

October 2019



# VicRoads Association

## Newsletter No.211



Membership of the Association is available to all who have been members of VicRoads or forerunner organisations or the spouse of deceased members and bestows on them all the rights of the Rules of Association. Current cost of membership is a once only fee of \$30 plus a joining fee of \$5. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary at 60 Denmark Street Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below.

Dear Members,

A major issue in the life of the current Parliament will be whether to conduct a referendum to address the rights of Australia's aboriginal people in our constitution. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was tabled during the Turnbull Government and was immediately rejected on the basis of it creating a third chamber in Parliament. I have read the statement – which I find moving – and I have reproduced it below, so that you can see what it says.

I can't see any reference in it to a third chamber but I will leave it to you to draw your own conclusions. The statement says:

"We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."

Isn't this an eloquent statement? It simply requests that indigenous views be taken into account in affairs of the state. For anyone unsympathetic to this, all I can say is put yourself in their place and imagine how you would feel if the roles were reversed. I see it as a first step towards equality of opportunity in this country of ours – including for our original peoples.

**David Jellie**  
President and Editor



## Dates for your diary

Our program for the remainder of 2019 is as follows. We will provide further details of visits in later newsletters and remind members of upcoming events via email notices. If you are not on our email list, and you have email, please let us know your address. If you do not have email and you would like to come along, please contact the Secretary.


### 2019

October	Monday 7	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Wednesday 9	6 pm	Drinks and dinner at Waverley RSL
	Monday 14	2 pm	Visit Melbourne Suburban Rail Loop
	Monday 28	9.45 am	Visit to North East Link Project
November	Monday 18	2.00 pm	Bus tour of the West Gate Tunnel Project
	Monday 25	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
December	Tuesday 4	12 noon	Christmas luncheon

### 2020

February	Monday 10	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
April	Friday 3	12 noon	Golf Day

Please note the change of date for the dinner at the Waverley RSL. It is now scheduled for Wednesday 9 October. Full details of forthcoming functions are provided below.



## What's coming up

### Occasional Lunch – Shoppingtown Hotel: Monday 25 November 2019

Bookings are not essential, but it would help with arrangements if you can let Kelvin York know on 9438 1028 if you can attend. We hope to see you there.

### Wake for VicRoads – Drinks and Dinner at Waverley RSL: Wednesday 9 October at 6 pm

We want to make this a special night so come armed with any memorabilia or stories you have about VicRoads or its predecessors. We want to give 'the Old Girl' a good send-off. We come to say goodbye and we won't see her again. It is not adieu – but goodbye. Please contact Ken Vickery on 0409 561 618 or [kenvickery@tpg.com.au](mailto:kenvickery@tpg.com.au) so that we can arrange for catering. It should be a great night.

### Visit to Melbourne Suburban Rail Loop – Monday 14 October at 1.45 pm for 2.00 pm

This was the visit that was deferred early in September. I included a generic description of the project in the last newsletter so I won't repeat it – but I have included the plan just to refresh your memory about the project.

We propose to meet at 1.45 pm at 121 Exhibition Street for a 2 pm start. Interested members should contact Jim Webber at [jimwebber@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jimwebber@optusnet.com.au) to confirm their attendance.

### Visit to North East Link Project – Monday 28 October at 9.45 am for 10.00 am

We propose to meet at 9.45 am at 121 Exhibition Street for a 10 am start and afterwards, head across the street to the hotel for lunch. Interested members should contact Jim Webber at [jimwebber@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jimwebber@optusnet.com.au) to confirm their attendance.

### Bus Tour of the West Gate Tunnel Project – Monday 18 November at 2.00 pm

We propose to take a bus tour that takes in everything happening across the project. The bus will depart at 2.00 pm outside 121 Exhibition Street and return two hours later. Senior engineers from the Authority will accompany us and describe the various aspects of the project as we drive around and stop off at the info centre. The size of the group will be limited to the bus size so we will allocate seats strictly in order of receipt.

We will meet outside 121 Exhibition Street say 10 to 15 minutes before the 2.00 pm departure so that we can board the bus and get away with a minimum of delay. Interested members should contact Jim Webber at [jimwebber@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jimwebber@optusnet.com.au) to confirm their attendance.

### Christmas lunch – Tuesday 4 December at 12 noon

We will provide details later but put the date in your diary now.

