



# Probis Club of Sydney

www.sydneyprobis.org

## Newsletter

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April 2026

Issue 485

### MEETING DATES

7 April 2026

Professor Penny Gay

Comments on Jane Austen

5 May 2026

Kate Mills CEO

Property Industry Foundation

- Youth Homelessness

### ACTIVITIES

14 April – Historic NSW Rail  
Museum, Thirlmere

16 April – Golf Day  
Killara Golf Club

15 June – Winter Lunch  
Royal Sydney Golf Club

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Gentlemen,*

### Tribute to Immediate Past President

Gentlemen, I would like to begin by acknowledging our newly appointed Immediate Past President, John Doherty. John's steady, composed, and humorous approach was instrumental in guiding our Club effortlessly through the past year. We are fortunate that he will continue to serve on the Committee, and I am confident that his involvement will remain a positive influence for the Club.

### March Meeting Highlights

During our March meeting, Professor Rick Shine presented a compelling exploration of the threat posed by Cane Toads. He discussed innovative strategies for controlling their spread and protecting native wildlife, including snakes and goannas. Among these strategies, Professor Shine described the breeding of "Peter Pan" cane toad tadpoles, which are perpetually juvenile. These tadpoles exhibit cannibalistic behaviour, consuming the eggs of other cane toads and thus contributing to population control.

Yours sincerely,

*Rod Binsted.*

President

**Note:** To Register to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026 Probis Meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club, along with any male guest you plan to host - [click here](#)

## FUTURE GUEST SPEAKER

7 April 2026

### Dr Penny Gay, Professor Emerita - Comments on Jane Austen



Dr Penny Gay is Professor Emerita in English at the University of Sydney, where she taught for 35 years. Her 2002 book *Jane Austen and the Theatre* was the culmination of many years of thinking about the unique qualities of Austen's novels. Penny has also published extensively on Shakespeare. She has been retired for some 15 years, which allows her to spend more time in London, exploring these themes and enjoying her English family and grandchildren.

As Jane Austen was writing her extraordinarily well-crafted novels, what did she imagine about her characters' bodies in spaces, in contact with specific objects, speaking, listening, watching, in a moment of time? What did she expect the reader to notice, perhaps unconsciously? In this talk, Dr Penny Gay will revisit a few famous scenes from the novels, focusing on place, objects, and characters' speech and actions. The talk will be accompanied by some unusual visual images she has collected over the years.

**Geoffrey McWilliam**  
*Speaker Co-ordinator*

## MARCH MEETING REPORT

President John Doherty opened the monthly general meeting and welcomed members and three guests. John informed members that this will be his last meeting as President as he will retire at this morning's AGM, along with all members of the committee. John acknowledged his appreciation of all committee members for their great co-ordination, communication and important work behind the scenes.

The President updated the meeting on membership which has reached 151 including the two new members elected at the today's committee meeting. During the year, 24 new members joined the Club and 15 members discontinued their membership.

Geoff McWilliam advised the forthcoming speakers, including today's speaker Professor Rick Shine AM FAA who will talk about cane toads. On 7 April, Dr Penny Gay will discuss novelist Jane Austen and then on 5 May, Kate Mills, CEO of the Property Industry Foundation will provide insights into youth homelessness.

Kim Oates updated us that the activities program for 2026 including on 14 April a visit to the NSW Rail Museum at Thirlmere, on 5 June a Naval Historical Society harbour cruise focussing on the 1942 Japanese submarine attack, a golf day at Killara Golf Club on 16 April and the Winter Lunch on 15 June. For further information see the Activities section below and the Club website.

## 44<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting – Probus Club of Sydney Inc.

The 44<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting was held immediately following the monthly general meeting. Formal minutes will follow in due course.

President John commented on the strengths of our Club which he's confident are sure to be maintained under the incoming President. We have excellent communications, good and wide-ranging discussions, very good attendance, a thriving organisation, conviction, great activities, life and cohesiveness. All of which qualities are attractive to existing and incoming members.

Ian Lansdown presented the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Wayne Jones who was unable to be present. The three outstanding elements reported were; 24 new members, a comfortable profit, and that annual/joining fees will not change for the coming year.

The management committee is largely unchanged except for the progression of President, Vice President and the addition of a second activities member to assist with the large workload of the role.

The Management Committee nominations were:

President	Rod Binsted
Vice President*	Kim Oates (*includes Welfare)
Secretary	Chris Luget
Treasurer	Wayne Jones
Guest Speakers	Geoff McWilliam
Activities 1	Bob Eckstein
Activities 2	Peter Nochar
Membership	Hugh Hopkins
Newsletter	Rod Hanson
Club Services	Robert Warburton
Systems Administration/IT	Tony Andrew
Immediate PP (Ex Officio)	John Doherty

All positions were declared filled in line with the nominations and all committee members were congratulated on their appointments.

Secretary, Chris Luget mentioned that a number of committee members had expressed a desire not to stand for membership beyond the current year. Club members who have an interest in joining the committee are encouraged to communicate their interest with a committee member.

Outgoing President John Doherty congratulated the incoming President Rod Binsted and in so doing, transferred the chain of office to Rod.



