Welcome to your September 2017 Newsletter

WELCOME TO YOUR SEPTEMBER 2017 ISSUE OF OUR NEWSLETTER. I WAS VERY PLEASED WITH THE ATTENDANCE FOR OUR AUGUST GENERAL MEETING GIVEN THE NUMBER OF APOLOGIES RECEIVED FROM REGULARS DUE TO ILLNESS OR BEING ON HOLIDAYS. I WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO SEE THE NUMBER OF “YOUNG 60-YEAR OLDS” WHO WERE IN ATTENDANCE. WE DO ENJOY SEEING MORE OF THE “YOUNGSTERS” COMING ALONG TO OUR GENERAL MEETINGS.

Last month, the newsletter published a notice of motion for a decision at the August General Meeting. The motion read “That any proposed expenditure over and above administration costs becomes a notice of motion to be advertised in the newsletter for debate at a general meeting. Such expenditure is also subject to a committee recommendation.”

I can report the motion was unanimously passed at the general meeting. The objective of the motion is to ensure an expenditure proposal other than for general administrative expenses is circulated to members (via newsletter) prior to a decision being made at a general meeting.

I was happy to be able to present Denis McCaffrey with his OBE. Denis turned eighty back in May but was unable to attend then due to a fall. There is an article on Denis receiving his OBE in this issue of the newsletter.

Surge Pricing and Payment Fees Warren Morley delivered an informative presentation on the topic of surge pricing. We are all used to seeing supermarket prices gradually vary over time (usually in an upward direction). Goods stay at the same price for days or weeks. Warren reported to the meeting this might be about to change. The relatively fixed prices we experience today may be gone within five years, replaced by frequent price changes depending on the demand for those goods, it will operate like share prices. This is already beginning to occur in some UK supermarkets. This is all possible thanks to electronic shelf-edge price labels that can change in real time.

Sometime in the future, you may find your ice-cream costs you more on a hot day, sandwiches more expensive around lunchtime or higher prices for beer and wine over a long weekend or holiday period.

Of course, this practice is not new, notice how petrol prices can be around $1.10 per litre then overnight soar to $1.39 (a whopping increase of 26 percent).

Warren also mentioned the increasing practice where companies charge a fee for processing a bill payment not made by electronic payment over the internet. While some companies make some allowances for pensioners, you still have to question their apparent greed. Companies have received a significant lower operating cost windfall from electronic payments made by their customers. You would think they would be satisfied with their windfall and just accept there will be a small customer segment unable to take advantage of electronic payments over the internet. Give me back a time when a retailer would be happy to simply receive payment for their particular good or service without trying to find more ways to extract extra money.

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Retired Members Association

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Retired Members Association Newsletter

Retired Members Association

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Organising a Christmas Party or annual reunion for your former district or workplace?

There are just two more newsletter issues for the remainder of 2017.

October & November issues.

Provide the editor with the function’s details:
Function Title
Date and Time
Location
Organisers’ name & contact information

Please e-mail (Paul Rewhorn at pdrewhorn@me.com) with your function’s details by the last Wednesday in September for inclusion in the last two issues or the last Wednesday in October for the final November issue.

Retired Members Association

Christmas is nearly upon us, a reminder that the Retired Members’ Christmas Lunch will be held at 12 pm on Thursday, at 12pm, on 30th November 2017

Petersham RSL, 7 Regent Street, Petersham
(A close and easy walk from Petersham Station)

The cost is $45 per person. The cost includes a three-course meal and lucky door prizes.

Payment can be made at a General Meeting or you can post a cheque to the Secretary, (address shown on page 2 of the newsletter) or via electronic payment:
John Ralph Walker

The Retired Members Association is sad to inform members that John Ralph Walker passed away on Thursday, 24th August 2017.

A funeral service was held for John on the 1st September 2017 at Saint Benedict’s Church, Mudgeeraba, Queensland.

John’s passing came after a long and brave struggle with prostate cancer. John was 77 years of age. John’s wife Gwane passed away in October 2016.

John joined the Retired Members Association in April 2003.

John was the assistant officer in charge of the Matraville Subscribers Installation Depot (SID). John was a hands-on manager who always led by example. His team of installers completed many major installations within the Redfern District throughout the late 1970s into the early 1980s.

