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Probus Club of Sydney

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Newsletter

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NOVEMBER 2023

Issue 459

MEETING DATES

NOVEMBER 14

BRETT MASON

Wizards of Oz

DECEMBER 5

HON GARY NAIRN AO

Catch Water Restore Land

ACTIVITIES

12 December

CHRISTMAS LUNCH at Orso

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

The Nation has now clearly given its verdict on “The Voice”. Many people were happy with the result and many unhappy but, irrespective, I’d like to think that we were all very well informed about the major issues, thanks in no small part to the two Probus presentations recently outlining both sides of the Debate.

The October Meeting was attended by 61, with 35 staying for lunch. I anticipate a larger attendance next month due to our celebration of member Jack Blackman’s 100th Birthday, which will include his Raconteurial reminiscences, fruit cake at morning tea & complimentary champagne over lunch. Please register via the website or App for both the meeting & lunch.

In what promises to be a most stimulating (and packed!) meeting, we will also have Life Before Probus talks from Rod Hanson & Tony Wither along with our Guest Speaker Brett Mason who will discuss two “Wizards of Oz”.

Please remember that the November meeting will be held on the 2nd Tuesday (Nov 14) due to the Nation being stopped by a horse race on the first Tuesday (Nov 7).

Best wishes,

John Carter

President

Note

To Register to attend the November meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club - [click here](#)

NOVEMBER 14

BRETT MASON

Clinical/Allergy immunologist and medical educator

Wizards of Oz



Brett Mason is Chair of the Council of the National Library of Australia, a member of the Council of Griffith University and Adjunct Professor in the School of Justice at the Queensland University of Technology. He was formerly a Senator for Queensland, serving in the ministry, before being appointed Australia's Ambassador to The Hague and Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

More than just a story of scientific discovery, 'Wizards of Oz' is a remarkable tale of secret missions, international intrigue, and triumph against all odds. Mason tells how Oliphant and Florey were also

instrumental in convincing a reluctant United States to develop and deploy the three breakthrough inventions in time to change the course of the war. (Sure, Robert Oppenheimer was important in making the atomic bomb, but it was Oliphant and British science that proved that the bomb could be built.) These two Australians not only helped win the war but shaped the peace, with their war-time contributions continuing to influence international politics and the health and wealth of nations.

Oliphant and Florey emerge in 'Wizards of Oz' as the two most consequential Australians of the Second World War – perhaps of all time.

His next book 'Saving Lieutenant Kennedy: the Heroic Story of the Australian who helped rescue JFK', will be published by NewSouth in November 2023.

Brett's two books will be available for purchase on 14th November.

DECEMBER 5

HON GARY NAIRN AO

Chairman of the Mulloon Institute

Catch Water Restore Land



Gary Nairn is the Chairman of The Mulloon Institute, a global leader in environmental regeneration and sustainable agriculture. The Institute uses its United Nations recognised Mulloon Rehydration Initiative as a model to deliver landscape rehydration and catchment-scale projects across Australia.

Its world-class scientific research and educational outreach helps Australian farmers create resilient, productive, and profitable farms where agriculture and the environment work in unison. Rehydrating landscapes helps restore their natural function, boosts ecosystem biodiversity, and makes them more resilient to climate extremes. It also allows for increased agricultural productivity and greater soil carbon

capture through healthier soils and vegetation cover.

Gary's presentation will cover The Mulloon Institute's work on the ground in various parts of the nation as well as its education and advocacy programs.

After 25 years in the surveying and mapping profession in Australia and Europe, Gary Nairn served as the Federal Member for Eden-Monaro from 1996 to 2007 including Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Howard with responsibility for water reform and as Special Minister of State where his responsibilities included e-Government, Spatially Enabling Government and all Commonwealth properties.

He was the inaugural Chairman of the NT Planning Commission, a Board Member of the NT Environment Protection Authority, Chairman of the Tasmanian Spatial Information Council and a Board Member of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust. In addition to his role with The Mulloon Institute, he is currently Chairman of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in Australia and Chairman of the International Advisory Committee for the Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructure & Land Administration at Melbourne University.