**Incoming President Rod Binsted congratulates Immediate Past President John Doherty for his successful presidential year.**

At the conclusion of the meeting, President Rod Binsted thanked the members for the honour of allowing him to be president for the coming year. He thanked John Doherty for his outstanding job as president, his cool, calm and collected demeanour, his ability in managing people and meetings. Rod also thanked the members for their confidence in him and thanked the committee for the job that it has done, for standing behind the president and without whom nothing would be possible. Rod is planning a steady as it goes year with the Club to function as it has and thereby continuing its success.

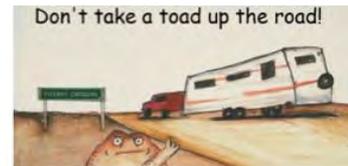
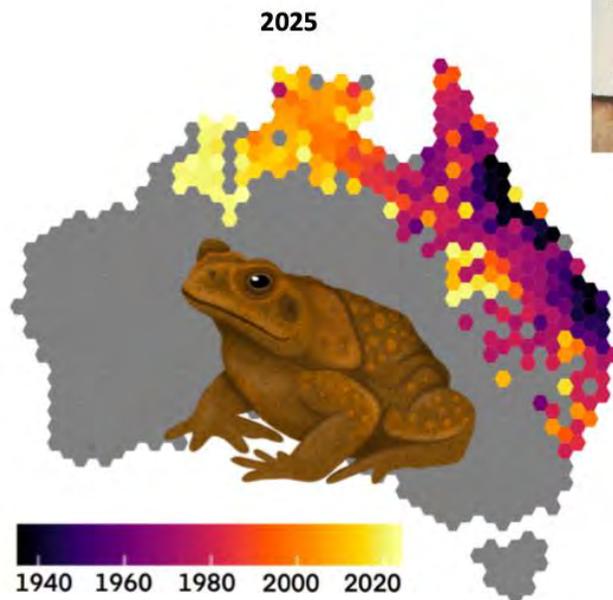
## NEW WAYS TO CONTROL CANE TOADS

### Professor Rick Shine AM FAA



Introduced by Geoff McWilliam, Professor Shine explained that the cane toad, a large frog, is prevalent throughout the world except, until recently, in Australia. When fully grown they have a gland behind their neck containing toxins deadly to both humans and animals. Noted for their capacity to kill beetles they were deliberately introduced to Australian cane fields. Unexpectedly, they have since advanced at an increasing speed (now 50-60 kms/year) across the north of the continent and are expected to reach Broome within a couple of years.

Due to their toxins, cane toads kill wildlife such as snakes, quolls, goannas and freshwater crocodiles, and do so within a few months of the toads arriving. In other countries, with a long history of cane toads, animals have learned to leave the toads alone or have evolved the ability to tolerate their poisons. Interestingly, rats, birds and large ants are not affected. Small toads cause sickness rather than death.



Cane Toad Progress Across Northern & Eastern Australia

What to do in Australia to deal with them? An initial idea was to release small toads in advance of the large toad invasion so that wildlife ate them, got sick and learned not to approach them again! However, the public reaction to introducing small cane toads in areas where there weren't any was, perhaps not surprisingly, quite hostile! However, small scale trials confirmed that this technique was successful and, supported by a substantial PR program, the WA government approved a large scale trial that is currently underway and achieving very pleasing wildlife conservation results.

A recent study in the Kimberley region with crocodiles fed toxin free toad carcasses injected with nausea-inducing chemicals taught them to avoid cane toads, with resultant lower mortality rates.

But the question of how to control cane toads remains and Professor Shine and his team have concluded that we need to stop them breeding. It has been observed in Australia that toad tadpoles are attracted to the poison in cane toad eggs and will eat them voraciously. The challenge then is to stop tadpoles maturing into toads i.e., encourage gene-edited "Peter Pans" (eternal tadpoles) that are voracious cannibals but not dangerous.

#### RECAP

Toad tadpoles are non-toxic and so do not endanger native fauna, but the tadpoles eat toad eggs, disrupt development of hatchlings, and outcompete younger larvae

So toad tadpoles are the perfect toad-control agents, until they metamorphose and become part of the problem



**A Cane Toad Tadpole**

Professor Shine and his team have also been involved in work leading to the development and commercialisation of cane toad traps that use the toad's own alarm pheromones (extracted from adult poison glands) to lure and catch thousands of tadpoles in natural waterbodies.

In concluding he acknowledged the members of his team, expressed confidence they would achieve their aim of controlling the cane toad population and reiterated the ongoing importance of bringing the Australian population along with their research.

***Alan Locke and Alec Brennan***

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

### Recent Events

#### Guided Tour of the National Maritime Museum – Monday 11 March '26



**The Sydney Probus Crew at the National Maritime Museum**

On 11 March, a group of 14 was taken on an interesting 'Behind the Scenes' tour at the National Maritime Museum. Our guide, a former merchant navy officer took us to areas not normally available to the public.

