



Probuss Club of Sydney

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Newsletter

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June 2025

Issue 476

MEETING DATES

June 3

PROFESSOR JAMES CURRAN

Professor of Modern History

Sydney University

AUSTRALIA AND UKRAINE

ACTIVITIES

June 26 - Tour of Archibald,

Wynne & Sulman Prizes

July 12 – Theatre Party

– Agatha Christie's *Spider Web*

July 14 – Winter Lunch

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

Events of human significance continue to arise, some ephemeral leaving consequences that can be recovered, others not ephemeral leaving unrecoverable swathes of death, destruction and geopolitical shifts paralleling nature's tectonic movements.

Within the last month we have been celebrating the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe. In August there will be added the Victory in the Pacific. These global conflicts were fought by countries that believed civilisation in the manner of respect, relative freedom of expression, association, religion, restraint on 'big brother tactics' and maintaining the civilising aspect of the family unit. Those against whom we fought were of the opposing view, determined to break civil society from humanity as it had evolved over several millennia to the central party line, causes devoid of humanity. The consequences personally and financially of WW II were devastating because the solution could only be found in 'unconditional surrender' by one of the powerful military groupings. There have been few world events in recorded history that 'unconditional surrender' rather than armistice, cease fire, or sheer exhaustion, has brought conflict to an end. This time 80 years has kept predatory challenges at bay, because of surrender.

At our May Meeting where we had the good fortune to hear from two speakers on what might be called precursors to the challenges from which conflicts can result. Our raconteur, Steven Schwartz, described the evolution and resolution of a serious security issue in London and secondly, AFP Assistant Commissioner Kirsty Schofield provided a very interesting insight into the widespread domestic and international activities of the AFP to protect our marvelous country from power hungry and criminal groups.

John Doherty

President

Note: To Register to attend the 3rd June meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club, along with any male guest you plan to host - [click here](#)

FUTURE GUEST SPEAKER

June 3

Professor James Curran – Sydney University

Australia and Ukraine



James Curran teaches political and diplomatic history and is International Editor at *The Australian Financial Review*. His latest book is *Australia's China Odyssey: From Euphoria to Fear* (New South Press, 2024). Prior to joining Sydney University, James served in the Department of The Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Defence and at the Office of National Assessments. In 2013, James was the Keith Cameron Chair of Australian History at University College Dublin and in 2010 a Fulbright

Scholar at Georgetown University in Washington DC. James has published in *Diplomatic History*, *The Journal of Cold War Studies* and *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*. He has also written for *The National Interest*, *Australian Foreign Affairs*, the Council on Foreign Relations 'Asia Unbound' blog and the *East Asia Forum*. He is currently working on a book about former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating and is also writing a short history of Australian foreign and defence policy. Curran is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences. His study of Australian rugby legend David Campese was published in 2022 and is entitled, *Campese: The Last of the Dream Sellers* (Scribe).

MAY MEETING REPORT

President John expressed sincere condolences for distinguished member and past President John Jeremy AM, who passed away on 18 April. A few moments silence was held in remembrance of John.

The President welcomed five guests. Geoff McWilliam advised forthcoming guest speakers including Professor James Curran, Professor of Modern History at Sydney University in June and then Wilsons in September to discuss markets and strategies. Bob Eckstein reported on activities including the Golf Day at Killara on 24 April and thoughts about transitioning it to an annual event. Looking to the future, there will be a tour of the Port Kembla steelworks on 28 May, the Art Gallery of NSW to view

the Archibald, Wynne & Sulman finalists and winners on 26 June, a theatre party to attend a performance of Agatha Christie's Spider Webb on 12 July and the Winter Lunch on 14 July at the Royal Sydney Golf Club.

INDUCTIONS



Chris Luget, Geoffrey Burge, President John Doherty, Geoff Fisher and Geoff McWilliam

Geoffery Burge

Chris Luget introduced Geoffrey Burge his friend of fifteen years. Geoffrey has had a long and extensive career in the field of biomedical sciences. He has a BSc and PhD in chemistry from Oxford University, where he also undertook post-doctoral research. During his career Geoffrey has lived in the UK, Hong Kong and Japan. He was involved in the development of a vaccine against rabies in Wuhan. He became CEO of Beckman Coulter in Australia, the providers of biochemical and life science aids and systems. Following his retirement, Geoffrey went to live in the US for a few years where he devoted a lot of time to teaching young children to swim. He is very fit undertaking long distance endurance cycle races for fun, recently completing in the Lands' End to John o' Groats race. He has a wife Ayomi, three children and one grandchild.