John left Telstra mid-1980s to manage a TAB agency.

While at the Redfern SID, John lived at Rockdale. Later, he left Sydney to live at Forster. Finally, he moved to Reedy Creek in Queensland.

The Association extends its deep sympathy and condolences to John’s family members, his friends and many former workmates who held him in high respect.

The Retired Members Association would like to thank Bob Bartley, a former workmate and friend of John Walker for his assistance with this tribute.

Vale Bruce Roser

The Retired Members Association is sad to inform members that long-time member Bruce Roser passed away on Sunday, 27th August 2017. Bruce was aged 90 years, he was born in 1927 in Condobolin.

Bruce had been a member (membership number: 141) of the Retired Members Association since 1991.

Bruce worked for the PMG and Telecom on exchange maintenance in the Harden area before moving to the Illawarra in 1963. It was in Harden that Bruce met and married his wife Dulcie who predeceased him by two years, they had been married for 67 years.

Bruce was one of the first Senior Technicians to work on the new ARF102 at Corrimal Exchange, the first of this type of technology outside of the Sydney metropolitan area. Later, he was to work in other local exchanges before he retired due to ill health in the early 1980’s as a PTTO2 at Warilla.

During their retirement, Bruce and Dulcie lived at Windang by Lake Illawarra. Bruce indulged his love of golf at the nearby Port Kembla Golf Course. He also owned, trained and raced greyhounds and for a brief time was an SP Bookie!

Bruce was a real character and a good trade unionist. He led the Illawarra contingents to the PTTA mass meetings at the Sydney Trades Hall in the early 1970s. Bruce is survived by his children Dianne, Keith and Kim as well as numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A funeral service for Bruce was held at Bulli where he previously lived. The service was very well attended with a bunch of RMA members there to send him off.

The Association extends its deep sympathy and condolences to Bruce’s children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, friends and former workmates.

The Retired Members Association would like to thank Chris Cartledge, a former workmate and friend of Bruce Rose for his preparation of the above tribute.
Denis McCaffery Receives OBE Award

I presented Denis McCaffery with the Retired Members Association’s own OBE (Over Bloody Eighty) award at the August General Meeting. Denis was to receive his award in May of this year, however, a home injury had prevented Denis from attending our meetings since then.

In making the award to Denis, I thanked Denis for his interest and support for Association of past years. Denis has been a member of the Retired Members Association since November 2001. Denis regularly attends our general meetings along with his lifelong friend Denis Richardson. Unfortunately, Denis Richardson, also a recent recipient of the OBE Award could not attend the August General Meeting.

Denis in accepting the OBE Award reminded the meeting that while he goes back as a 1958 Technician in Training, he has never worked in a telephone exchange. Denis had worked in Planning, Transmission Measurements and concluded his career as a Customer Service Manager in the Penrith District.

I am sure all members will join me in congratulating Denis on receiving his OBE, he is now looking well after a recent fall and we hope to see Denis on many future occasions.

The Response to this Year’s trip away has been outstanding. One of largest responses we have had. There is still an opportunity to join this year’s trip. However, I would ask that you contact me within the next couple of weeks.

John Lane

Retired Members Association
Annual Trip Away to Lithgow
Monday 16th to Friday 20th October

We have had a great response to this trip away to Lithgow. Itinerary and motel accommodation and costs were published in the July newsletter. There is still the opportunity to make a booking. If you are interested, please advise me either via e-mail at (a-lane@bigpond.com) or call me on 0417 238687. After you book, you will need to pay a deposit of $50 per person. The deposit is necessary to secure motel accommodation and the coach bus for our tours. You can pay the deposit by:

Pay the deposit in person to Bruce Muirhead or myself at the September General Meetings.

Send a cheque to Bruce Muirhead at 22 Cameron Avenue, Baulkham Hills. NSW 2153. Please ensure you mention the names of the persons travelling and your contact details.

Make an electronic payment. The details are Credit Union Australia (CUA) BSB 814-282, eSaver Account No: 10642769, include your surname as a reference.

