



Probuss Club of Sydney

www.sydneyprobuss.org

Newsletter

Private and confidential – for Probuss use only and not to be used for any other purpose

July 2025

Issue 477

MEETING DATES

July 1

The Hon. GEORGE PALMER AM KC
LEARN HOW TO COMPOSE MUSIC!

ACTIVITIES

June 26 - Tour of Archibald,
Wynne & Sulman Prizes

July 12 – Theatre Party
– Agatha Christie's *Spider Web*

July 14 – Winter Lunch
– Royal Sydney Golf Club

August 21 – Tour of Charles Perkins
Centre, Sydney University

CONTENTS

Future Guest Speaker

June Meeting Report

Guest Speaker Report

Social Activities Program

Book Review

A Touch of Humour

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

Our recent monthly presentations have developed an understanding of the forensic study of events of wide interest, including; medical, ethical, military, and community, followed by the security of individuals and groups from prospective attacks, and then stopping for a moment in June to consider how the history of today's world political environment, economic and geopolitical will be recorded, each presentation having the present or recent past set down, and prediction as to where we head to minimise the challenges. The latter characteristic is like predicting the weather, climate, politics, etc., where we should keep in mind Keynes' classic remark (paraphrased): "prediction, particularly if it is about the future, is most difficult!"

In July we move to music as a provider of metaphysical sedation, probably beneficial in assisting the salving the mind's worries, and it is strictly a personal matter of enjoyment, in comparison to almost everything else in our daily lives.

Music can provide a contrast to the much too active flow of 'good or bad news' stirring the mind and arguing solutions to matters beyond the individual control of any one of us as we debate how we would settle whatever 'should be done' – prediction. Who could be better to describe the creation of the highest human music form than having the benefit of Australia's only living composer of opera speak to us on Composing Music and Opera on the 1st of July.

John Doherty

President

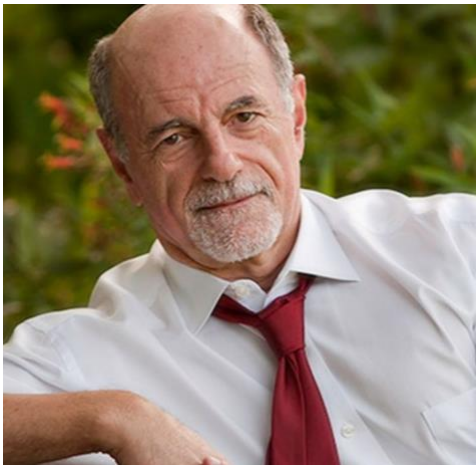
Note: To Register to attend the 1st July meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club, along with any male guest you plan to host - [click here](#)

FUTURE GUEST SPEAKER

1 July

The Hon. George Palmer AM KC

Learn How to Compose Music!



George Palmer has had an outstanding career initially in the Law, from Solicitor to Barrister then a Judge of the Supreme Court of NSW and subsequently his first love, composing music.

George Palmer was born in 1947. He graduated in Arts and Law from Sydney University in 1970 and practiced as a solicitor specializing in commercial law. In 1974 he was called to the Bar and in 1986 he became a Queens Counsel. He was a Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales from 2001 to 2011.

As a youth, Palmer studied piano with Frank Warbrick and Neta Maughan, both eminent teachers. He has been composing since he was a teenager but never sought to have his music performed. By chance, his music came to the attention of the ABC in 2003, resulting in an episode of Australian Story on ABC TV in 2004, a live broadcast by ABC FM of a concert of his orchestral music and the release by ABC Classics of a CD of his music, *Attraction of Opposites*.

Since then, he has received many commissions. A Mass, *A Child is Born*, for choir, soloists and orchestra, was commissioned by Ars Musica Australis in 2005 and was recorded by ABC Classics with Cantillation and Sinfonia Australis, conducted by Dr Paul Stanhope. The CD, *Exaltate Dominum*, released in 2007, contains Palmer's other choral works, also performed by Cantillation.