Geoff Fisher

Geoff McWilliam introduced Geoff Fisher who he has known for over 40 years, and more recently as a golfing partner. Geoff started work as an accountant with PWC and has subsequently run many businesses including farms. He is just as comfortable running companies of various sorts as building stone walls at his Palm Beach residence – an excellent tradesman. He enjoys racing vintage cars. Geoff is married to Lynne, has three daughters and five grandchildren

LIFE BEFORE PROBUS

Jim Domiguez CBE AM



Jim has had a distinguished career in stockbroking, investment banking, a director of private and public enterprises across many commodities and technologies. He has interests in wine and pearl farming, media, current affairs, sailing, music, reading, philately and travel. He describes himself as a failed retiree, attending his city office five days a week.

Jim was born in 1938 in Junee, the eldest of nine children. His father drowned in 1959, just three weeks before his 21st birthday. Jim supports the philosophy of living better rather

than living longer. He is very troubled by the antisemitism which is now prevalent in our community.

He believes that laughter is a universal language and supported his approach with a generally lighthearted address including honorable mentions of Groucho Marx, Bob Hope and Barry Humphries. A personal example related to his role as Chairman of St Vincents Hospital where the board largely comprised of doctors who were using too many acronyms. He sought to introduce the Triple A Rule – Always Avoid Acronyms

RACONTEUR

Stephen Schwartz AM



Stephen's story started at home on a Sunday night in April 2004. Whilst working at London University, he received a phone call from Scotland Yard. The officer said he had an important matter to discuss and arrived at Stephen's door 5 minutes later. The officers identified themselves as senior members of Special Branch – they had intelligence that a student at the university was planning a terrorist attack. Within a day or two the university was filled with undercover police in roles from students to maintenance workers.

Six weeks later there were raids in which seven people were arrested in England and two overseas in an action which became known as

Operation Crevice. They were all charged with conspiring to commit a terrorist attack on the night club – The Ministry of Sound, which, when busy, held some 1800 people. Most of the local conspirators were British citizens of Pakistani extraction who had

been radicalised. So how was the plot discovered? A young female clerk in a self-storage depot was concerned that chemicals were being kept in one of the storage units. When the police checked they discovered 600kg of ammonium nitrate, a bomb making ingredient. The university student under suspicion had rented the storage unit. Proving a conspiracy is very difficult and as a result, in mid 2005, the Operation Crevice trial had still not commenced.

On 7 July 2005, four suicide bombs exploded on London public transport. 52 lives were lost and 800 people were injured. During the Operation Crevice trial in 2006, it was revealed that the Crevice conspirators were in contact with two of the suicide bombers involved in the July 2005 bombings, raising issues about police competence. The trial lasted a year. Two of the conspirators were acquitted and others were given life sentences, but with the passage of time some are now being released.

Police have stopped many such incidents, but some get through.

A few years ago, ABC television asked Stephen to participate in the show called; What Keeps Me Up at Night and what keeps Stephen up at night is 'Will we in fact be ready?'

GUEST SPEAKER

Assistant Commissioner Kirsty Schofield APM

Australian Federal Police



Assistant Commissioner Kirsty Schofield began by explaining the AFP role to protect Australians and Australia's national interests from serious criminal threats. Its scope includes enforcing Commonwealth criminal law, protecting airports and national infrastructure from security threats, protecting Australian and foreign dignitaries and providing community policing in the ACT. In addition, it has a global reach through representatives (including some operatives undercover) in 33 countries plus close links with international police agencies, notably in close cooperation with and assistance to Pacific Islands police.

Crimes combatted include fraud, bribery and corruption, serious and organised crime, crimes against children, human trafficking and people smuggling, breaches of international law, crimes against the Commonwealth, airports/aviation, drug crime, terrorism, money laundering & financial crime and cybercrime. Many of these areas are new or rapidly evolving in their sophistication, so the AFP has been expanding rapidly to build expertise and capability, often requiring recruits with skills outside traditional police work, embracing highly specialised computer technologies, forensics, psychologists and AI.