Please contact me to advise that you have made an electronic payment.
The meeting also discussed power prices and the various contracts offered by electricity retailers. There was a lot discussion about the ‘fine print’ in these contracts and how power prices within a contract are still subject to increases.

Dave Martin also gave a helpful talk on the subject and how to reduce the costs as much as possible. As Dave so succinctly put it “I can handle their extortion but not their lies”.

ABC Turns 85 Our ABC turned 85 recently and as a “Friend of the ABC”, I read in their August publication “Update” an article about the Postmaster General not long after the ABC was established. The Postmaster-General of the time greeted the new ABC Chairman and Commissioners with “I know nothing about broadcasting. I am not interested in it. If I had my way I would stop all broadcasting”. He went onto state that he had no time for what he expressed as these mechanical things. Also on the subject of music, “I don’t know anything about music”.

On the subject of “over the air” talks and commentaries, “as for people who give talks and commentaries over the air, if I had my way I would poison the <expletives>, I would bring them under the Vermin Act”. Perhaps the Postmaster foresaw the current day shock jocks Ray Hadley and Alan Jones.

The Postmaster General was not on his own in his opposition to our national broadcaster. Sir Keith Murdoch along with other print press operators was bitterly opposed any threat to his newspapers and radio stations.

The private media owners insisted that news broadcasts be limited to “one bulletin, just five minutes long, broadcast no earlier than 7:50 pm a time when they were assured people would have finished the evening papers”. These restrictions stayed in place until the Second World War.

Fortunately, public opinion is firmly on the side the ABC. The ABC is still the most trusted media outlet in Australia. However, this has not stopped the federal government, mainly the Howard and Abbott governments, slashing ABC operating funding by almost 25% since 1985-6. The BBC by way of comparison receives six times the funding for three times the Australian population.

Registered Nurses in Nursing Homes Back in June 2014, then Health Minister. Mrs Skinner committed to preserving full-time Registered Nurses in nursing homes, for now. Now in May this year, the New South Wales Legislative Council passed a Bill to retain this position, making it enforceable under the law. The Bill was defeated in the Lower House.

A recent report from Deloitte commissioned by the Aged Care Guild showed 62% of residential aged care facilities reported a shortage of Registered Nurses and the majority of Registered Nurses spend less than one-third of their time caring for patients and are being taken off the floor to occupy managerial positions.

Registered Nurses are an essential part of aged care.

♦ They oversee medications and assess their side effects,
♦ undertake nursing procedures that minimise unnecessary transfers to hospital emergency departments,
♦ are essential to proper palliative care
♦ train and support general hospital support staff.

Today, more than 270,000 Australians live in residential aged care. State Governments’ inertia, along with the Federal Government who has slashed $41.2 billion from the 2016 federal budget over the next four years for nursing home residents with complex care needs has put these people at significant risk.

All this comes at a time when the Federal Government believes they can justify the spending of $122 million dollars on a non-compulsory, non-binding plebiscite on same sex marriage.

All that remains is for me to say bye for now and trust I will see many of you at our next general meeting on Thursday, 28th September 2017. Vince
RALPH BRITTEN MEMOIR (Part 2)

Last month, we commenced the first part of an unfinished book written by Ralph Britten.

The first part seen Ralph Britten complete his basic training. Now he is on his first workplace assignment at York Street. We start with Ralph’s introduction to his new supervisors.

Ralph found the introduction to his new supervisors somewhat daunting, unlike what he had experienced before. Ralph has a decision to make, stay or leave this crazy new job.

To find out what Ralph decides, you will need to read this article.

CHAPTER TWO

York Street

Yes, this is the real exchange name, complaints in writing only, no correspondence will be entered into.

York Exchange was located in the basement of a large city building which had been the Headquarters of the Americans during their involvement in World War 2. Some said it was General MacArthur's Headquarters and that was where the famous, “I shall return” statement was uttered.

The place consisted of two staff groups, Exchange Maintenance and Area Maintenance; each having their own Supervisors and hierarchy (the Senior Technicians). The Exchange Supervisor was Mr Michael Joseph Patrick Walsh who had two Junior Supervisors, one for the day shift and the other for the afternoon shift. We will deal first with the Area Maintenance section because this was where I was to be stationed.

