a diet.

Good habits:

- 1) It used to be gospel that we should drink 2 litres of water daily. Not correct, but 2 litres of fluid in total, yes, and about half should be water.
- 2) Coffee is a bladder irritant; 6 or 7 cups of coffee a day will produce much urgency.

- 3) High sugar drinks have the same effect; in fact because of *Red Bull* and similar high energy drinks, even teenagers today have bladder problems.
- 4) Remember when we were little and were taught to, "Go, just in case..." before setting off somewhere? This instilled a bad habit because if the bladder has only, say, 100 ml in it instead of 400 ml, it gets used to this amount and sends us off every time it is only partially full.
- 5) Take time to empty the bladder properly; otherwise, infection can set in.
- 6) Don't hover over the seat, sit *on* it so that the pelvic muscles are properly relaxed for the job.

Normal bladder function: There is a constant drip from the kidneys into the bladder, which, when half full, sends a message to the brain, "I'm about 1/2 full", followed by "I'm now 2/3 full" and about 20-30 mins later an urgent "NOW!" Going once a night is "normal". As we age the muscles are not as strong and the kidneys are not as efficient, so after age 60, 6-8 times a day and up to twice a night is considered OK.

Urinary tract infections can be nasty, the biggest cause being dehydration. Others include soap, incontinence pads, toilet paper, incorrect wiping (carefully front to back, especially girls), synthetic fabric and/or tight fitting underwear, and baths instead of showers. In men, incomplete emptying caused by a prostate problem is a frequent cause of infection.

Bowel incontinence can cause infection, especially in women. Stress leakage from the bowel occurs due to stress on the pelvic floor during a cough, sneeze, laugh or heavy lifting, or to straining because of constipation. Other causes include nerve damage, back or spinal cord injury, a stroke, hormone deficiency (the pelvic floor muscles rely on oestrogen to keep them strong; post menopause there is insufficient), and obesity where too much weight pressure on the pelvic floor weakens it. A chronic smoker's cough, or asthma, can also trigger incontinence, as can a hysterectomy or prostate problems.

Management of bladder and bowel incontinence:

- 1) Get a proper assessment, including an ultrasound.
- 2) Do pelvic floor exercises 3 times a day for 6-12 weeks. (But why stop there?)

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CLARE TAYLOR: CONTINENCE ADVISORY SERVICE OF W.A. (Cont.)

- 3) Keep to a healthy weight.
- 4) And a healthy diet.

Go to a specialist for help if none of the above works.

Pelvic Floor Exercises - for men as well as women, can be done while sitting, lying, talking, walking. Squeeze and draw in the muscles around the back passage (and for women the vagina at the same time). Lift UP and feel the lift as you squeeze the pelvic-floor muscles tight. Try to hold them strong and tight as you count up to 8. Let go and relax. Repeat squeeze and lift and let go; rest for about 8 seconds in between each lift. Do 3 sets of 8-12 squeezes, with a rest in between. Breathe normally, no holding the breath. Do these exercises regularly whether there are problems or not.

Prolapse of bowel or bladder occurs when the pelvic floor muscles, which act like a firm sling, are weak or saggy, or the fascia and ligaments (the support tissue) are weak or damaged. The pelvic organs drop down, putting pressure on the bladder. In women, a specialist can surgically insert a pessary, a rubber ring device, into the vagina to keep the organs in place. It doesn't fix the prolapse but does reduce the symptoms. The pelvic-floor exercises must still be done. In the worst case scenario, further surgery is necessary - and still those exercises must continue.

"Urgency" or the overactive bladder: there are some situations which seem to prompt the need to rush to the loo, e.g. when you are nearly home - perhaps cruising into your driveway, or hear running water, or put the kettle on... sound familiar? Diabetic and other medications can cause urgency, as can prostate problems, dementia, and neurological problems like MS and Parkinson's. Repeat: do not "go, just in case..." as this habit will increase urgency.

Management:

- 1) Drink MORE water.
- 2) Do the pelvic floor exercise.
- 3) Defer – go for a walk (but not near water). Some exercises might help this deferring: a) curl up toes till the urge goes, b) press finger into base of nose, c) put pressure on inside of thumb.