Kirsty's most recent roles in her career have been Assistant Commissioner Eastern Command, based in Sydney covering the populous eastern states, then to Canberra as Assistant Commissioner Crime Command covering overall organised crime, including international activities & drugs and now as Assistant Commissioner Specialist Protection including politicians here and abroad, visiting dignitaries, special facilities, as well as overseeing tactical response teams, maritime response teams and search & rescue. The treatment of several threats to politicians during the recent election campaign was one of the challenges for her team.

An example of her role was the visit to South America. This visit was to reinforce the importance of the relationship between the Australian Federal Police, Colombian National Police and Mexican Authorities. Kirsty was transported into the Colombian jungle in a Black Hawk helicopter to see first-hand how the Colombian National Police operate in this environment. Dismantling drug manufacturing at its source is the most effective way to combat drug importation into Australia. Notably Australia has the second highest cocaine prices globally, hence it is an attractive target for crime groups, who use various means to try to bypass detection, even employing single use submarines.

Kirsty was deeply involved in Special Operation Ironside, in which high technology encrypted mobile phones were developed and released into criminal networks who had believed these phones were secure for their communications. However, in fact the phone's technology had been developed to enable the AFP to monitor the communications. By 2021, there were over 11,000 users in 100 countries (half in Australia), leading to over 14 million communications being intercepted, providing the AFP with extraordinary intelligence on crimes being planned and undertaken. Its success in smashing criminal networks can be seen by Australian statistics such as seizure of over 6 tonnes of drugs, 149 firearms/weapons, \$55M cash, 2,351 offences, thwarting 29 threats to life, etc. Overseas, by mid 2021, Ironside had led to 993 arrests, and seizure of \$58M in currency/cryptocurrency, 220 firearms and 53 tonnes of drugs.

As a further example of her AFP activities, Kirsty oversaw the high-profile case called Operation Elbrus, to uncover and convict the perpetrators in a \$165M PAYG tax fraud, centrally involving the son of the then Deputy Commissioner of the ATO. She described the complicated web of forensic accounting needed to detect, understand and thwart this complex network of companies which had been set up.

After a wide range of questions showing our deep interest, on behalf of members, Paul O'Sullivan thanked Kirsty for giving such a fascinating insight into the management of the expanding roles of the AFP and its achievements in keeping us safe, whilst balancing it with the rights of citizens and legal processes.

It was comforting to all members present to gain an understanding of the scope, dedication and capabilities of the AFP domestically and globally, and to know that the AFP is led by such capable people as Kirsty Schofield.

All members present expressed to me their great appreciation for Kirsty's outstanding presentation, with several commenting it was one of the most interesting they had heard.

Peter James

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

1st Sydney Probus Golf Day

The inaugural Sydney Probus Golf Day was held at the newly renovated Killara Golf Club on 24th April. All 19 attendees were enthusiastic in their enjoyment of the course, the lunch and the company, if not necessarily their golf form.

Winners were grinners, with the accolades awarded to:

2 ball best ball stableford

- 1st John Fitzpatrick & Geoff McWilliam 41 points

- 2nd Stuart Murray & Bill Webster 39 points

Nearest the pin - Ian James 216 cm.



The course was beautifully presented, even though for many of the rest of us sometimes more than challenging our expertise. However, we all had a lot of fun, in fortunately glorious sunshine, devoid of the forecast showers.

Special thanks go to our organiser Bill Thomas, and to ground staff, the pro, and bar staff who all made us so welcome.

There was universal support for the day to be held again next year. Many other members expressed regret at being unable to play this year due to the short week between Easter and Anzac Day, when many were away or had other commitments. Although spring or autumn may provide optimal temperature for golf, hopefully next year a date may be possible which suits more members who want to play.

Peter James

Future events (please see the website and emails for details)

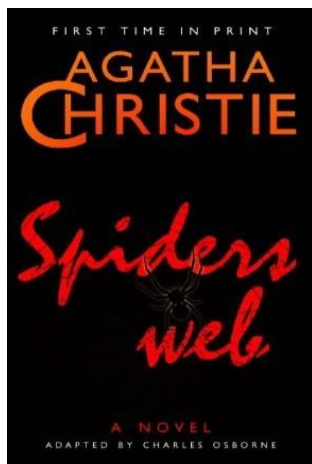
Tour of Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes 2025



On **26 June 2025**, a private tour of the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW has been arranged for 40 members and guests. The Archibald Prize for portrait painting is Australia's most celebrated and sometimes controversial – art award. This is a great opportunity to inspect the finalists and winners to make up your own mind. An early lunch is also proposed at the Gallery Café. See

the website for further details.