George has numerous other compositions including a Papal Mass composition for World Youth Day.

George is married with three children and lives in Sydney.

JUNE MEETING REPORT

The President welcomed four guests. Geoff McWilliam advised forthcoming speakers including Professor James Curran at this meeting, George Palmer KC AM a former Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW and a composer of classical music in July, Stephen Loosely AM in August and then Wilsons Advisory in September to discuss markets and strategies. Kim Oates reported on activities including the successful tour of the Port Kembla Steelworks in May. Coming up, there will be a tour of the Art Gallery of NSW to view the Archibald prize on 26 June, a theatre party to attend a performance of Agatha Christie's *Spider's Web* on 12 July, now fully subscribed

(waitlist available) and the Winter Lunch on 14 July at the Royal Sydney Golf Club with guest speaker Dr Stephanie Ward. Bob Eckstein spoke about the Orange FOOD Train on 27-29 March 2026, which is a part of the celebrated annual Orange FOOD Week, a week that showcases the food and wine of the Orange NSW region. More details below in Social Activities - Future Events and in the forthcoming email announcement, as firm bookings will be required by September.

INDUCTION

Paul Richmond

Chris Luget introduced Dr Paul Richmond, who he met about a year ago at the Ensemble Theatre. They had struck up a conversation about things to do in retirement. Paul emigrated from England when he was seven years old, studied at Sydney Boys High and then medicine at Sydney University. He devoted his working



life to pathology. He spent time at RNSH and then studied overseas with a focus on bringing all the elements of pathology together with a holistic approach for problem solving. Back in Australia, Paul started his own practice then worked for Douglass Hanly Moir now Sonic Healthcare. His specialty is skin care, sun protection and infectious disease. Regarded as a great mentor, his passion is passing on his knowledge of pathology to others. Paul is now retired and lives at Bellevue Hill.

President John Doherty, Paul Richmond and Chris Luget

LIFE BEFORE PROBUS

Phil Barnes



Phil Barnes was born in Paddington in 1952, growing up in Pennant Hills, a keen Boy Scout, attended Normanhurst Boys High and in 1971 commenced first year medicine at Sydney University in the 'Age of Aquarius'. Although some memories are a little faded, he does remember meeting his future wife Rosemary at the White Horse Hotel in Newtown. They were married at the RNSH chapel in 1978 where they were both working as Residents. Patients formed a guard of honour. He passed the Royal College of Physicians exam, one year later than his wife, resulting in an interesting dinner table conversation!

In 1982, Phil trained in gastroenterology at the quaint St Mark's Hospital in London and researched anorectal physiology for his MD

thesis. In the interests of time, Phil commented that he would be happy to discuss that subject in more detail, with anyone interested, over lunch!

Returning to Sydney, Phil established a practice in St Leonards and became a visiting medical officer at the Concord, RNSH and the Mater Hospitals and a consultant with the RAN at HMAS Penguin. His first sea voyage on HMAS Hobart was marred by his catastrophic seasickness followed a train trip back to Sydney from Jervis Bay. He was appointed Head of Gastroenterology at RNSH in 1991

In 2001, a mid-life crisis led to the purchase of a farm near Oberon. He had no farming experience but quickly learnt a lot about cattle and their habits, not to mention the strength, resilience and work ethic of country people and the lack of services for those who produce food and fibre west of the Sydney basin sandstone curtain.

Phil retired in 2020. He has three daughters and 10 grandchildren, all living in Sydney and providing wonderful additions to Rosemary and his lives. They have skied, hiked or cycled in all continents except Antarctica – A Fortunate Life!

John Kell



John's family story started in Sydney with seven convicts in his life from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd fleets. The baby of one of the convicts was Samuel Freeman who went on to help build the road across the Blue Mountains with William Cox in 1814/15.

John, a keen Boy Scout and bushwalker, has walked on the Shoalhaven, in PNG, the Overland Track in Tasmania, Kosciuszko, NZ, Italy, France and Argentina.

