



Probus Club of Sydney

www.sydneyprobust.org

Newsletter

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May 2026

Issue 486

MEETING DATES

5 May 2026

Kate Mills CEO

Property Industry Foundation

- Why Young People Make Up 40% of Homelessness

2 June 2026

George Gittoes AM

Afghanistan and Ukraine

- From The Inside

ACTIVITIES

5 June – Sydney Harbour Cruise
Japanese Mini-Sub Attack 1942

15 June – Winter Lunch
Royal Sydney Golf Club

14 July – Guided Tour of Salon
de Refuses, SH Ervin Gallery

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A Touch of Humour

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

At our April meeting, we heard from our USA ex-marine, Max Garcia, who combined the roles of Life Before Probus and Raconteur to recount a remarkable personal journey — from a challenging start to life as an orphan in Mexico, through adoption by an American couple, to serving as an active combatant on two tours of duty in Iraq. Having witnessed the trauma of friends killed and maimed, Max found love, peace and tranquillity on leave in Sydney, where he met the woman who became his Australian wife.

Max is now deeply involved with *The Youth Regiment*, a programme dedicated to mentoring troubled young people, helping them regain control of their lives and build self-esteem. He is also an accomplished motivational speaker and a fine example of the "fit mind, fit body" philosophy — or perhaps, given our demographic, "fit body, fit mind."

In an engaging counterpoint, Emerita Professor Penny Gay delivered a fascinating lecture on *Aspects of the Life of Jane Austen*. Penny explored a typical village of Austen's era — with its main street, adjacent church lane and surrounding estates. She noted the strategic placement of the butcher's shop and the prominence of the larger houses at either end of the village. We were also treated to a map of a typical village of the period, drawn by Penny's husband, Robert.

Penny highlighted the central role of gossip as a primary means of communication during Austen's lifetime (1775–1817), now some 250 years ago. Her novels are rich with innuendo and subtle messaging — none more so than the use of the harp by the alluring Mary Crawford, an instrument chosen as much for its seductive symbolism as for its music.

The overwhelming message was the only way for women to maintain or improve their lot in that era was to marry well.

Rod Binsted.

President

Note: To Register to attend the 5 May 2026 Probus Meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club, along with any male guest you plan to host - [click here](#)

MAY GUEST SPEAKER

5 May 2026

Kate Mills CEO Property Industry Foundation

- Why Young People Make Up 40% of Homelessness



Kate Mills is the CEO of the Property Industry Foundation. The Foundation accelerates the building of homes for homeless youth and is supported by the property and construction industry. Kate is passionate about creative thinking and has a MA in Creative and Critical Thinking. Kate is a hub leader with the For Purpose Alliance, a peer-to-peer network for for-purpose leaders. Kate is also on the board of HomelessnessNSW.

Geoffrey McWilliam
Speaker Co-ordinator

APRIL MEETING REPORT

President Rod Binsted opened the monthly general meeting by extending Easter and Passover greetings to members and guests, noting the many religious events over the past week. Rod welcomed members and six guests, including Alan Farrell, whose membership was approved at the earlier committee meeting.

Peter Nochar updated us that the activities program for 2026 including:

- The recent Orange Food Train trip very well attended attracting 32 participants. Due to its popularity, the Food Train trip may be repeated next year.
- 5 June - Naval Historical Society Sydney Harbour cruise focussing on the 1942 Japanese midget submarine attack
- 15 June - Winter Lunch – guest speaker Paul Adam on the history of chocolate, including tastings.

For further information see the Activities section below and Club emails/website.

Editor's note: Special thanks to Adrian Pilton and Tony Andrew who recorded and photographed the April meeting during the Editor's absence.

INDUCTIONS



L to R: Peter James, Stuart Westgarth, President Rod Binsted, Tony Andrew, Peter Young, Peter Dodds, Tony Dodds.