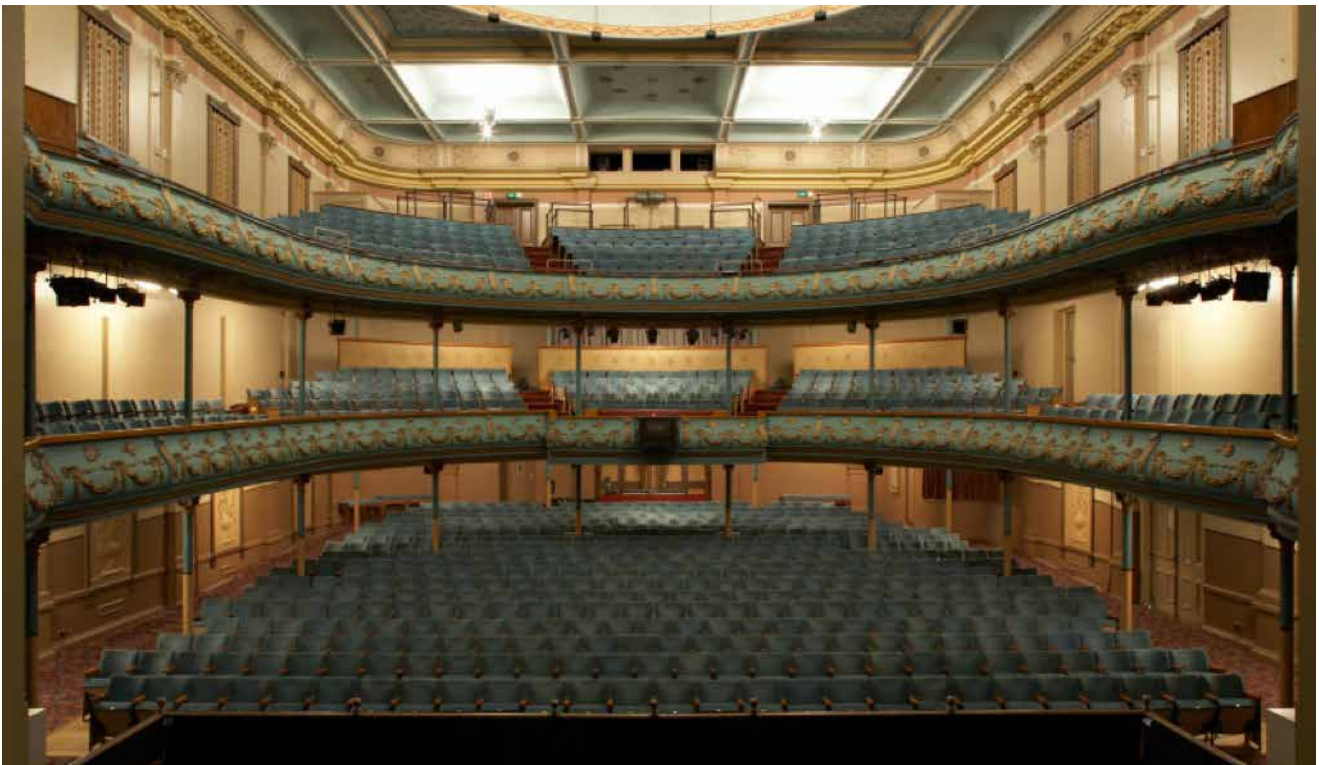


Conceptual layout of the Melbourne Suburban Rail Loop

# What's been happening

## Visit to Ballarat Regional Office

11 and 12 September



Looking out from the stage

This was the best attendance we have ever had to one of our regional visits. We had a total party of 26 people and eight locals joined us for dinner on the evening of the 11th. We are indebted to Geoff Lawrence for organizing such an interesting program and Carolyn Byrnes – the Personal Assistant to the Regional Director - who converted it all into reality, including wonderful morning tea and lunch.

We were given an overview of the road transport needs and issues in the region by Bradley Prior, the Acting Regional Manager. Road strategies were outlined for major towns in the region – Mildura, Bacchus Marsh, Horsham - as well as Ballarat's own growth needs. Farmers are now using bigger machines and transporting grain using larger trucks requiring improved freight links to Melbourne. Wind farm development is increasing as is tourism and the horticulture sector.

Ben Anderson and Damian Kelly provided a more detailed description about some of these projects as well as road safety initiatives in the region.

After lunch Steve Pattinson described the works proceeding along the Western Highway. He was quite open about answering our questions on the controversy surrounding the alignment of the southern section between Buangor and Ararat. He described the engagement with the local aboriginal community and the environmental considerations taken into account in selecting the approved route.

The approved alignment is the most environmentally and culturally respectful option that balances the needs of the community, with the need to improve safety for the 6,000 people who will use the road every day.

In February this year, VicRoads agreed to significantly alter the design of the project to avoid two trees identified by the Aboriginal community as being of significance. Additional design revisions made since will allow for a total of 15 trees which are of interest to members of the Aboriginal community to be retained.

That afternoon we also visited Her Majesty's Theatre to inspect the renovations that have been recently completed.



This theatre is the oldest continuously operating theatre in Australia. It first opened its doors in 1875 and has been used for live performances ever since. They were preparing for the opening of the Royal South Street competition. The attention to detail in restoration works was amazing and the seating was so comfortable, one of our party was seen to nod off – into a past world of theatre no doubt.