The Supervisor for the Area Maintenance section was George Osborne and his Senior Technician was Simon Jones (not his real name). George who was a Major in the Australian Army during World War 2 (1939-1945), no one seemed to know what Simon did during the war. However, Simon seemed to be very good at making bullets for George to fire at the staff.

Staff had to reply to “please explains” almost every day, while they were busy making out their replies to go to George, Simon would sneak away to the second job he had at a radio service firm. A little hypocritical, we will pick up on that side of things a little later.

First Day at the Workforce.

Being an early bird the writer arrived at the Area Maintenance office at 7.20 am, December 5th, 1955. He was met by an aggressive young chap, who seemed to know everything about the place, even though he had only been on the job for three months. His name was Bill Cartwright.

Bill said the boss would be along very soon and would give me something to do. Almost immediately a well-dressed man in a beautiful suit, hat and the old school tie came in and proceeded to a desk. When he had settled and looked comfortable, naturally thinking that he was the boss, I moved over to him and made himself known. The gentleman seemed to be taken aback and said, “Oh you want George or Simon, I am the clerical assistant and my name is John Owen”.

Sure enough, Simon arrived about ten minutes later and the phones started to ring like mad, so Simon seemed to be the busiest and most important person in the City of Sydney. Eventually, the new member of the staff (or that is what I thought I was) was sent there by the Training School, after just completing the “Basic Course”. Simon presented me with a look of dismay and said, “they are mad at that school, we don’t need any unskilled dills here, what are we going to do with you?”.

My next question to Simon was, “are you the boss”? He answered “no”, “well I will wait for him” I replied.

Starting time at this amazing place, (bear in mind, I had over the previous ten years worked 16 to 18 hours a day in cake shops and by the bell in a tobacco factory). The time was 8.00 am, so at 8.12 am in came George, the boss, or to be more exact the Supervising Technician and Simon’s first statement to him was, “I have six names here for you give late papers to for last Friday”. What a funny joint this place seems to be.

George and Simon indulged in a considerable amount of quiet discussion about what to do with this creature from outer space sitting quietly in a corner with a patient look on his face. About an hour after everybody had gone George came over and said, “go up to the Queen Victoria Building, take the lift to the 3rd floor, turn right then right again and you will see a door marked telephone exchange. Go in and you will meet a chap by the name of Neil Ferguson, he will give you a job”.

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Ralph Britten Memoirs (Cont'd)

Well, I walked up York Street to the corner of Market Street and paused for a while, I pondered the situation thinking about going to see if I could get back the old job I had just left, at least things made sense back there.

I reasoned that as the Company had spent four weeks training on me, I should at least spend another four weeks trying to come to terms with this new work environment. As things turned out in retrospect, it was a very wise decision.

Neil turned out to be a great help and indeed a very competent teacher who had any amount of patience with this new fellow who was supposed to be a help but without going into details, most times turned out to be a hindrance. The Queen Victoria Building was a stately old building, built during the Victorian era hence the name. At this time was being used as the headquarters of the electrical company which had branches throughout the metropolitan area, supplying the city and suburbs with electricity.

The Telephone Exchange which took care of the communications needs of this company was fairly old and needed plenty of maintenance, Neil, being very clever technically looked after the place well and was held in very high esteem in the electrical firm as well as in our company.

A lot of people called in at different times to visit Neil, the most notable being Phil Scott, the senior technician in charge of installation of phones. Others being Ted Webb who actually did the work and a very fine man who at that time was an adult Technician in training, Jim Morris, who became a close friend of mine as the years progressed.

1955 came to end and perhaps 1956 was the most important and effective time in the development of the my career in the job. I was back to Alexandria School for a two-week introductory course and from April to July was there again for a three-month course in the maintenance and installation of customer telephone equipment. On completion of the three-month course, I was made an acting technician and sent out onto the area to fix phones, (I felt like being I was being thrown to the wolves). For the reader to fully understand we will go through this year in detail.

Introductory Course (two weeks).