A/Prof. Tony Dodds

Tony Dodds was introduced by his brother Peter. Tony is a retired Professor of Medicine, formerly Head of Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplantation at St Vincent's Hospital for 17 years, and later Director of CPAP during the COVID period. He is on the board of Honorary Consultants of Medicine Today.

Tony plays golf at Roseville once or twice a week, enjoys playing bridge. He is the father of three children and six grandchildren.

Stuart Westgarth

Peter James was honoured to introduce Stuart Westgarth. Stuart grew up in the country, studied Arts Law at Sydney University. He commenced practice in his great uncle's firm Dudley Westgarth and Co., which by the time of his retirement was Sydney Managing Partner and the firm was by then known as Corrs Chambers Westgarth.

Stuart is a distinguished legal practitioner with a long career in litigation and public service, including senior leadership roles in the legal profession, including the roles of President of the Law Society of NSW and Deputy President of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Stuart plays golf regularly and tennis occasionally. He married Marnie 51 years ago. They have four children and ten grandchildren.

Peter Young

Tony Andrew introduced his good mate Peter Young who he met at the Balmoral steps. Peter comes from Melbourne, has a degree in Economics and an MBA. He moved to Sydney in 1976 to work with Citibank in banking operations, 20 years as a consultant in systems development and subsequently an independent financial advisor.

He enjoys cricket, AFL and golf, playing at the NSW Golf Club for 36 years, reading and travel.

He is married to Marie, has two children and one grandchild.

LIFE BEFORE PROBUS / RACONTEUR

Max Garcia



President Rod introduced member Max Garcia and explained that Max's talk would be a combination of Life Before Probus and Raconteur.

Max Garcia is a former U.S. Marine Sergeant-Major and motivational speaker, now living in Sydney. He commenced by talking about what it means to be a man in today's society, leadership and thanking members for their support.

Max also spoke about current youth development challenges and highlighted the work of his guest Matthew French, Chief Executive Officer of the Youth Regiment, a youth development program supporting troubled teenagers. Max and Matthew were currently running a nine day youth motivational course.

Max shared his personal journey from a challenging childhood with low esteem, to senior leadership roles in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he led and mentored large operational units across multiple international deployments. It was his lack of confidence and self-esteem as a child and the negative comments that others made about him that encouraged Max to join the Marines. He was born into a poverty-stricken orphanage in Mexico. He was adopted by two American Marines as a baby, leading him to believe in the philosophy of nurture rather than nature. He graduated from boot camp with honours and a meritorious promotion becoming a drill-sergeant.



Max served in Iraq in 2003, stopping in Sydney on the way home, where he met his future wife. His second tour of Iraq changed his life forever. After being involved with several very serious incidents, he decided, that if he makes it out of there alive, he would help as many people as he could and become a motivational speaker.

Now living in Australia, Max focuses on leadership, resilience and personal growth, drawing on real-world experience to inspire others. Max believes in leading from the front and that every crisis has a hidden blessing.

COMMENTS ON JANE AUSTEN

Dr Penny Gay, Professor Emerita, University of Sydney



Introduced by Geoff McWilliam, Dr Gay, in commenting on why men should read Jane Austen, explained that she simply writes better than any of the authors who went before her, and that she created a new form of novel involving women and men relating to each other in a particular place and at a particular time, a form that is now very popular. In her case the place was England and the particular time was the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century.

Dr Gay described Austen's novels as well-crafted masterpieces focused on events in a particular calendar year, which is never named, but can be deduced from clues in the novel. They demonstrate her deep understanding of the complex conditions in society, particularly for the 'gentry' class in the villages and towns of southern England – still largely agrarian in nature.

Austen displayed a particular skill in writing extensive conversations between characters to carry the novel's story. She was inspired by Shakespeare's dialogue in his comedies, and she made it sound entirely natural and modern, although it was typically witty and theatrical.