On Wednesday evening we joined with Ballarat office staff – retired and current – for dinner at a local pub.

On Thursday morning we visited the recently opened \$30 million Central Victoria Livestock Exchange at Miner's Rest. This is a huge complex with state-of-the-art design and management facilities providing comfort and ease of operation for both animals and buyers.

Water treatment ponds, resting paddocks, a roof over their heads, soft floors under their hooves, and automatic weighing and processing facilities means that the 1.6 million sheep and 70,000 head of cattle that move through the yard each year are cared for in the most comfortable conditions possible.



The intrepid travellers at the saleyards

We had morning tea at the Ballarat Mechanics Institute and then a tour of the facilities by local historian, Phil Roberts. Phil described to us the importance that the Institute and its buildings contributed to Ballarat's history and its continuing role today.



The Reading Room at the library.

He also took us to the Town Hall and other central Ballarat sites of historical importance and interest, after which we joined together in lunch before dispersing for home.

## News from regional roads Victoria

### Movement of Superload from Melbourne to Dundonnell

#### 11 and 12 September

From 10 pm Wednesday 7th August to 8 am Sunday 11th August, a 370 tonne superload travelled from the Wilson Transformer Company in Glen Waverley to Dundonnell in Western Victoria. The load travelled in stages across four days and nights to minimise disruptions. The load was a transformer being delivered to a wind farm.



The Superload

The transport vehicle weighed over 370 tonnes and was 82 metres long. It travelled at a speed of only 25km/h. At over five metres wide, it took up the entire width of some of the roads along which it travelled.

A management crew was on hand for the whole operation, making sure of road safety during and after the move. They assisted in manoeuvring around corners, temporarily removing signage and lights, placing steel supports over existing drainage and then putting everything back in place once the superload had passed through.

The route of the shift is shown below. The townships of Colac and Camperdown were bypassed because of difficulties in those road stretches.



## RRV participation in Broadening Horizons program

Broadening Horizons is an initiative that brings organisations and schools across Gippsland together to give secondary school students the chance to undertake a real-world learning project over the course of a school term and boost their education and employment aspirations.

Students from Traralgon College are a step closer to being the road experts of tomorrow after showcasing their safety initiatives to transport industry representatives as part of the Broadening Horizons program.

The year nine students presented their findings and recommendations on a range of road topics, including truck and motorcycle safety and licence testing for elderly drivers. The students worked with mentors from RRV and the Department of Transport to hone their skills and work on a transport-themed project.

It is the fifth year that RRV has worked in partnership with Traralgon College on the program. The program supports local youth and assists them in making decisions about post-secondary pathways. The program also helps in developing and inspiring a new generation of road experts.

The students presented their projects and RRV was very impressed with the thought, effort and innovation that went into it, with groups going as far as preparing a sample television commercial and a road model featuring safety barriers made from recycled tyres.



Traralgon College students Dylan and Jet with their mentor, Adam Lancaster and RRV's Regional Engagement Manager, Loris Dart.

## Public enquiry

I have had a request from Inverleigh Historical Society via VicRoads Media and other groups. They wish to know the history of these unusual picnic tables that are located on the Hamilton Highway at Inverleigh. The seats are wooden on concrete plinths. Can anyone shed any light on them?





# News from Major Road Projects Victoria

## Chandler Highway Bridge

The Chandler Highway Bridge opened to traffic in July. Drivers are now experiencing quicker journeys and less congestion with all major roadwork on the new six lane Chandler Highway bridge now complete.

This is an important milestone that will have enormous benefits for local road users and the broader road network.



## Hoddle Street Improvements

We all know how important the Hoddle Street and Punt Road corridor is to Melbourne. It the main north-south link to the east of the city and is Melbourne's busiest arterial road with 330,000 people travelling along and across it every day. Work started at the Punt Road intersections with Swan Street and Olympic Boulevard in October 2018 on building Victoria's first Continuous Flow Intersection (CFI). Pedestrian movements were also improved at Brunton Avenue and Punt Road.

The new CFI was introduced in March 2019 on Olympic Boulevard, with construction of a new twin-platform tram stop in late May marking the end of major works. Minor construction, landscaping and streetscaping works will continue until late 2019.



The Swan Street intersection before the CFI.



The Controlled Flow Intersection (CFI)

As many of you will know, John Cleeland has been advocating Controlled Flow Intersections for some considerable time. He has also written a book called *Crafting Green Waves and Aerial Podcar Warrants* for transport professionals. It covers replacing congestion with green waves, and solving transport problems with aerial podcars.

It involves metering traffic to remove congestion to enable a green wave to then travel at the speed limit. Minor traffic is staged across arterials.