Other bladder problems:

- 1) Problem voiding, probably caused by enlarged prostate. Do not ignore this symptom; you could end up in hospital with a catheter your only means of relief.
- 2) Neurogenic bladder, caused by certain conditions like diabetes which can damage nerves.
- 3) Enlarged prostate, where the urethra is small and the channel needs opening up. An enlarged prostate will not cause cancer, nor vice versa.
- 4) Fluid retention can cause more than twice a night urgency. Puffiness in the ankles, feet, is quite common. Lie or sit down with the legs up to drain the fluid back. Clare suggested doing this about 3-4p.m. Furosemide (once called Frusemide) or Lasix (same thing) can help; take it in the morning or at lunch time, not later. Cut back on caffeine and alcohol before bed – both are irritants to the bladder.

Good bowel habits:

- 1) The perfect poo position is knees higher than hips (nature intended us to squat), unless you have had a hip replacement.
- 2) Diet should include lots of whole grains, fruit and vegetables.
- 3) Don't ignore the brain's message to the rectum urging evacuation; the stool can move up into the intestine again, causing it to become hard as it sits there.
- 4) Frequency? 3 times a day is normal, as is 3 times a week. The stool should be soft and easy to pass – no pain, no strain. The process should take about 40 seconds – no sitting and reading on the loo! The bowel should feel completely empty. Have a look at the result: smooth like a sausage or snake and pointy at the end? Perfect.

Bowel problems: the main causes of which are too much processed food, alcohol, long term straining, pelvic-floor weakening, long term use of laxatives, bowel diseases, some types of surgery, chemo- and radiotherapy, Parkinson's and other nerve diseases.

- 1) Diarrhoea and urgency.
- 2) Faeces leakage.

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CLARE TAYLOR: CONTINENCE ADVISORY SERVICE OF W.A. (Cont.)

- 3) Constipation is when evacuation is less than 3 times a week. The causes are not enough water and not enough fibre. Soluble fibre comes from fruit, vegies and grains, while insoluble fibre comes from the skin on stone-fruit, and from corn. Deferring the urge will result in a hard stool. Lack of exercise is a factor as are medications like Codeine and some antidepressants.
- 4) Inflamed bowel conditions such as Diverticulitis, Crohn's Disease, Irritable Bowel Syndrome. If there is a sudden change of bowel habits, consult your GP.

Management:

- 1) Drink more water.
- 2) Eat more fibre. Bulk the stool with extra fluid and extra fibre. If the stools are too loose, eat white foods – bananas, cheese, white rice, white bread, fruit minus the skin.
- 3) Walk! And exercise generally.

Question: Can I eat chocolate? As much as you like but remember that too much can cause diarrhoea.

Contacts for the Continence Advisory Service of WA:

Web: www.continencewa.org.au,

Telephone: 9386 9777,

Email: info@continencewa.org.au .

Excellent pamphlets, such as those tabled after Clare's talk, are available.

An outstanding presentation on a subject not often shared. (Have you been squeezing those muscles?)

Vera Payne



12 AUGUST 2016: GORDON HUDSON, WHEELCHAIRS FOR KIDS

President Ron introduced our guest speaker for the day, Gordon Hudson, an amazing volunteer who with other equally amazing volunteers, make up the charity known as Wheelchairs for Kids.

This charity was started by the Rotary Club of Scarborough in 1998, with the support of the Christian Brothers, and currently a group of around 150 retiree volunteers are making 400 wheelchairs a month in a workshop in Wangara and distributing them to disabled children in impoverished countries around the world. Since 1998 roughly 35,000 wheelchairs have been sent to countries as far afield as Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Nigeria, and, closer to home, to Vietnam, Indonesia, China and Papua New Guinea, to name just a few.

Gordon asked us to imagine what a difference a functional wheelchair would make to a disabled child in one of these countries; the chance to go to school, get an education, and perhaps get a job.

The wheelchairs have been developed and improved over the years from the very simple model in 1998 to the latest model which can be adjusted to suit the needs of individual children as they grow. The chairs must be robust as most of them will have to negotiate rough terrain. Gordon brought to the meeting one of the latest models. It had puncture-proof tyres, a head-rest, safety straps, a cushion and a tray, and was brightly painted in primary colours. In addition, Gordon said, ladies around Australia knit a toy and a rug to accompany each chair. And one of these chairs can be provided for a donation of as little as \$100. This is possible because all labour and administration is voluntary, materials are supplied at a discount, some even free, Toll Transport provides transport to all Australian ports free of charge, and distribution and costs are paid by Rotary Clubs around Australia and overseas.