Dr Gay showed illustrative slides and read passages from "Emma" to demonstrate



Walthamstow c. 1810

Austen's ability to write in great detail about people and relationships in a fictional village remarkably similar to the actual village of Walthamstow, now a suburb of London. The reader is encouraged to spot clues as to what the real motives underlying any scene or conversation are. The example she gave was that of Jane Fairfax's piano, the gift of her secret lover.

By contrast, in the novel "Mansfield Park" Austen has a young lady playing a large modern harp which requires her to show off her bodily attributes – a possible way of

attracting a rich husband. The expensive harp, however, cannot be conveniently transported when all the local carts are needed for getting in the hay. Mary Crawford, the harpist, does not understand the priorities of an agrarian economy. Austen's true heroine in this novel, Fanny, is the one who understands the moral problem of slave labour in relation to British landowners increasing their capital by creating sugar and cotton plantations in the West Indies. Dr Gay describes this novel as being the least entertaining and beloved of the Austen novels, but she admires it because it is particularly insightful and reflects Austen's strong social conscience.



Dr Gay followed up with comments on the professions available in Austen's day for members of the gentry if they were not landowners or had no capital investments. They included the Law, the Church and the Military (Army or Navy). They did not include Medicine, which was still regarded as a trade. Interior and garden design emerged in the 18th century as another possible profession, as some rich landowners required

modern 'improvements' to their houses and landscapes.

Most Austen heroines married clergymen, whose stipends were often quite small – she arranged her novel plots so that the clergymen were given funds from their family in order to enjoy a comfortable gentry life while ministering to the local community.

Points arising during questions included:

- Accents in Austen's world would not have been posh/upper class, but would have reflected more the 'polite' speech of gentry living close to London and the universities.
- Dickens' major novels were written about 30 years later than Austen's. His writing reflected more upon the advancing industrial revolution and the cities than the agrarian economy prevailing at the time and place of Austen's writing.
- The increased level of interest in Austen's novels in recent times results from the TV 'costume dramas' of the 1990's.

Bernie Haylen highlighted several of Dr Gay's achievements in thanking her on behalf of members.

Alan Locke

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Recent Events

FOOD Train Weekend in Orange, NSW – 27-29 March 2026

The Orange Food Train is a component of Orange Food Week, which is a longstanding and very popular annual event in Orange. On Friday 27th March, 32 of us caught an early train from Central Station, alighting in Millthorpe around midday in very cold and very wet weather. After a short stroll, we reached the first of our lunches - a superb three course meal at Tonic Restaurant.

orangecitylife.com.au



Iley and Wayne Jones with Phil Barnes from Sydney.

Moving on to Orange, we then received presentations from three local growers – of olive trees, saffron and makers of gourmet preserves - with the opportunity to buy their goods. This was followed by an excellent dinner in a wine bar setting at Ignite Restaurant.

Iley & Wayne Jones and Phil Barnes in the local media



Happily, the weather was perfect for the next two days.

On Saturday most of us meandered along the 4km “Forage” trail through the vineyards, pausing for the eating (and imbibing) of an 8-course degustation menu spread at intervals along the walk. Others enjoyed a multicourse lunch at the highly regarded Union Bank restaurant in town.



On the last day we first visited a Producers Market in in Cook Park. We then visited Hillside Harvest, an orchard providing a broad range of fruits to farmers markets in the region. After giving us an insight into a small fruit growing business, the husband-and-wife owners took us to the orchard where we picked fruit to take away (apples, plums and figs were in season).



Our final lunch was at Rowlee Winery, another superb lunch in a vineyard setting.

We caught the train home on Sunday reaching Central at about 9.00pm.



The itinerary was extremely well organised by Juls, the host provided to us, and Mali the background organiser. We were very well looked after. The lunches and dinners were uniformly of top quality, but nicely varied in setting and type of cuisine, and the “Meet the Producers” events were fascinating and fun.

Orange and its surroundings are lovely, and the city is very well-kept. It is well worth visiting. As a group we all had great fun.