It also describes processing right turns on the approaches to intersections, within the existing footprint, using a two-phase design, to increase intersection capacity by 70%, cut the crash rate by half, and greatly reduce delays.

Tolled queue jumping at restrictions for 90% of traffic will slash trip time, cut emissions by half, and is the best form of road pricing, supported by the normal delay for the 10% free entry queue.

This is all very futuristic stuff but John is offering a soft copy of his book free of charge to VicRoads Association members. If you would like a copy go to the Google Form at <https://forms.gle/6Nv6FtoHSYg31bmv6> and type in your email address.

## News from our members

### Laurie Jones

Laurie sent me a note as follows:

Hello David,

I was quite startled when I read the September issue of the Vicroads Association Newsletter, and learnt that VicRoads is no more. I'd already previously got the impression that some changes were afoot, particularly in the Melbourne area, but no-one invited me to the farewell function on June 26, and it didn't even rate a mention in Far North Queensland. No matter, it alarms me somewhat that I rarely see a name that I recognize in the Association's newsletter these days, and even when I do they are 'young chaps' like yourself.

No matter, I was interested to learn from you in the July issue, that you are a 'lexophile', so I imagine that you probably also appreciate 'PARAPROSDOKIANS' which my sister told me are 'Figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; and which is frequently used in a humorous situation.'

I thought I would share with you a few of these to remind you that I'm still alive – and which you could perhaps use later, if you're ever again stuck with a few words to fill an empty corner.

"Where there's a will, I want to be in it," is a type of paraproisdokian.

So are these:

1. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
2. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
3. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
4. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
5. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
6. Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
7. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research. "

I'll save the others for another time.

## John Wright's Odyssey (Continued)

## Life in Port Moresby

**We continue with John's story of life in Papua New Guinea. This is the penultimate instalment of this epic adventure.**

### Decimal currency

When Decimal currency was introduced in February 1966 (along with 10 o'clock closing in Victoria) the Australian Women's Weekly had a beautiful front page depicting the new currency. Up in the New Guinea Highlands, some enterprising locals cut out these pictures and managed to pass them across some business counters to native shop assistants unfamiliar with the new money.

Robert Menzies was the Prime Minister when decimal currency was proposed. He prided himself as being British to the bootstraps and was so besotted with the Queen and her family, he announced to all and sundry that the new currency should be called "Royals", not Dollars. It was the closest that I can remember Australia coming to having a revolution.

### Crime and other amusements

Port Moresby had a European population of about 5,000 and an indigenous population of about 25,000 – many of whom were unemployed. According to the mainland newspapers, the place was a hotbed of crime, women were being pack raped and most residents lived fearfully in barricaded citadels behind 'boi' wire. The reality was very different, although there were naturally some isolated cases of rape of European women and quite a lot of petty theft. Most of the bigger crimes, including murder, fraud and stealing from government bond stores were being perpetrated by expatriates.

### The Police and the Riot Squad

Not long after we arrived in Port Moresby we were warned by locals not to stop and render assistance if we were to hit a local or a local's vehicle while driving. We were told that, in the event that we actually hit a person, we should only stop long enough to disengage the body from the vehicle via judicious reversing, if necessary, and drive off quickly to the nearest police station.





Apparently, in the year before we arrived, an Australian woman was involved in a minor vehicle collision with a local's vehicle near Koki Market on a Saturday morning, when it was very busy there.

When she got out of her car to exchange details with the other driver, a hostile crowd of Papuans very quickly surrounded her. They were apparently being egged on by a drunken Papuan man standing on the tray of a nearby truck. An Australian man pulled up behind her and got out of his car to help the frightened woman. At this point, the growing crowd decided to ignore the woman and instead attack the man. The howling mob chased him up the road, armed with machetes and axes. He took refuge in Luk Poi Woi's trade store and locked himself in a rear toilet. The crowd surged in and started to batter down the toilet door using axes.

The Police had been called and had in turn summoned the Riot Squad, which had apparently never been called to serious action before. A big, navy-coloured truck with a canvas roof and sides pulled up outside the trade store. A large number of huge New Guinean squaddies bearing wicker shields and vicious-looking wooden clubs and gas grenades quickly emerged and formed up into a line. Their very pukka European commander stepped forward and quickly read the relevant passage from the local Riot Act to the crowd, who ignored them because they were too busy trying to get to the guy in the toilet.

An order was barked, and the squad moved forward through the crowd in a rigid line, smashing their clubs onto the shoulders of everyone they encountered (and breaking their collar bones in the process – far more effective than hitting them on the head and risking breaking their batons). After one murderous pass through the crowd it began to dawn on the surviving rioters that something really bad was about to happen to them, and they decamped in terror. Thereafter, when the riot squad arrived at any kind of potential disturbance, all rioting ceased immediately.