Gary is an Honorary Fellow of the Institution of Surveyors and of the Geospatial Council of Australia, a former President of the NT Country Liberal Party, a former

Chairman of the Spatial Industries Business Association and a Rotarian of 40 years including being a Paul Harris Fellow.

In June 2015 Gary was made an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO) with the citation naming his service to the Australian Parliament, the NSW and NT communities, the spatial sciences and disability support services.

John Doherty

OCTOBER MEETING REPORT

The meeting was opened by President John Carter recently returned from adventures in Canada and Alaska. He welcomed five guests – Roger Gyles and Paul King (introduced by Peter James), Peter Corlette (Ted Brogan) and Alec Brennan (Alan Locke). He thanked Peter James for standing in at the last meeting. He also noted that it was the International Day of the Older Person!

John Doherty reported on his speakers programme for the next few months and Ted Brogan described the recent visit to Victoria Barracks which was very enjoyable. There will be a second tour to Transurban on 9 November. Ted encouraged members to book for the Christmas lunch on Tuesday 12 December

Induction

Ian Ernst



Tony Andrew introduced Ian Ernst as a new member, noting that he did so as Ian's seconder because his proposer, Ian Lansdown, was recuperating from a recent illness.

Ian was born in Zagreb but moved to Australia with his parents at the age of one. He studied at UNSW where he gained a BSc in Applied Chemistry and a PhD in Physical Chemistry. Later he completed a BA at the University of Sydney.

He then worked at the Australian Atomic Energy Commission for several years before moving to the UK to join the International Wool Secretariat (and to gain several more postgraduate degrees!). This was followed by 7 years in Fiji where he became a venture capitalist and managed the Pacific Harbour Resort as well as being involved in a range of tourist activities including Fiji Air.

Returning to Australia he became a Patent Attorney with Shelston Waters, later being self Employed until 2022. He was involved with the Mosman SES from 2001-2008, His interests include silversmithing, art, theatre, classical music and photography. He has been married to Susan for 54 years. In 2001 he accepted Austrian citizenship offered in reparation for the mistreatment of his grandparents by the Austrian Nazis.

Life before Probus

Geoff Hudspeth



Geoff Hudspeth had an unconventional schooling. He went to six schools in four different countries! His father, who was an Australian Trade Commissioner, was posted to Calcutta when Geoff was 11. For two years he attended a private school with only 60 students, the majority of whom were English. After India the family moved to New Zealand where they stayed for three years before Geoff returned to Melbourne to complete high school.

In 1959 his father was transferred to Ottawa and Geoff, then 20, joined the family there. He joined FW Woolworth as a trainee manager with whom he worked for 5 years and was involved in converting the first Woolworth store to self-service. From there he moved to Toronto but in 1964 he returned to Sydney via Kuala Lumpur (where his family was then living). In Sydney he joined Woolworths (different to the Canadian stores). He stayed with them until 1969 to start up his own travel agency called Key Travel in Goldfields House. He opened for business on the same day that man first stepped onto the moon. As he noted “a giant step for mankind and a big step for Geoff Hudspeth”!

He started the business with just four staff. He and his backers (including Ken Landell Jones, the owner of Fortune Advertising) decided to differ from the majority of travel agents in going after corporate travel business which was then mainly serviced by Qantas, Ansett and TAA. Ken Landell Jones approached his client base, suggesting that they use Key Travel for all of their travel, which was a very successful move. They prided themselves on having such good contacts with the airlines and hotels that they were able to secure hard to get seats or hotel rooms. They also provided a very personal service, with Geoff personally meeting senior executives of the major clients at the airport, checking them in, taking them to the lounge and immigration where they would be escorted to the aircraft door! On return the reverse would apply. Such a service would be impossible today with security requirements.

The travel industry was very different in those days before online ticketing and internet bookings. All communication was by telephone, telex and later, fax. Tickets were hard copy and itineraries were typed up before being couriered to clients. The company specialized in Incentive Travel but in those days they couldn't Google destinations – they had to travel to the sites to do the research. Hence, a lot of travel and building up relationships around the world. The agency ran tours for their clients' top people with groups of up to 1600 people.