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



On a lovely sunny day, after an easy 75-minute drive from Sydney, 13 of us visited the NSW Rail Museum in Thirlmere, near Picton.

The Museum exhibits a broad range of steam, diesel and electric locomotives, and a wide range of carriages used over many years for passengers and freight in metropolitan and country areas of NSW.

Over an hour our knowledgeable tour guide walked us beside the locomotives and then showed us through very varied first and second-class passenger carriages, along with luxury dining cars and beautifully constructed and appointed sleepers. Carriages, designed for travel by royalty and vice-royalty were, not surprisingly, the most luxurious! The carriages and engines are in excellent, and mostly working, condition. They are looked after by several hundred volunteers.

The tour evoked pleasurable memories, whether from childhood days spent catching trains in Sydney or the excitement associated with long-distance journeys. After viewing the exhibits, we took a coal-powered steam train ride from Thirlmere to nearby Buxton, and back.

We then had lunch within the museum precinct, organised through the museum.

I think we were all mightily impressed by the extent and quality of the museum collection. There is also a nice play area (with mini trains) for children. The museum is well worth visiting whatever your age.



Bob Eckstein

Probus Golf of Sydney at Killara – 16 April 2026



The sun shone and the Killara course was in great condition to treat 23 PCOS members to a superb golf day on Thursday 16th April.

The golf was followed by lunch, fine service, lots of camaraderie and reflections on the speed of the greens (for which we were helped by getting gimmes for putts less than 30 cm, sometimes perhaps a bit inflated!).

2BB winners Peter Nochar and David Brand, flanked by runners up Peter Moll, Geoffrey Burge, Chris Wokes and Bob Eckstein

Shot of the day was by Max Moore-Wilton, who holed out from about 100 metres on a par 5, giving him 4 points! However, rumours of his other shots mean it is unlikely he will get an invitation to Augusta next April.

The main competition was 2 ball better ball stableford, with the pair of Peter Nochar and David Brand victors, amassing an impressive 44 points. Joint runners up with 42 points each were Peter Moll & Geoffrey Burge, as well as Chris Wokes & Bob Eckstein. Nearest the pin was held on 3 holes, won by Geoffrey Burge, Peter James and Grahame Harris.

Special thanks were expressed to Bill Thomas, who made arrangements with the club, and organised the event so splendidly together with the author.

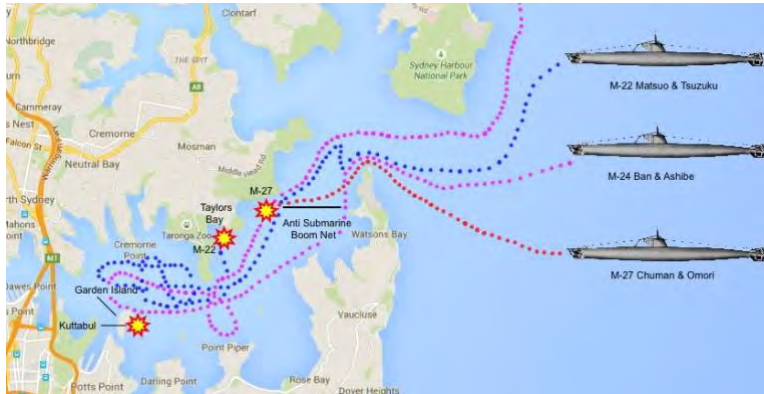
Peter James

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

Sydney Harbour Cruise - Japanese mini-sub attack 1942

Conducted by the Naval Historical Society of Australia

Friday 5 June 2026



The 1942 Japanese midget submarine attack on ships in Sydney Harbour remains a topical subject. However, many Sydneysiders know little about this watershed event. It was the first attack on Sydney and its impact changed Australia from a quiet backwater of

the Second World War to a vital springboard for the defeat of Japan. This cruise will provide a detailed description of events leading up to and during the attack.