This fear was vividly illustrated one weekend when a British submarine moored at the Pier in the Harbour and announced that it would be open for tours by interested locals from 10 till 5 on Sunday. We thought we would pop down in our car and have a look. The long, wide pier out to the submarine was packed with indigenous folk and there was a further queue that extended for perhaps 100 metres along the foreshore. By mid-afternoon, the Brits had decided that they had allowed enough visitors on board (they were probably choking on the fumes of hundreds of persons using pig fat to pomade their hair, also). Anyway, the Navy quickly realised that some of the locals, who had been standing in the hot sun for hours were not happy about this turn of events and called the Police – who called the riot squad, which arrived just after we did.

I have often read the expression "...a ripple of fear ran through the crowd" but this was the first time I had ever witnessed it. There must have been about 400 locals on the pier when the Riot Squad arrived, and they had nowhere to escape to – other than jumping into the harbour. They just stood there in horrified silence, watching the squad form up. There was no riot.

### **Petty crime**

Our hausbois occasionally helped themselves to leftovers in the 'frig, which we didn't really mind, but we suspected that one of them, Telea (or 'Tea Leaf' as we privately called him) was actually stealing money from us. We decided to set a trap for him by placing two nice, shiny 50 cent pieces on the middle of a window ledge in our bedroom. Over the space of perhaps 4 days, the coins slowly inched their way across the sill towards the curtain. One day I came home for lunch and discovered that the coins, which had finally reached the curtains, had vanished. I called Telea and asked him if he had seen them. For a black man he nearly went white and quickly mumbled that he knew where to find them, somehow managing to transfer the coins from his pocket and magically 'locating' them in another part of the bedroom. I didn't say a word, but I know that Telea never pinched anything from us again.

One evening, Sylvia was in the shower and she heard a strange noise at the window. Somebody had poked a stick through the flywire and used it to open the wooden louvres so that he could see her naked. Slamming the louvres shut, she yelled out at about the same time as our dog 'Blackie' ferociously located and bit the voyeur, who departed screaming.

On another evening, we had just turned out the lights in our bedroom and were getting ready for sleep when we heard furtive footfalls around the side of the house. It must have been a different voyeur who didn't know about Blackie who, invisible in the darkness arrived and suddenly started biting our visitor, who was yelping in pain. The voyeur's big mistake was trying to escape via the high rock cutting behind our bedroom. For a while, he kept losing his grip and sliding down, and every time he did the dog would bite him again.

## The Airport

Because nothing much ever happened in Moresby, we would often drive out to the airport at weekends to see what was happening there. More often than not, there was:

The DC6B's in which we arrived in 1965 were phased out not long after in favour of Lockheed Electra prop-jets. However, I do remember seeing a DC6B that had arrived the previous night from Lae, being started up in the morning for the long flight back to Brisbane. They seemed to have a lot of trouble getting it going, and I was amazed at the loud backfiring that went on and the quantity of condensate and black smoke that was spewing out of the exhausts before the engines started to run properly. Mercifully, we were never to fly on one of these dinosaurs again.

## Vietnam war Hercules flights

New Zealand Air Force Hercules transports often staged through Port Moresby when moving troops to and from Vietnam. There was a marked difference between the flights from New Zealand and those returning from Vietnam. On the flights going to Vietnam all of the young troops would trot out of the aircraft and form into squads to run around the immediate perimeter of the airport and do push-ups while the aircraft was refuelled. They all looked fit and keen.

On the flights from Vietnam the troops would slowly file out of the aircraft and generally sit down on the tarmac with their heads in their hands. Their body language said that they were completely crushed, and they were not made to do anything.

## Australian Munition ship escorts

Every so often during the mid-1960s, an Australian Navy ship, HMAS Boonaroo would transport weapons, ammunition and other supplies to Vietnam to support our troops there. For the entire voyage, the ship would be shadowed during daylight hours by a group of about six Neptune bombers, which were temporarily based in Port Moresby and carrying out armed anti-submarine surveillance while the ship was in flying range. Each time, they would construct and guard a secure compound for all of their munitions. The aircraft looked immaculate and shone almost as if they had been polished. We could hear them taking off around dawn and they would stay out all day - only returning early in the evening.

## French aircraft

In 1966, the French ended their nuclear weapons testing program in Algeria and moved their testing facilities to Mururoa Atoll near Tahiti. As a result, a squadron of French Neptune bombers and their command aircraft, a DC6B, staged through Port Moresby on their way to Tahiti.

The word got out that all these sexy Frenchmen were coming and reportedly, every unattached woman in town turned up at the airport to see them arrive. Sylvia and I were there to see the Neptunes arrive, and they were the grottiest collection of aircraft we had ever seen. Originally painted black, the Algerian desert winds and grit had obviously sandblasted much of the paint off their leading surfaces. They did not compare well to the immaculate Australian Neptunes, which had only recently departed.