We saw, amongst other things, kayaks used to cross the Tasman to New Zealand, gold medal winning rowing skulls used in the Barcelona Olympic Games, indigenous bark and dugout canoes, workshops and the figure-head made for the James Craig sailing ship. Interestingly, the James Craig figure head was never mounted as it was the wrong size.

An interesting item was the beautifully crafted rowing boat, used to transport philanthropist Dame Eadith Walker and her parasol from the Walker Estate at Concord across the Parramatta River.

We had lunch at the Museum café with some members remaining at the Museum to explore the other exhibits and the historic vessels moored there.

***Kim Oates***

**Future Events** (please see the website and emails for further details)

**A Private Tour of the Historic NSW Rail Museum and Heritage Train Ride  
- Rail Heritage Comes to Life - Tuesday 14 April 2026**



The NSW Rail Museum, located within the historic town of Thirlmere, is a fascinating and exciting step back in time for all ages with interactive displays, glimpses behind the scenes at Australia's newest locomotive roundhouse and a priceless collection of historic locomotives, carriages, wagons and memorabilia.

On this private tour we will follow the timeline of rail development from the invention of the very first steam engine to today and discover how NSW railways brought life to town and country. We will see inside the driver's cab of an historic steam locomotive, explore a mail van, walk through a prison van and admire the Governor-General's carriage in all its glory. Then visit the Great Train Hall to see an impressive collection of locomotives, carriages and wagons – each with a unique story.

Next, as long as we have a minimum of 25 guests, we will take a ride on a heritage train, followed by a light lunch in the museum cafeteria.

Assemble at the entrance 10 Barbour Road Thirlmere at 10.30am then walk (10 minutes) to the museum for a private tour commencing at 11 am followed by the train ride at 12 noon.

**Probus Golf at Killara – Thursday 16 April 2026**



**After very successful inaugural Sydney Probus Golf Day a year ago, we expect even more players at the outstanding Killara Golf Club on Thursday 16th April. Please register now to assist planning.**

Play will start about 9.30am with a shotgun start off 17th, 18th and 1st tees. Carts will be provided for all players to share. Group draw times will be provided by email a few days

before the event. Coffee and snacks may be purchased from the bar from 9am, then lunch/snacks on completion. Food and beverages will be paid individually when ordering from the bar.

### **The Competition**

The competition is a stableford event and two-ball winners will receive golf ball prizes and honourable publicity in our next newsletter.

Those who are no longer a member of a golf club are very welcome to play, using their last handicap.

Refunds will be paid for essential cancellations prior to 15th April and to all participants if the function is cancelled due to weather.

### **Lunch and Prize Giving**

We anticipate that all groups' games will be completed by 2pm and lunch and prize giving will follow on tables set aside in the lower bar. Arrangements provide for individual selection of food, drinks and payment.

### **Non-player participation**

Non-player participation, including lunch, is very much encouraged on the course and at lunch time. Please advise Peter James or Bill Thomas for table set up.

### **Entry fees, including cart and ball competition cost**

Killara Golf Club members- \$30

Non-Killara Golf club members \$155

[Click to register](#)

## **Winter Lunch at the Royal Sydney Golf Club – Monday 15 June 2026**

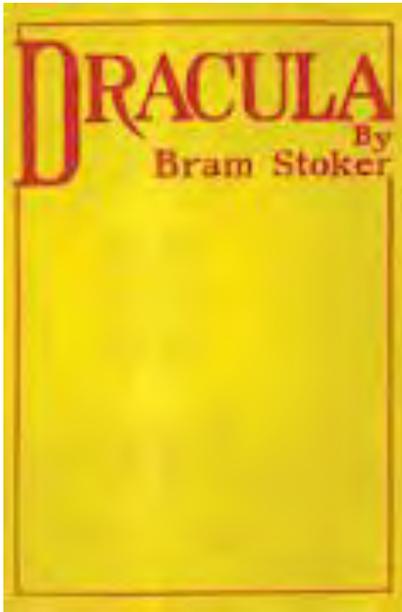
**\*\*SAVE THE DATE\*\***



***Kim Oates & Bob Eckstein***  
***Events Coordinators***

### Dracula

by Bram Stoker (1897) 454 pages – Fiction



There is so much more to this book than you remember from old movies, cartoons and stories to frighten the children. It is the essential gothic vampire thriller. Although probably too long for today's reader, with our short attention span, it does repay reading for those who love Charles Dickens, George Eliot and other Victorian writers.

The hunt for the vampire is quite engrossing (boy's own annual?) and multi-layered. We are introduced to all the late Victorian obsessions with horror, sex, the supernatural, race, medicine and religion. There is time and space for all of these in the 454 pages. Nonetheless it is well written and, in many ways, a page turner.

With the new film version of Frankenstein recently released, who knows when there will be a Dracula revival? So read it for the writing, suspense and historical value. Gothic thrillers always seem to be in vogue.

*David Castle*

## A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

### Ask a Simple Question...!

My wife is pregnant and my doctor asked me if I had ever been present at a childbirth before.

I said:, "Yes just once."

He asked, "What was it like?"

I replied, "It was dark, then suddenly very bright!"

## Ask a Silly Question...!!



## Tradesman Language!!!



## 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.