Theatre Party – Agatha Christie’s *Spider Web*



On **Saturday 12 July** a theatre party has been arranged for a performance of Agatha Christie’s play *Spiders Web* at 2:30pm at the Zenith Theatre, Chatswood. The performance is by the Pymble Players. The organizer, our very own Kim Oates is learning his lines as a member of the cast. A light lunch prior to the performance is planned.

The Winter Lunch will be held at the Royal Sydney Golf Club on Monday **14 July 2025**. The Speaker will be Dr Stephanie Ward, a geriatrician and a star of the ABC TV series *Old People’s Home for 4 Year Olds*.

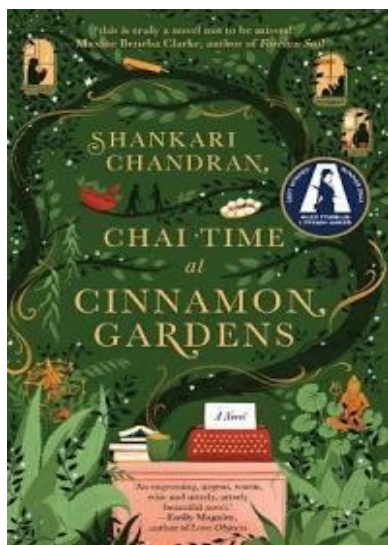
Looking ahead, the **Christmas Lunch** is booked for **8 December 2025**, at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron. Please add this important annual event to your diary.

Bob Eckstein & Kim Oates
Events Coordinators

BOOK REVIEW

Chai time at Cinnamon Gardens

by Shankari Chandran (2022) 353 pages – Fiction



A fascinating introduction to the Tamil diaspora in Australia, in the aftermath of the Sri Lankan civil war between 1987 and 2009. This highly readable novel traces the history of an extended Tamil family which, having fled to Australia, encounters racism here. There are many flashbacks to the bloody conflict in Sri Lanka.

To me, a worthy winner of the 2023 Miles Franklin literary award. Others may find the book too long and too obviously focused on “cultural erasure”. To me, the characters were real, believable and well described. Also, the story and the writing are first-class.

So read it if you are interested in Sri Lanka, problems facing immigrants to Australia and racism. Therefore, highly recommended, but with the caveat that some may find it ‘over the top’.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

Post Election Blues

A driver is stuck in a traffic jam on the motorway. Nothing is moving. Suddenly a man knocks on the window. The driver rolls down his window and asks, "What's going on?"

"Terrorists down the road have kidnapped Anthony Albanese, Peter Dutton and Adam Bandt. They're asking for a \$10 million ransom, otherwise they will douse them with petrol and set them on fire. We're going from car to car, taking up a collection." The driver asks, "How much is everyone giving on average?"

"Most people are giving about four litres."

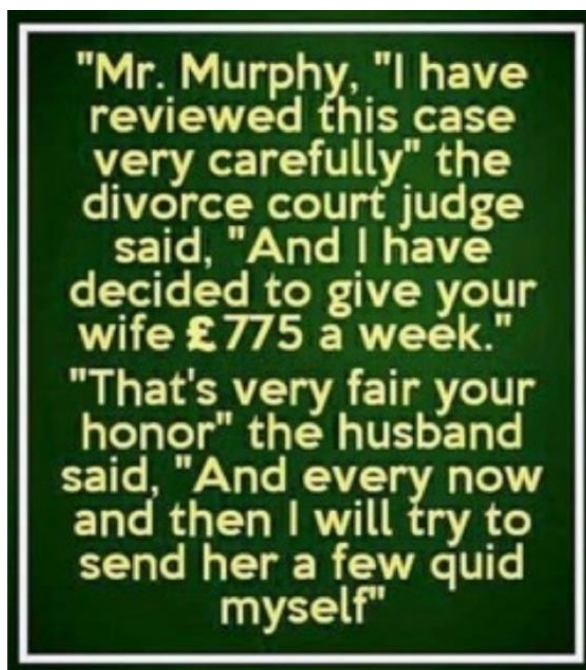
A Contribution from a New(ish) Member

An ambitious executioner is always trying to get ahead.

Note to a keen bachelor: Say it diamonds, say it in mink, but never ever say it in ink!

Every dog has its day, but the dog with a broken tail has its weekend

The Law at Work



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.