As the planes taxied to a stop, each crew emerged wearing berets with a distinctive, coloured pompom to identify them with their plane as they marched with a spring in their step to the terminal. Obviously, they were anticipating having a good time in the town that night. The command aircraft clearly carried the senior brass, who stepped out wearing smart uniforms with lots of gold braid and white peaked hats.

The French airmen were allowed one night only in the town and because of their country's continuation of nuclear testing, further flights were banned by Parliament from ever returning to Papua again. There was one local gentleman who was obviously displeased by the attention his wife had been giving to the visitors. On the morning of their departure, he rushed out onto the tarmac and attacked the nose wheel of the command plane with an axe but was disarmed before he could do any serious damage.

## American aircraft

Some strange American aircraft turned up from time to time. One of these was a large USAF cargo plane with twin diverging booms attached to the nose of the aircraft. I learned that they were part of a secret support service to the US satellite world surveillance program. Because the satellites pre-dated modern computer memory and transmission technology, the images the cameras captured were actually stored on film, which the satellite periodically ejected at known locations in special, radio-trackable canisters attached to parachutes. The role of these aircraft was to catch the parachutes in mid-air.

Another strange US aircraft I saw belonged to something called Project Magnet and was a large, military version of the Lockheed Electra with an extremely long fuselage extension beyond the tail, looking like a huge wasp's stinger, in which (I believe) was mounted a Magnetic Anomaly Detector. I suspected these aircraft were part of a worldwide program to track Russian submarines.



Strangest of all, and something I did not see personally but was told about by Ric, was the arrival of a high-altitude surveillance plane called the U2 (Gary Powers was shot down over Russia in one) which apparently landed in Port Moresby. The U2s were effectively jet-powered gliders and had no undercarriage mounted under their long, flimsy wings during flight. Instead, the planes had titanium skids mounted at the end of each wing.

Before they could land at a foreign airfield, an accompanying Hercules support aircraft firstly had to land and disgorge a jeep, which would then race down to the end of the runway to await the arrival of the U2. As it landed, the jeep would match the U2's speed as it slowed, providing voice guidance to the pilot for a smooth landing on front and rear wheels mounted under the fuselage. When the plane was stationary, personnel from the jeep would fit lightweight assemblies to the underside of the wings so that the plane could taxi off the runway to a parking area. When the plane took off again, these wheels would fall off on to the runway and be recovered by the support staff for the next landing.

On one memorable occasion, I was sitting at my desk in the Armit St office, gazing out over Walter Bay when a dot suddenly appeared in the sky over Walter Bay. As I watched, it quickly materialised into a US carrier-based Thunder Chief fighter, seemingly flying straight at my window at enormous speed and then disappearing over our roof-top in a huge thunderclap of sound. I came close to falling off my seat.

### **The surveyor**

One of the projects I was engaged on was preparing plans for the survey brief for reconstructing Moem Point airstrip near Wewak on the north coast. This was a top-secret Air Force project in which the runway we were planning for would actually be 1000 feet longer than what was being reported in the Port Moresby papers - so that F111 fighter aircraft could safely land on it. At the time there was a widespread expectation that it would only be a matter of time before the Indonesian armed forces invaded PNG from neighbouring Irian Jaya. One of the surveyors who worked on this project later called into the office on his way back to Australia, and I invited home to have dinner with us.

The guy (whose name I have forgotten after 50 years but I think was Joe), worked for Jason Garrett, whose survey company did a lot of work for CommWorks. When Joe signed up with Jason, he was told he'd be required to lead a survey party of indigenes from south of Madang through thick, mountainous jungle towards a godforsaken place appropriately called Dumpu. He would be the only white man on the party, and fresh food and other necessities would be dropped by parachute at regular intervals. When Joe cheekily asked about sex, Jason replied, with a straight face, that a copy of the latest Playboy Magazine would be dropped to him every month.

As it turned out, after about 6 weeks on the survey, Joe became very ill with agonising stomach pain. His party abandoned the survey, immediately made up a stretcher and prepared to carry him 50 miles to the nearest road. Joe told us that he was convinced he had appendicitis and that he would die long before his party got him anywhere near the road, let alone help. Eventually, he lapsed into unconsciousness and when he woke up in Madang Hospital, he thought he was in the hereafter. As it turned out, he didn't have appendicitis.

When Joe started work at Moem Point, much of his survey work took place in a swampy area which had been extensively bombed during WW2 by both the Japanese and the US air forces. From the air, the place still resembled a moonscape of overlapping bomb craters. A bulldozer was brought in to clear a path through the scrub ahead of Joe. This worked well for a while until Joe heard this loud clanking noise coming from in front of the bulldozer. Upon casual investigation he discovered that the source of the noise was a live, 500-pound WW2 bomb being pushed along over the rough coral surface by the dozer blade. Within seconds of this discovery, Joe, the bulldozer driver and the rest of the survey party were on their way to bettering Herb Elliot's 4-minute mile record.