He studied Civil Engineering at Sydney University, graduating in 1973. In the final year the Eastern Suburbs railway was being built by Roberts Construction who were desperate for graduate engineers to support their South

African business. He was offered and accepted a Job in Johannesburg. Following an agreement with his future wife prior to his departure, John returned to Sydney after twelve months and daily aerograms, to marry Sally.

In 1977, they moved to the UK as John wanted to gain a membership on the British Institute of Engineers. He joined a firm of consulting engineers in Peterborough, just north of London. Having gained his MIE(UK), he returned to Sydney about 18 months later and then spent about six years working as a consulting engineer.

John's father was involved with an investment casting company Hycast Metals with John joining him in 1990. John's daughter now runs Hycast providing him with time for other activities such as Probus. Investment casting involves making a wax pattern then surrounding it with ceramic, melting out the wax and pouring molten metal into the ceramic mould to make an object. Rolls Royce use the same method to make single crystal turbine blades. Hycast makes architectural features and other objects. Only two companies in Australia undertake investment casting. Fortunately, the high quality of the castings allows Hycast to compete with "cheaper" imports.

In retirement, John's engineering passion is the Mt Foxton water supply project which will require the construction of a 10,000 gigalitre dam (one of the three biggest in Australia) and a 20 kilometre tunnel to gravity feed 1,100 gigalitres of tropical water per year from the Herbert River, just north of the Burdekin River in Northern Queensland to the Murray River and Adelaide, thereby restoring the Murray-Darling Basin water balance. A professor at Sydney University is keen to discuss the project and John is keen to gain university support.

Another pet project is to change the spelling of Engineer to Ingeener for 'ingenuity' and thinking outside the square! He's very pleased to be able to share his dreams with Probus!

GUEST SPEAKER

Professor James Curran

Australia in a Trumpian World



In introducing Professor Curran, Geoff McWilliam commented that our speaker was both a Professor of Modern History and a passionate rugby fan, with a book on David Campese published in 2022.

Professor Curran commented initially that responding to the quick-fire actions and announcements of the current Trump administration reminded him of an earlier experience in cricket nets dealing with a wayward cricket ball machine firing balls at him rapidly and erratically!

Speaking on what he saw as the fundamentals, Professor Curran noted that Trump's lodestar is contempt for the old order. This is reflected in his cutting a swathe through the rules-based order established after WW2, including the multilateral trading system. His language reflects his wanting America to get its own way in the world, and his view that "might is right." He has little time for the liberal international order and his focus is on the western hemisphere.

In recent weeks with the changes to tariff levels he is looking a little "ratty", including with emergence of the expression TACO – Trump Always Chickens Out. However, his Cabinet is performing and any adverse trends in the economy have not yet emerged. The polls indicate that he is not in bad shape politically. In geopolitical terms the Administration has intensified its language on what is expected of other countries, particularly on defence spending. The Europeans probably needed the "cattle prod" in terms of providing for more their own self-defence. They have undertaken to support Ukraine even if America was to pull back. But for how long?

At the weekend Asian countries were told by US Defence Secretary Hegseth that America expected them to increase their spending on defence to 5% of GDP; the figure for Australia was 3.5%. There has been quite a lot of pushback including from Australia with the PM indicating our defence spending would increase to 2.33% by

2032. There needs to be more discussion with the electorate about our defence needs given the strategic environment, though the “threat” is rarely pronounced with any clarity by policymakers. There is also uncertainty regarding receipt of the Virginia Class submarines given the US’s own demand and its limited production capability (1.3 per year when it needs to lift to 2.4). In addition, our own resources will be severely stretched by the need to upgrade our Collins Class submarines and to design and build SSN AUKUS. All in all, a huge demand on our defence industry capability! Turning to US Defence Secretary Hegseth’s speech at the weekend, Professor Curran commented specifically on the point being made that Australia and many other countries who have a major trading relationship with China and a security relationship with the US are going to “complicate things” in a time of crisis (like a war over Taiwan). Given the difficulty of the choice that would need to be made, we need to do everything in our power to avoid the conflict arising in the first place. Hegseth has little stature or authority.