After Gordon's talk and viewing a quite emotional video, President Ron, after a quick consultation with Committee members, broke with tradition and WASFR donated \$200 to Wheelchairs for Kids. If any members wish to make a donation cheques can be sent to, and would be gratefully received by:

Wheelchairs for Kids,

PO Box 1175, Wangara 6947.

All donations are tax deductible.



9 SEPTEMBER 2016: RACHEL YOUNG, YOUNG CHIROPRACTIC.

Today's guest speaker was the charming Dr Rachel Young, the principal of Young Chiropractic, who came along with her assistant Nicole.

Rachel said Chiropractics is a five-year full-time university course. She was an undergraduate in Science at Curtin University and then completed her five-year course at a University in Iowa in the USA. She has spent 20 years in her chosen profession.

Chiropractic studies involve many of the same courses undertaken by doctors and physiotherapists, but the main focus of chiropractors is the spine. Rachel has a post-graduate degree in both pediatric and adult chiropractics.

It is well known that the population is living longer, but are we any healthier? Rachel posed this question, citing aspects of our lives that do not improve our health—we are generally not as active as our parents and grandparents—we tend to sit more with our computers and phones and this is not good for us. And it is common for older people to be told and to believe that our aches and pains are all just part of getting old. Not so!

Our bodies are amazing in that they are designed to heal from the inside. It has become too easy to, say, reach for the Panadol when we have a headache, rather than ask ourselves what is causing the headache. It is common to treat symptoms rather than listen to what our bodies are trying to tell us.

Here, our charming Rachel indicated that her presence at our meeting would involve audience participation. Her theory was, if she just stood and talked to us we would remember only about 10% of what she said, BUT if we participated we would retain about 90%.

An alarming statistic: one in three of us over 65 will have a serious fall. While this can be devastating for the individual and family, there is also a huge cost to the community of about \$100 million annually. Rachel said one of the keys to staying upright and not becoming a fall statistic is BALANCE.

The reason balance is so important is that we have this amazing communication with our brain and nervous system that helps coordinate our muscles and joints with feedback to our brain to tell us where we are in space so that we do not fall over.

There are three main areas affecting our balance:

1. Our vision.
2. Our inner ear.
3. Our inner spatial orientation.

If any one of these systems is damaged, we may experience dizziness or loss of balance.

The brain uses the visual system to help orientate us in our surroundings. The vestibular system detects both circular motion and movement in a straight line, including actions such as stopping, starting or turning. The sensory system keeps track of the movement and tension of our muscles and joints. It also monitors the position of our body with respect to the ground. The brain receives signals from all these systems and processes the information to produce a sensation of stability.

The brain is connected to the rest of the body via the spine. Together the brain and spinal cord make up the central nervous system. Nerve impulses from the brain travel along the spinal cord and control the activities of the body such as the movement of arms and legs, touch and temperature, and the function of other organs.

Now we were familiar with the functions of the brain and spine, Rachel brought audience participation into play and we were asked to test our BALANCE.

- Stand up without using our hands for leverage, then sit again;
- Stand and lift one leg and hold the pose as long as you can, with or without using the back of a chair for balance;
- Do the same exercise with your eyes closed; it was surprising how difficult this was.

These are very good, simple exercises to help maintain our balance.

Continued Page 8

RACHEL YOUNG, YOUNG CHIROPRACTIC. (Cont.)

And then to check your POSTURE:

- Pick a partner and turn him (or her) around to look at his back:
 - Are his ears aligned?
 - Look at his shoulders. Is one higher than the other?
- Turn him so you are looking at his side:
 - Is his ear lobe in line with his shoulder?

Next came Rachel's tests to help us improve and balance and posture:

- Sit in seat with legs in front; with your hands check to see if there is a curve in your lower back?
- Now cross legs at the knees; notice the difference?
- Now cross legs at the ankles; notice the difference again?
- Sit and slouch. Take a deep breath in, and then out. Now sit up straight and take a deep breath in, and then out. Notice how much better we breathe when sitting up straight?

In everyday life, when out shopping, walking, doing the housework, driving the car, think about your POSTURE and you will breathe much better. Slouching decreases your oxygen supply.