## Cruise ship visit

Fairly late in our stay, the South Pacific Post reported that the Swedish luxury liner Kungsholm would be visiting Port Moresby Harbour, and in the absence of any viable tourist industry, asked local vehicle owners to provide free assistance in showing the visitors around the town. We put our names down and duly picked up a charming retired couple, Mr & Mrs Bertheau from Linton, North Dakota and showed them all of the best sights, finishing with lunch at the Boroko Hotel. He had been the local doctor in Linton, and told us memorable stories about the freezing winters, when he had to leave his car engine running outside when making house calls and plug his car engine into an electrical heating system to ensure it wouldn't freeze during the night.

When we arrived back at the wharf, they insisted on us accompanying them out to their ship in its transfer tender, so they could introduce us to their friends. The ship seemed to be full of millionaires and our minds were boggled at the extent of luxury and wealth on display. They gave us US\$20 dollars for our trouble and we exchanged letter for several years afterwards.

## Misgivings

It didn't take us long to realise that coming to Port Moresby was a big mistake. There was no television and only one indoor picture theatre. Both of our families were thousands of miles away at the other end of Australia. Outside of work and the car club, life was unvaried and boring, and we began to focus on getting away in our annual holiday. Sometimes I would go out to the airport on a weekend morning to watch all the happy people boarding the plane – and wish we were on it. Before it took off, I would drive to the top of Three Mile Hill and watch it heading south until it disappeared into the shimmering blue. Reading the mainland weekend papers when they arrived on Sunday morning was always a treat, because the local paper, the South Pacific Post, was hardly worth the effort.

Worse than the boredom, our cost of living was exceeding my income. We were only able to save money if I worked overtime, and/or if Sylvia also worked. The climate was enervating during the wet season when it was hard to get excited about doing anything more cerebral than reading a book, and this wasn't helped by the fact that our flat had no air-conditioning. When we came home from work to eat at lunchtime, we would strip down to our underwear because of the heat. I had initially proposed to continue part-time studies for my Civil Engineering Diploma by correspondence with RMIT, but the humidity made it impossible for me to concentrate. During the dry season, the onshore wind blew constantly, which in itself was very depressing because every day mirrored the preceding one.

We soon began to have concerns about raising our two children in an environment that was extremely favourable to infectious diseases and populated by deadly insects, snakes and sea creatures, including coral snakes and stone fish. Tuberculosis and brucellosis were also rife as were skin infections and intestinal parasites as we discovered with both children. At one stage, Tania had some sort of skin problem on her back due to a parasitical infection, which had to be treated with expensive ointments.

To be continued...

# Trivia and didactic whimsies

## Superannuation

This story – slightly edited - appeared in the ESSSuper magazine and is reproduced with their permission.

‘Sometimes we may think fondly of life in the past. The days when there were fewer cars on the road, when the shops all shut on Sunday and newspapers came out twice a day. Life may well have been slower, simpler and less complicated in the days before digital disruption, social media and the 24-hour news cycle. But sometimes we forget the downsides - like how hard it was for many people living in retirement.

It may be difficult for young people today to imagine a world without the Internet, but for those of us born before 1950, it was the world we grew up in. It was also a world without universal superannuation. And that meant life was pretty tough for some.

At the turn of the 20th century, there was no social security system in Australia. If you weren't working, it was fend for yourself. When people got too old to work, they had to self-fund their retirement. This was particularly hard on widows and invalids, who didn't have the opportunity to save over their working life, and had to rely on charitable relief provided by voluntary organisations.<sup>1</sup>

Then in 1908 Australia introduced the Age Pension. However, it's important to understand the Age Pension was never intended to offer a 'comfortable living'. It was always designed to be a modest benefit based on need. Although the 'means test' has gone through many changes since then, essentially the Age Pension remains the same today – a benefit targeted at those most in need, while remaining affordable for the government.

However, throughout the first half of the 20th century, there were a few lucky white-collar workers who received a pension, provided by their employer. This was the early form of what we know today as superannuation.

Right up to the 1950s and 60s, income in retirement for most Australians was the Age Pension, or for just a lucky few, a private pension. After several failed attempts at introducing national superannuation, private superannuation became more widely available in the 1980s, when the unions negotiated its inclusion in industrial awards. But in 1974, still only 32% of the workforce was covered by super, and nearly all were men.

The breakthrough came in 1991 when the Hawke-Keating government in an effort to restrain inflation, while still giving employees a wage rise, introduced the Superannuation Guarantee. The intended 3% wage rise was instead paid into newly established 'industry funds'. And by the end of 1992, more than 80% of workers had super.