Secretary Hegseth’s remarks regarding the trade/security dilemma are consistent with views that have been expressed in Washington in past years, including expressions of concern about Australia’s trade dependence on China. Our PM and Trade Minister have pushed back hard, but there is no point in demonising Trump or mockery. The situation requires extraordinary diplomatic guile. Post Trump things are unlikely to go back to past norms. In dealing with the trade/security dilemma “unstitching the Aust-US Alliance” would have significant consequences for Australia including but not limited to significantly increased defence spending. What are Australia’s other alternatives? Armed neutrality? Closer relations with other countries? Finding a new great and powerful friend? But who?

On the issues that Trump’s ascension has raised, including about the reliability of the US as a partner and Australia’s alternatives, we need to apply much more deep thought and avoid group think.

Other points that arose during Question time included:

- Higher tariffs are not the answer to fixing the US national debt (currently US\$36 trillion).
- PM Albanese has been more robust in his comments since the election and the US will have concluded that he is not to be kicked around, particularly given the importance of Australia as the host of US Defence facilities such as Pine Gap.
- In the event defence spending is to be increased, the Australian Government will need to start a conversation with the population about the need and how to finance it. (Professor Curran earlier commented that the NDIS would be a good place to start).
- We should be doing a lot more to strengthen our relations with Indonesia.
- Things could get messy for Trump if by the mid-terms his rusted on supporters find there has been no benefit for them.

In thanking Professor Curran on behalf of the members, Richard Broinowski highlighted the need for Australia to develop closer relations with our Asian neighbours.

Alan Locke

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Port Kembla Steelworks

On Wednesday 28 May a total of 27 members and guests travelled by train to the Port Kembla Steelworks. The Steelworks arranged for a bus to meet them at Coniston



train station and convey them to the visitor centre where they were shown a film on The Making of Steel, then fitted out with hard hats, jackets, gloves and goggles before re-boarding the bus to head for the works.

This is the only steelworks still functioning in Australia. It concentrates on flat steel sheets which are rolled into varying

thicknesses, some thin enough to roll into coils. The guides were excellent, thoughtful and knowledgeable, explaining the process from iron ore through to flat sheet steel. At the conclusion of the tour John Doherty gave a gracious vote of thanks before being returned to Coniston station for lunch at the adjacent Coniston Hotel.

Kim Oates

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

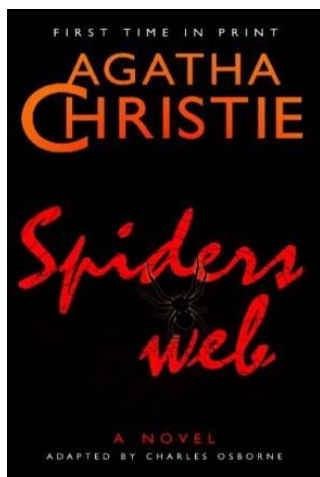
Tour of Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes 2025



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's Web*



On **Saturday 12 July 2025** a theatre party has been arranged for a performance of Agatha Christie's play *Spider's 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.

Fully booked, but a Club waitlist is available for cancellations for the 12 July session. Most evening shows have vacancies for personal bookings - on line at <https://pymbleplayers.com.au/>

Winter Lunch - Royal Sydney Golf Club



Our 2025 Winter Lunch will be held at Royal Sydney Golf Club Monday **14 July 2025**.

Following the success of last year's Christmas lunch at this venue, the Club has decided to return here for our popular Winter Lunch. Canapés and pre-luncheon drinks on the front lawn overlooking the Harbour will be followed by a two-course meal with wines and coffee.

Our guest speaker will be Dr Stephanie Ward, a geriatrician who is well known for her role in the ABC TV series, *Old People's Home for 4 Year-Olds*. This Emmy Award winning series explored the health benefits of bringing together the very young and the more mature. Her topic will be *Brain for the Ages*.