Now, exercises in spinal MOBILITY. The spine has little senses in joints to show where we are in our space:

- Standing, bend forward as far as possible with knees straight;
- Return to vertical. Bend knees and then lean back as far as you comfortably can.
- Run right arm down right leg as far as possible; then the same down the left side with the left arm.
- Now the neck: Place your chin on your chest and then slowly raise and bend backwards as far as possible.
- Then try to lower your right ear to your right shoulder; then again on the left hand side.

These are all simple exercises we can all do at odd times during the day. The less we move the more arthritic we become.

And finally, EXERCISE. It is well known that regular exercise every day helps to keep our brain cells active, and therefore keep the dreaded dementia at bay.

Rachel said that if we do not take our bodies through its full range of motions every day we will have poor core strength. Core strength is what supports our spine and helps with balance. Improving core strength was once commonly known as 'sit-ups'.

More simple exercises:

- Stand on toes; repeat 10 times.
- While still sitting, squeeze leg muscles; Repeat a number of times
- Squatting. Keeping back straight, squat as low as you can. Stand and repeat.

In concluding her informative and entertaining talk Rachel once again stressed the importance of keeping ourselves healthy and active through simple exercises involving the whole body. It is never too late to start: "The future depends on what we do in the present".

Rachel offered everyone present who wished to take up her offer, a complimentary spine assessment. I know of a number of members who took up her offer. I trust they are feeling healthier!

Having experienced back problems in recent months, I enthusiastically sat and stood, twisted and rotated, and did all the exercises Rachel put us through. I feel better already!

Margaret Harris



RACHEL YOUNG'S MOTTO:

"Life is too short to always have clean fingernails"

14 OCTOBER 2016. PETER KENNEDY, JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR: “PREMIERS I HAVE KNOWN”

After President Ron’s introduction, Peter, the consummate journalist, sailed right into his subject.

After he retired from the ABC in 2010 he was often asked to write a book of his experiences interviewing and reporting on interesting personages. After thinking about it for some time, the book came to fruition in 2014. It is called “*Tales from Boom Town: Western Australian Premiers from Brand to Barnett*”.

Eleven Premiers, 10 men and 1 woman, have led the State since the mining boom took hold. Six attended government schools, five were educated in private schools—3 Catholic and 2 from Hale School. Six were from the Labor side and 5 were Liberals. Three of the first four Premiers were ex-servicemen, all serving overseas. Two Premiers have served jail terms.

To test our knowledge of our Premiers, Peter asked us 6 questions:

1. Who was our longest serving Premier?
2. How long did he serve?
3. Who was the longest serving Member of Parliament in WA?
4. Who served as Premier longer—Charles Court or Richard Court?
5. Brian Burke became Premier in 1983. How old was he?
6. One Premier played football for East Perth. Who was he?

There were some clever members in the audience who knew all the answers, which were:

1. David Brand
2. Four terms of three years each
3. John Tonkin: 1933—1977
4. Richard Court (8 years); his father (7 years 10 months)
5. 35
6. Ray O’Connor

Peter then went on to reminisce about each Premier in turn.

He said when he was a young lad Menzies was the Prime Minister and David Brand was the Premier. All was well with the world.

David Brand: Came from a Geraldton farming family. He left school at the end of Grade 7. He would have liked to have gone to High School but his parents couldn’t afford it. He was also a Methodist lay preacher. He was seriously injured in Greece in WWII and was evacuated to Egypt. After returning home he married and became the grocer in Dongara.

Shortly after the Liberal Party was formed in 1944 David Brand, in a by-election in 1945, became the Member for Greenough. He rose quickly up the political ladder and in 1950 became Minister for Works, Water Supply and Housing. In 1952, he helped secure an agreement with Anglo-Iranian Oil for the establishment of a refinery at the new Kwinana industrial area. He revealed later that he regarded this as the greatest achievement of his career.

The coalition was defeated in 1953 by Labor and after the retirement of Sir Ross McLarty in 1957 David Brand became Leader of the Opposition. The coalition retained government in 1959 and Brand was sworn in as Premier. David Brand presided over one of the most exciting periods of development in WA history. In 1960 the federal government lifted its embargo on the export of iron ore, enabling exploitation of large deposits in the Pilbara and the development of a major export industry. During this period bauxite was mined in the Darling Range and processed at Western Mining’s nickel refinery at Kwinana, the Ord Dam was constructed, as was the east-west standard gauge railway. And oil and gas deposits were discovered in commercial quantities. In 1969 he became Sir David Brand.