Some of the tours Geoff did include the world Merino Wool tour and a world wide Simmental Cattle tour. He organized a group of 40 Panasonic dealers to fly from New York to London on the Concorde. Likewise, he arranged for a group of 1600 insurance advisors to go to Vienna where he had to arrange ball gowns for all the ladies to go to a ball in the Hofburg Palace! Other large tours went to Honolulu, Banff Springs and Cancun.

Over a period of 30 years, he merged with two other travel agencies so that by 1995 they had offices all over Australia and New Zealand. They had grown from 4 employees to over 400! IN 1999 the company (then called ITG) listed on the Sydney Stock Exchange and in 2004 it was absorbed into Flight Centre.

In retirement Geoff enjoys doing Meals on Wheels, playing golf and spending time with his wife Jan and their family, which included two granddaughters.

Raconteur Bill Butterell



Bill (who has spent 52 years as an accountant) gave us a great tale of his adventures as a liquidator and receiver – a challenging area of the profession where he would always find distressful situations and a lack of money which meant that he didn't get paid a lot! He was even threatened with death three times! The first he was shot at, the second a rifle was presented and the third time he and his family needed federal police protection for a weekend because of a demented bankrupt in Deniliquin who wanted to come to Sydney to kill him!

The first example he told us of was when he was 22. He was sent out to Mulgoa to sort out a gentleman who owned a store and had been made bankrupt about 6 months prior. The bankrupt had received all the letters but never responded. On arrival at Mulgoa (then a sleepy little hamlet) to be welcomed by growling dogs and then he heard a shot. The bankrupt told him if he came any closer, he would be shot and the dogs set on him. Wisely, he retreated and decided to go to the police but they told him that, being a bankruptcy matter he would need to go to the Federal Police – in Canberra! However, he suggested that perhaps the wife would be a better place to start. She was practising the organ in the local church but accompanied Bill to their house where she took control. Bill was saved by a woman!

The next story was where he was appointed receiver to a crematorium/lawn cemetery. A lot of money had been spent on developing the site which was in a rural

area where the majority of the local population was in a younger age group. Not a big market for the crematorium! Bill did say that they had foresight; they are doing a roaring trade nowadays. He went out to the site where the manager was a German gentleman with whom he formed a good relationship and eventually sorted everything out over two years. One of the interesting (?) things that came up was when they were asked by the Health Department, who wanted to conduct an experiment on cremating 'waste' from the hospitals (severed limbs, removed organs and the like) which had previously been buried. The department turned up with two sets of 'waste', one in plastic bags and the other in cardboard boxes. Now, the crematorium was a modern facility with a smokeless chimney. Bill and the crematorium manager handed over the remains to the staff for disposal and then went out into the lawn cemetery where a burial was taking place. The first load of remains (in plastic bags) was burnt but dense black smoke came out of the chimney – not a desirable outcome. Then the cardboard containers went on with result that the mourners at the burial service were covered in cardboard ash! This led to the priest telling the mourners “this is one reason we believe in burial. At least you know where the body is.....”

Finally, he spoke of his involvement with Abe Saffron who needed some help and turned up with two large goons. He had bought a chain of music stores for his son, but the son lost interest and went to America so Abe needed to sell the business.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Speaker

WES RAFFEL

Silicon Valley Venture Capital Investing - My Experiences and Tips for the Future



We were indeed fortunate that Neil Martin enticed his Harvard classmate Wes Raffel to give up some of his Australian holiday to educate us so clearly on venture capital investments, drawing on his extensive experience in Silicon Valley. He is now a high level advisor in the industry, having had over a decade in the nitty gritty as a partner in a Silicon Valley venture capital investing firm

He first questioned why is Silicon Valley the epicentre for venture investing? Chief among the reasons for early growth was its proximity to Stanford and UC Berkeley, both outstanding centres of excellence in engineering, training and research at the leading edge of the technology development and related finance.

Early majors to establish businesses there as early as the 1940s included Hewlett Packard, whose success in turn encouraged others such as Fairchild etc, so that support infrastructure of ancillary services built up, attracting other start-ups by entrepreneurs. Successes bred more success, and this has continued through to the present day. Other US cities have tried to foster similar environments, but none have near matched the San Francisco Bay area.