Visit to the Charles Perkins Centre, Sydney University



There will be an opportunity to visit the Charles Perkins Centre, Sydney University on Thursday **21 August 2025**. Charles Perkins was the first indigenous person to graduate from an Australian university. As a student, he organised a student bus tour 'The Freedom Ride' around NSW to draw attention to the state of indigenous health, education and housing. Perkins went on to hold several distinguished positions in Australia. Sydney University has recognised his contributions by establishing the Charles Perkins Centre, sharing his philosophy of collaboration, inclusivity and challenging the status quo in healthcare. Further details will be circulated by email and on the website shortly.

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.

FOOD Train Weekend in Orange, NSW



The FOOD Train weekend package is the perfect getaway for food lovers. Hosted by local foodies, this 3-day guided trip on **27-29 March 2026** showcases some of the Orange region's best food and wine experiences and includes tickets to FOOD Week's most sought-after event, Forage. Enjoy exclusive local tours, selected FOOD Week events, and dining at some of the region's best restaurants and wineries. The cost will be: \$1590 each twin share or \$1770 for a single. Bookings to be finalized by September 2025. Only 30 places are available.

Activities included:

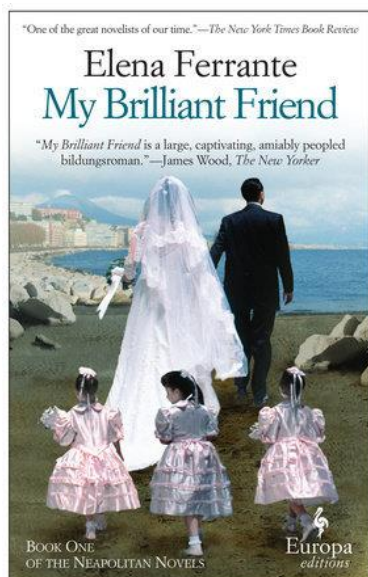
- Return train ticket in reserved carriage from Sydney to Orange, with the option to upgrade to a flight home.
- 2 nights' accommodation (twin share or single) at the Quest, Orange.
- Bus transfers between events and trains.
- Full day FORAGE experience on Sat 28 March.
- Breakfast at the Sunday Producers Market and Brunch on Sunday, the official closing event of FOOD Week.
- All meals over the three days.

Bob Eckstein & Kim Oates
Events Coordinators

BOOK REVIEW

My Brilliant Friend

by Elena Ferrante (2012) 331 pages – Fiction



Memories of childhood with all its, fears, taboos and obsessions. Compounded by poverty and provincialism in 1950s Naples. This modern classic deserves to be read again and again. However, try to find a copy (like mine) with an index of characters – comprising at least 10 families with multiple children. The heady mix of friendships, rivalries, hatred and claustrophobia have made this book and its successors a worldwide phenomenon.

Although translated from the original Italian, the prose is amazingly lucid and the book is difficult to put down. Even though I first read it about eight years ago, it was just as good the second time round.

Elena, the narrator, undergoes all the traumas of childhood and adolescence. Lila, the friend, is just as enigmatic and dangerous.

As Book 1 of the so-called *Neapolitan novels*, it has had amazing success and has been branded by the New York Times Book Review as the best book of the 21st century. It is also part of a successful TV series and has been followed by three successors. So, worth reading for the first time and yet again, if you have already read it.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

Pay Negotiation

Phil walks into his boss's office one day and says, 'Sir, I'll be honest with you. I know the economy isn't great, but I've got three companies after me, and I'd like to ask for a raise, respectfully.' After a few minutes of haggling, the boss finally agrees to give him a 5 percent raise, and he happily gets up to leave. 'By the way,' the boss asks as Phil leaves his office, 'which three companies are after you?' Phil replies, 'the power company, water company, and phone company.'



Machine Learning

Standing in front of the shredder, the new employee looked a little confused, so a supervisor offered to help. Supervisor: 'Are you okay?' New Employee: 'I'm trying to get this thing to work?' Supervisor: She takes the wad of paper from his hands and feeds it through. New Employee: 'Oh great, thanks! But where do I get the copies from?'

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.