This course was most interesting and contained mostly calculations e.g. inductive reactance, capacitive reactance, impedance and other electrical formulas together with some rather light hearted practical exercises. Two instructors ran the course namely Harry Collister on the theory calculations and Don Taylor who handled the practical side assisting Harry as well. Things came fairly easily to me in this course because it was held in early February 1956 and having worked with Neil since December 1955, I had learned a lot from Neil who was brilliant on the mathematical side and also a good teacher. With this experience, I topped the class at the final exam and re-joined Neil at the Electrical Department.

A week after my return from the course, Neil went to relieve George at the head office. Neil was relieved by a most interesting chap, Jack Fisher. Jack had been in the navy during the war and he loved motor cars, especially his Peugeot and made the statement that he would just love to get into it and drive forever. I went to lunch with Jack a number of times and met a man who was to become a friend, as close as a brother, his name Pat Dilworth.

Pat carried his swag around the bush during the great depression and when war broke out in 1939, joined the Sixth Division of the Australian Imperial Forces (known as the A.I.F). He went away on the Queen Mary and served in Europe, Greece and the Middle East. When Japan came into the war a couple of years later, the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, ordered the Sixth Division to return to assist in the defence of Australia.

This great Army Division then returned to Australia and a place in Queensland, called Canungra, for Jungle training and when that was completed they were sent to New Guinea on active service. One can only imagine what coming from desert to jungle would be like in itself, let alone having bombs and bullets being thrown at you.

Sydney has always been renowned for its humidity in February and in 1956 it seemed worse than ever. Humidity had a disastrous effect on telephone cables and the York Exchange area was particularly hard hit this year. So this new member of the staff had to become involved and assist where he could be the most useful. One of the most popular pieces of telephone equipment of this era was known as the A10, which had two Exchange lines and ten extensions with the capacity for one external terminating on an ordinary telephone.

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Ralph Britten Memoirs (Cont'd)

Each extension telephone had a flexible cord containing about forty small wires insulated with silk and cotton material, being the same as most telephone wiring that was constructed in these days, it was seriously damaged by this heavy humidity. As a result, I found myself a quiet corner of a large room called “the adjustment room”, Tucked away in the telephone exchange confronted by about twenty A10 telephones with broken down cords; it was my job to change them, a very steady job I can assure you.

Now Exchange people had a number of characteristics, the two outstanding ones being the number of Sunday shifts they were getting and who was getting the most Sundays more than the other, the other being the fact that a fault was never in the Exchange and always an outside problem.

Every day you would hear the expression, “no! not in here mate”. After a couple of days in the adjustment room and having become quite efficient with these dreaded cords and come to terms with the fact that exchange blokes were not a very communicative lot, apart from the fore mentioned subjects, I was quite happy to be a loner, just getting the job at hand done and then get the hell out of there.

Suddenly a chap in a brown dustcoat came from nowhere, sat down and to my amazement spoke to me. He said, “how long have you been working in here”; the chap put out his hand and said, “my name is Merv May”. At the time of writing, Merv is eighty-four years of age and from that day, the two of us have been close personal friends, there will be more about Merv and the exchange staff throughout these stories.

Welfare News

SPOKE TO BOB MASON RECENTLY, BOB IS STILL HANGING IN THERE. HE RECENTLY CELEBRATED A 70TH YEAR TECHNICIAN IN TRAINING REUNION. BOB SAID THEIR NUMBERS ARE GETTING THIN ON THE GROUND. BOB ATTENDS GET-TOGETHERS AT PORT MACQUARIE AND HAS HEALTH PROBLEMS LIKE THE REST OF US. BOB WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MY RECRUITMENT TO THE PMG WHILE I WAS AT GLOUCESTER HIGH BACK IN 1956.

Dennis Richardson has suffered a fall and fractured some ribs. He cannot cough, laugh and worse; cannot play golf. Otherwise, he remains in fine spirits.

Laurel Rogers is recovering from the flu. Woolfie is traveling well.

Keith McReagh and Eddie Parrot along with a little help from myself put on a Morse code display at Parkes for the Red Read Day. Brian Lowe dropped in to say hello.

John Hickey has had a successful cataract operation. He is now planning to have another one.

Ron Titcombe had a stroke on Friday, 25th August at his home in Ulladulla. Ron is now in the Rehabilitation Section of the David Berry Hospital at Berry. This particularly upsetting for me to learn this news. I will keep you informed.