Of course he made mistakes, one leading to the downfall of his Liberal government being the proposed demolition of the old Pensioner Barracks. As we know, the wings were subsequently demolished and only the arch retained. He did not read very well the will of the people.

The Liberals lost government in 1971, but only by one seat!

David Brand was Premier for 11 years, 11 months and 1 day—a State record—yet to be broken.

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PETER KENNEDY, “PREMIERS I HAVE KNOWN” Cont.

Our next Premier was Labor’s **John Tonkin**. He was WA’s longest serving member of parliament—an amazing 44 years from 1933 to 1977.

John Tonkin was born in Boulder in 1902. He attended Boulder Central School and Eastern Goldfields High School. He became a teacher and taught in several country WA schools.

In 1933 he was elected to the seat of North-East Fremantle. As part of a redistribution in 1950 his seat was abolished. He ran for the newly formed seat of Melville, which he won.

From 1943 to 1947 he was Minister for Education. He became Deputy Premier in 1953 as part of the cabinet of Albert (Bert) Hawke. He remained Minister for Education, as well as Minister for Works and Water Supplies.

After Labor lost the 1959, 1962 and 1965 elections, John Tonkin was elected Leader of the Opposition in 1967. Labor again lost the 1968 election but gained power in 1971, defeating the coalition under David Brand. However, his position was shaky; he had to contend with a Legislative Council where Labor was hugely out-numbered. He was also not helped by the unpopularity of the Whitlam federal government.

Labor lost the 1974 election to the Liberal/Country alliance led by Charles Court. He retired from parliament in 1976.

Having lost his first wife and daughter to cancer, he campaigned for many years for radio-wave therapy treatments for cancer sufferers, and he set up a clinic at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. At the time he became Premier and married his second wife in the early 1970s he was renowned for his tireless support of the Tronado anti-cancer machine.

His one term in the ‘top job’ does not reflect the esteem in which he was held. Popularly known as “Honest John” or “Super-Tonk” he is remembered today by the Tonkin Highway and Mandurah’s John Tonkin College, named to “honour a Western Australian leader in education”. In the Queen’s Birthday Honours in 1977 John Tonkin was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC).

Peter moved on to the next Premier, probably the most recognisable and high profile Premier in recent times, **Charles Court**.

Charles Court was born in England and immigrated to Australia with his family when he was only six months old. He went to primary school in Leederville and then to Perth Boys School. He aspired to study law at university, but, like David Brand, his parents couldn’t afford it. His father was a plumber. He went on to study accountancy at night school. In 1933 he went into his own practice where he remained a partner until 1970.

He enlisted in the Australian Army in 1940. He rose through the ranks and was posted to New Guinea in 1945. He was awarded an OBE for his service in maintaining and coordinating communication and supply lines in the outer islands.

In 1946 he joined the Liberal Party and in 1953 won the seat of Nedlands which he held for 29 years. He was a member of the opposition until 1959 when David Brand became Premier. The Liberal government was defeated in 1971; David Brand retired in 1972 and Charles Court became leader of the party. John Tonkin’s Labor government was defeated in 1974 and Charles Court became Premier.

He was the Minister for Industrial Development in the Brand government. He was the architect of a number of important development initiatives in the iron ore industry, paving the way for the mining boom. In his term as Premier he continued these initiatives, promoting mining in the Pilbara and gas exploration and development on the North West Shelf.

He was an opponent of aboriginal land rights, playing a central role in the infamous Noonkanbah land rights dispute.

In 1976 he controversially attempted to close the Tresillian Centre for mentally ill children in his electorate of Nedlands. This prompted a public outcry and he eventually backed down. However, the centre was later closed.

He demonstrated a commitment to arts and culture, overseeing the inauguration of Murdoch University, the restoration of His Majesty’s Theatre and the opening of the Art Gallery of WA.

Continued Page 11

PETER KENNEDY, “PREMIERS I HAVE KNOWN” Cont.

About a decade after David Brand misread the will of the people over the Barracks fiasco, Charles Court made the same mistake when he closed the Perth-Fremantle railway line. He resigned in 1982 and was succeeded by Ray O'Connor as Premier and by his son Richard as member for Nedlands.

He is our most “honoured” Premier, receiving the OBE in 1947, Knight Bachelor (KB) in 1972, Knight of the Order of St Michael & St George (KCMG) in 1979 and Knight of the Order of Australia (AK) in 1982. So he must have done a lot of good.