This led to the modern Australian retirement income system we have today. The system comprises three elements:

- a government provided means tested age pension
- mandatory personal superannuation; and
- voluntary saving (including voluntary saving into super).

This system has increasingly become viewed as a model for other countries. The World Bank endorsed it in its report *Averting the Old Age Crisis*, saying Australia's three pillars approach offered the best prospect of being sustainable servicing an aging population, while improving national savings and providing higher incomes in retirement.

The super system we have today has given us all vastly better opportunities to enjoy life in retirement. No longer do most of us have to subsist on a barely adequate Age Pension. Today, we all have the ability to add to our retirement income through our super.

Despite some complexity in the rules, the preferential tax rates on contributions and post retirement income has made super an attractive way to save. What is more, the ability to draw down regular payments from an income stream in retirement means you can remain with the same fund right through your working life, as part of one of the world's best retirement income systems.'

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1 This actually turned out to be a blessing because RMIT later decided to not recognise some of its own correspondence courses for the Civil Engineering Diploma. Fortunately, the ones I had completed by correspondence in Brisbane were recognised.

## Problems of Long-term Parking

Bill Sagers has reported that they have recently resealed Blackburn Road, north of the Burwood Highway – except for the surface around the abandoned car.



## Biblical communications

A new pastor was visiting the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks on the door. He took out his business card and wrote 'Revelation 3:20' on the back of it and slipped it under the door.

When the offering was processed after the following Sunday's service, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, 'Genesis 3:10'. Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' Genesis 3:10 reads, 'I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked.'

## Two Interesting Years – 1981 and 2005

### Interesting Year 1981

1. Prince Charles got married.
2. Liverpool crowned soccer Champions of Europe.
3. Australia lost the Ashes.
4. The Pope died.

### Interesting Year 2005

1. Prince Charles got married.
2. Liverpool crowned soccer Champions of Europe.
3. Australia lost the Ashes.
4. The Pope died.

Lesson to be learned: The next time Charles gets married, someone should warn the Pope.



## Tales of my Father

I have just completed writing two books – a memoir called *An Accidental Engineer* and a family history called *Decent People*. They are in pre-publication stage and they should become available early next year. Don't worry! I will let you know when they come on sale.

In *Decent People*, I wrote about my father travelling north to Queensland with one of his mates for a bit of adventure. It was in the mid 1920s. He worked in places with evocative names like Longreach, Charleville, Thargomindah, Goondiwindi and Dirranbandi and he once saw the Diamantina River twenty miles wide in flood. I don't know how they made their way north but family stories mentioned them bumming rides on trains and doing odd jobs on farms along the way.

Once in Queensland, they went where work took them – droving and shearing and doing rouse-about work. They told a story of getting a job at a station where they were each given a horse and instructed to check the fencing of the home paddock. They were not told that the fence was 60 miles long and it took them a couple of days to complete the task. Apparently, the boss allocated all the newcomers this task, just to remind them how big the place was. He took these photos of the shearing sheds.



A typical shearing shed



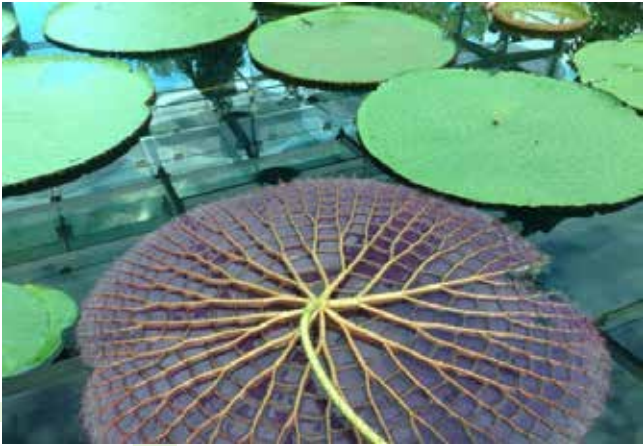
The shearers' quarters

I can remember Dad telling me that, during the shearing season, there were up to 100 men employed at a station. Smaller farmers often drove their sheep to the larger stations, as they did not have the facilities required. On the electoral roll in 1925, Dad's occupation was listed as a shed hand in Longreach. Shed hands were part of the wool harvesting team along with shearers, wool classers and other staff. They assisted in moving animals between pens and the shearing shed, clearing and sorting fleeces after the sheep were shorn, removing inferior or stained wool from the fleeces, grading wool that has been edged off the fleeces, bundling fleeces ready for wool classing and keeping the shed tidy. It was hard work. Dad also learnt to shear and he used to shear the few sheep we once owned with hand clippers.



Tough work

## Some unusual photographs



The underside of a lily pad



A 9 volt battery is 6 AAA batteries tied together

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Inside a guitar