There are various types of venture firms, focusing on different types of technology. Wes was one of the partners in Advanced Technology Ventures, which focused mainly on both the IT sector and the Health Care sector (both new drugs and devices). Some other companies especially during last 20 years have focused on social networks (which did not attract Wes because of competitive risk). Some focus on the private sector, others on public or corporate orientation. Structures vary, eg some such as Wes' firm had a flat organisation (all 6 partners sharing the risks and rewards), whilst others are more on a hierarchy model (eg older founders get a higher share). Picking a suitable partner is critical.

Who invests in Venture Funds? The prestigious US universities have immense endowment funds, who provide a large source of investment funds in projects. In addition, funds may come from high wealth people (so called home offices, looking for some alternative non-standard investments in their portfolio), pension funds, wealthy individuals and/or corporations (notably Google and Meta/Facebook put massive amounts in such ventures).

Investors may inject funds at different stages in a start-up company life cycle. Some may provide seed funds to help develop an idea. Others may enter at an early stage, so called first round, to help the project off the ground (Wes' firm targeted that stage, which has high risk, but also rewards if successful). Others enter in mid stage as the project is expanding, yet others at a late stage looking for further growth.

Typically, among 10 investments, only 1 project might make a lot of money. About 5 venture projects in 10 lose money. The other 4 might make mediocre returns.

So, selection is critical. To assist with the choice, Wes' firm does due diligence of the project (incl detailed modelling using recent business school graduates), receives key information via a presentation, which would then be discussed among the partners. His firm decided by the partners voting whether to invest or not, with no fence sitters, with majority decision being final (ie not consensus).

Wes identified 4 key elements to look for in a new venture investment - people (incl track record of the entrepreneur), technology (incl potential roadblocks, patent protection, intellectual property, etc), market (>\$US 1 billion to be of interest), and capital requirements to hit breakeven.

What are the key characteristics of successful venture investors? These days they have record of operational experience/success, willingness to see others do the operational work, have good relations with other venture capital firms who might join a syndicate (which is common). So networking is important.

If a decision is made to invest and another syndicate VC investor is on board, a Board of Directors is formed to provide advice, leveraging on their experience, be closely

involved to support the CEO, review operations and provide feedback, plus find other external directors who can add value.

How does a venture create liquidity? Wes favours going public/floating when needed, but timing is important in floating. He considers market place wins against competitors are key. Selling out to the incumbent company could make sense, if the offer is right (in 90% of cases, liquidity comes from sale to another company, cf only 10% go public). An alternative might be to form a partnership (Google do a lot of this). Also bankers may facilitate this.

For the private investor, he noted a huge investment trend now is in AI (for which San Francisco has become a key centre). Another current focus is security, eg protection from hacking, software security. It seems worthwhile to keep an eye open for prospective investments in these two areas, including from floats in the next year or so.

After a lively Q&A (incl comments on Australian universities, government involvement, scams, plus comments on the concerns of AI), Richard Kaan thanked Wes on behalf of members for such a fascinating summary of venture capital investment.

Peter James

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Tour of Victoria Barracks



On 21 September a group of 16 members and guests enjoyed a most interesting three hour tour of Victoria Barracks in Paddington followed by lunch in the courtyard of the

Officers Mess. The photo above was taken in the courtyard of the Commanding Officer's residence where Ted Brogan lived as a young man (not as CO, that was his Dad)!

Tour of Transurban's Control Centre

On 6 October 13 members and their guests had a fascinating tour of the Operations Centre of Transurban Ltd. at St Peter's.

Transurban is responsible for most of Sydney's underground traffic tunnels under public private partnership arrangements. In addition to fee collection their responsibilities include the day-to-day maintenance of the tunnels and associated traffic control systems, lighting, air conditioning plus rescue and recovery of disabled vehicles. All these functions are monitored from the Control Centre.

We were shown the operations room with its multiple screens and controllers manning specific areas. A most impressive room with a backup system in an adjoining building in the event of a catastrophic event occurring at the main centre plus backup generators and standalone water reserves.