Your comfortable and spacious cruise boat will take you to sites on the Harbour where key events occurred and a comprehensive description of how those events during the fateful night of 31st May and 1st June 1942 unfolded. The story will be told by expert narrators from the Naval Historical Society of Australia.

A comprehensive commentary is provided supported by information and photos on TVs to bring the commentary to life. Every passenger will receive a complementary booklet with detailed information and photos as a souvenir.

A first-class morning tea is included.

It is important to remember that this is a cruise and that access to the vessel is via a steep gangway, whilst throughout the vessel there are stairs, not suitable for those with medium to severe mobility issues. Members with low to medium mobility issues are usually able to manage.

Check-in Time: 09:30am. Boarding Time: 09:45am for 10:00am departure

Departure Point: King Street Wharf 3, Darling Harbour, Sydney.

Finish time: 1:00 pm

Access: Ferry to Barangaroo or train and walk from Wynyard or Town Hall Stations.

The cost is \$75 per person. **As full payment is required by the Naval Historical Society one month prior to the cruise, we ask that you register before 5th May.**

Contact person on the day: Kim Oates

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



Following the success of our 2025 Winter Lunch at the Royal Sydney Golf Club, we have decided to return for the 2026 Winter Lunch which will be held on Monday 15 June from 12 midday till 3pm.

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 is Paul Adam of Du Plessy Pralin & Otello whose family has been making chocolates for 65 years, now at West Pymble. He will tell us about the history of chocolate making and the hazards of being featured on TikTok.

The Club car park should be reasonably quiet on a Monday. The Rose Bay Ferry wharf is a 7 minute walk away and the 324 and 325 Bus stops adjacent to the Club at the corner of New South Head Rd and Kent Rd.

Dress code is smart casual, coats optional

The Club will allocate seating, a great way to meet some new people. However, if you really have a preferred table group, contact Kim Oates (who will try, but no promises) 0433 050 448.

Cost is \$160 pp and includes pre-luncheon drinks, canapés and wines.



Guided Tour of Salon de Refuses, S.H. Ervin Gallery – Tuesday 14 July 2026

A tour of the Salon de Refuses at the S.H. Ervin Gallery is planned for Tuesday 14 July. Details to follow by Newsletter, Email and Website.



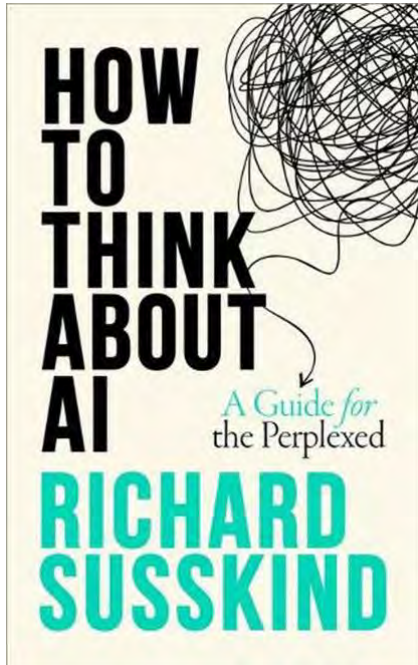
Libby Wakefield - *First Light, Rainfall on the Wingecarribee*
Salon Wynne Selection 2025

Kim Oates & Bob Eckstein
Events Coordinators

BOOK REVIEW

How to Think about AI

by Richard Susskind (2025) – 171 pages – fact



AI is the flavour of the month. Although the increasing number of dismissed employees might not agree with this description.

For those of us wanting a relatively easy introduction to the background, history and possible future of AI, this is a good starting point.

With the arrival of ChatGPT, we already have machine learning which is spiralling out of control. This book will help us understand where we are at, risks and alternative scenarios for the future.

Although short, it is dense and will take concentration. However, with AI capturing headlines daily, we need to understand what is happening in this light speed world. Highly recommended as an introduction – and not too technical.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

Swapping Health for Pleasure!



Can't Argue !!



Truth in Advertising??!!



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