Next came the two ‘bad boys’ of State politics. Both were sent to prison. To maintain the symmetry mentioned by Peter early in his talk, one was from each side of the political fence.

Ray O'Connor was Premier for just 13 months, was known as ‘the forgotten Premier, but he will be remembered more for his involvement in the WA Inc scandal than for his achievements whilst in parliament and on the sporting field. He played Aussie Rules for South Fremantle and East Perth in the WANFL.

Ray O'Connor was born in Perth and attended school in Narrogin and York and St Patrick's Boys' School in Perth

He joined the Liberal Party in 1957 and in 1959 he was elected MLA for North Perth. That seat was abolished and he became the member for Mount Lawley until 1984. He became Premier on the resignation of Charles Court in 1982. He was defeated in 1983 when Labor under Brian Burke came to power. More than 10 years later a Royal Commission into business dealings by the government was conducted. He was tried in 1995 on charges of stealing from the Bond Corporation and was given a six-month jail sentence.

Brian Burke was born in Perth, a son of Federal Labor parliamentarian Tom Burke. He was the first of the WA Premiers to attend University (UWA). In 1973 he became the member for Balcatta in a by-election which he won by only 30 votes. In 1981 he became Opposition leader and in 1983 he became one of the State's youngest Premiers at 36 years of age.

The Burke government is mostly remembered for its unfortunate business deals, but it should be remembered for its major achievements, the reopening of the Perth-Fremantle railway in 1983 and the abolishment of capital punishment in WA in 1984.

His Premiership was characterized by close associations with Laurie Connell and Alan Bond and arranging joint government and business deals. As a result of the 1987 stock market crash, major corporate collapses including merchant bank Rothwells unwound some of those deals which caused major losses to the State.

He resigned as Premier and from Parliament in 1988, and took up an appointment as Australia's ambassador to Ireland and the Vatican.

As a result of allegations of improper conduct during his time as Premier the WA Inc Royal Commission was established in 1991. Brian Burke was charged with various offences for which he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. He served 7 months in jail in 1994 for travel expense rorts, and in 1997 served six months of a three year sentence for stealing campaign donations.

He was succeeded by **Peter Dowding** who was born in Melbourne, the son of a Presbyterian minister. He was educated in Melbourne, Sydney, and at Hale School in Perth. He earned a Bachelor of Laws degree from UWA in 1964.

He was elected as a member of WA's Legislative Council for the Labor Party from 1979 to 1986, and in 1986 was elected as Member for Maylands in the Legislative Assembly. Having succeeded Brian Burke as Premier in 1988 during the time known as WA Inc he was involved in unravelling a number of business transactions such as the government's support of Rothwells. He led the ALP to its third consecutive victory in the 1989 election, but resigned (or was he pushed?) from the Premiership in 1990. He was succeeded by Carmen Lawrence.

Lack of space has defeated me in reporting this absolutely fascinating subject. I found this one of the most interesting talks I have recorded and to do Peter Kennedy justice I will conclude with the final Premiers interviewed by him, Carmen Lawrence, Richard Court, Geoff Gallop, Alan Carpenter and Colin Barnett, in the next edition of WASFR News.

Margaret Harris

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GUEST SPEAKERS

2017

10 Feb. Prof. Lyn Beazley: My Life in Science

10 March: Linda J Bettenay: Author

13 April: Eric McCrum: Papua New Guinea and the
Kokoda Trail (**Note change of date to THURSDAY because of Good Friday**)

12 May: Michelle Fyfe: Acting Deputy Commissioner
(Special Services) WA Police

9 June: Peter Ellery: Discovery and early develop-
ment of the Pilbara Iron Ore fields

It is our aim to present guest speakers whose topics
are pertinent to our members, i.e. people who are
ageing gracefully, keen on preserving or enhancing
their income and of quick wit and high intellect.

So, please let us know whom you would like to hear
or the topics which interest you most. And as many
of our members belong to more than one organisa-
tion it will be helpful if you can nominate a speaker
whom you have heard and whose presentation was
impressive and interesting, to a group such as ours.

Our Guest Speaker coordinator is Vera Payne and
Vera can be found at most meetings, but if she is not
present on the day that you plan nominating a speak-
er, any committee member will be happy to receive
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