The tour finished with a lunch provided by Transurban and a bus tour of some of the tunnels where we were given examples of specific events that have occurred and the ways in which they were rectified.

In short, a most interesting and informative tour which gave us all a better understanding of the complexities of running a complex transport facility.

Future Activities

Tuesday 12 December: Christmas lunch at Orso. Bookings now open.

Ted Brogan

HOW TO CANCEL A REGISTRATION FOR A MEETING AT THE UUSC

Should a member wish to cancel a Registration for a Monthly Meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club, the following simple steps should be followed:

- Open the Website and Login
- Select 'View Profile'
- Select 'My event registrations'.
- Select 'Confirmed'
- Select 'Cancel Registration' and the confirmation as below.



MEMBER DIRECTORY DOCUMENTS > [VIEW PROFILE](#)

My profile

[EDIT PROFILE](#)

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Event	Ticket type	Status
Wizards of Oz: How Mark Oliphant and Howard Florey helped win WW2 and shape the modern world 14 Nov 2023 10:00 AM	Meeting and Luncheon \$0.00	Confirmed

Event	Wizards of Oz: How Mark Oliphant and Howard Florey helped win WW2 and shape the modern world 14 Nov 2023 10:00 AM Location: Union, University and Schools Club: Probus Members & their male invited guests only
ket type	Meeting and Luncheon

[CANCEL REGISTRATION](#)

Please note to cancel a Registration for an Activity it is necessary to contact our Activity Coordinator Ted Brogan or phone 0412 338 817.

VALE CLYDE DICKENS



It is with great sadness we report that Clyde Dickens died on October 8 at age 93. A member for 28 years, he was the longest standing member of our club. A dedicated supporter of Sydney Probus, he undertook the role of Membership Officer before being elected President in 2005. Always looking ahead, Clyde created the club's first website.

He attended Northcote High School in Melbourne. In 1969 he emigrated to Sydney to join a predecessor firm to Ernst & Young. He was a partner for 20 years including periods as Managing Partner Sydney Office and International representation. He specialised in Corporate Recovery and Insolvency work. He was NSW and later National President of the Australian Society of Accountants (ASA)

Clyde was pivotal as Chairman, ASA National Committee for the development of the Certified Practicing Accountant Professional Schedule and the Society's Change of Name to 'Australian Society of Certified Practicing Accountants'.

In recognition of his professional endeavours in the advancement of the Accountancy profession Clyde was awarded Life Membership and Honorary Fellow of the Australian Society of Certified Practicing Accountants - FCPA. In addition, he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia – AM.

You may be unaware Clyde had a hidden career; that of Ship-Spotting! He held a Post of World-wide Webmaster for which he was renowned.

His major hobby was sailing EMPATHY, a 28-footer yacht. After retirement he travelled widely with his charming wife Lorrie. They were much loved by their family of daughter Robyn and two grandchildren.

In accordance with Clyde's wishes there will be a family cremation service and maybe a function later for a wider group of friends.

Cliff Dodds and Tony Andrew

Small Things like These by Claire Keegan (2021) – 110 Pages – Fiction



A masterclass from an Irish writer. The underlying theme is the way the Catholic Church in Ireland (and no doubt elsewhere) treated unmarried mothers and their children until as recently as 1996. Presumably as a punishment for immorality and a lesson to the community, the Church separated unmarried mothers from their babies and then forced the mothers to work as slave labour in the so-called Magdalen Laundries.

The author invents a kind-hearted simple protagonist with 5 young daughters, barely making a living in an Irish country town in 1985. Fate brings him into contact with the local Catholic Church where he witnesses two cases of atrocity. Can he ignore the plight of the second young woman or risk everything by defying the church and blowing the whistle?

In such a short compass, the book brings alive the town, the family and each of the central characters. Not a word is wasted. Although it has an axe to grind, the book reads brilliantly as a novel, which you cannot put down. Just another example of the power of fiction to paint a picture much more graphically than a polemic.

It was shortlisted for the 2022 Booker prize and in my view should have won. One of the best books I have read for some time.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

MORE GROAN-WORTHY THOUGHTS FROM FRANK BARR-DAVID!

I once dated a lady who broke up with me because I only have 9 toes. Yes, she was lack-toes intolerant.

I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.

If you boil a funny bone, it becomes a laughing stock. Now that's humerus.

I accidentally rubbed ketchup in my eyes. Now I have Heinzsight.

Did you know muffins spelled backwards is what you do when you take them out of the oven?

Scientifically, a raven has 17 primary wing feathers. The big ones at the end of the wing are called pinion feathers. A crow has 16. So, the difference between a raven and a crow is only a matter of a pinion.

I was walking in the jungle and saw a lizard on his hind legs telling jokes. I turned to a local tribal leader and said, "That lizard is really funny!" The leader replied, "That's not a lizard. He's a stand-up chameleon."

I tried to come up with a carpentry pun that woodwork. I thought I nailed it but nobody saw it.

Just spoke with Bill Withers and told him "Ain't No Sunshine" is bad grammar. He said, "I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know."

Singing in the shower is fine until you get soap in your mouth. Then it's a soap opera.

The Black-Eyed Peas can sing us a song but the chick peas can only hummus one.

How much does a chimney cost? Nothing, it's on the house.

My friend said she wouldn't eat cow's tongue because it came out of a cow's mouth. I gave her an egg.

Once upon a time there was a King who was only 12 inches tall. He was a terrible King, but he made a great ruler.

Ran out of toilet paper and now using lettuce leaves. Today was just the tip of the iceberg, and tomorrow romaines to be seen.

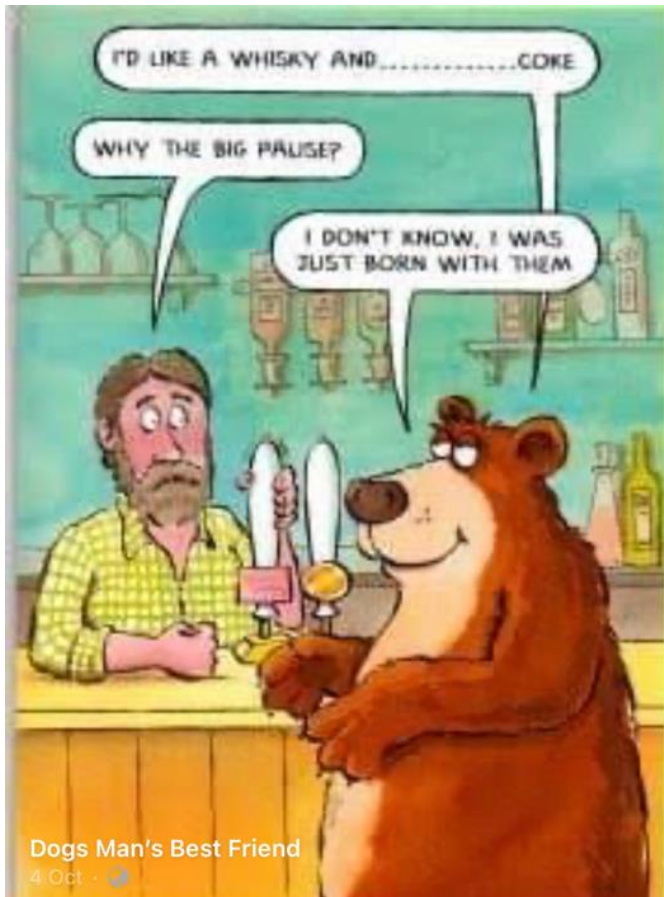
My friend Jack says he can communicate with vegetables. That's right... Jack and the beans talk.

I want to tell you about a girl who only eats plants. You probably have not heard of herbivore.

I was struggling to understand how lightning works and then it struck me.

Six cows were smoking joints and playing poker. That's right. The steaks were pretty high.

I went to the paint store to get thinner. It didn't work!



Dogs Man's Best Friend
4 Oct · 🌐



Made for the American market?

HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member [Click here](#)

Please use email where possible or telephone if you require urgent contact.