



Probus Club of Sydney

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Newsletter

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October 2026

Issue 491

MEETING DATES

6 October 2026

AUSTRALIA'S ENERGY

Aidan Morrison

Director Energy Program

Centre for Independent Studies

10 November 2026

QUANTUM COMPUTING

Professor Nalini Joshi

Chair of Applied Mathematics

University of Sydney

ACTIVITIES

15 October – Walking Tour of

Parramatta Female Factory

TBA November - Tour of the

The State Theatre

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A Touch of Humour

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

Sadly, one of our long-term and very active members, Ian Lansdown, passed away a week before our last meeting. We extend our deepest sympathies to his wife Tricia and his family.

At our meeting on 1 September 2026, we inducted four new members: John Dunlop, Richard Gordon, Peter Dean and Peter Duncan — all extremely well qualified gentlemen with outstanding and diverse CVs across their chosen career paths. Welcome to the Probus Club of Sydney!

In our "Life Before Probus" segment, Tony Joseph outlined his career in medicine, particularly emergency medicine, along with his contribution to worthy causes such as the Hoc Mai Foundation. In the same segment, Don Maxwell explained how he was one of the earliest specialist anaesthetists in Sydney and found himself very much in demand given the high perioperative mortality rate of the time.

Our monthly lecture was given by our very own Max Moore-Wilton, who gave an interesting and entertaining talk on where Australia stands today, drawing on his insider's knowledge of events and personalities. Chatham House rules apply!

After extensive work by our Constitution review sub-committee, Chris Luget and I met with Silvana Martignago, CEO of Probus South Pacific Limited, to explain our variations to their constitutional template. It was a very worthwhile meeting, and we anticipate putting the new constitution to our members at the AGM.

Rod Binsted.

President

Note: To Register to attend the 6 October 2026 Probus Meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club, along with any male guest you plan to host - [click here](#)

OCTOBER GUEST SPEAKER

6 October 2026

AUSTRALIA's ENERGY PROGRAM

Aidan Morrison – Director Energy Program Centre for Independent Studies



Aidan Morrison is an accomplished data scientist with postgraduate academic qualifications in physics, and work experience spanning academic research, technology start-ups, and contracting to large corporates. He leads research into energy systems from an Australian perspective, with a particular focus on the most economically viable pathways to a low-carbon economy, incorporating full-system cost analysis and modelling.

Recent media articles include:

- Energy fight shows how close NSW is to lights out – Daily Telegraph, 29 July 2026.

- Kept in the dark over true cost of renewables – Daily Telegraph, 27 April 2026.
- Government meddling means more pump pain – Daily Telegraph, 8 April 2026.
- Eraring extension exposes Bowen's credibility gap on renewables – AFR 21 January 2026.

Aidan has co-authored technical papers covering energy topics entitled:

- The Renewable Energy Honeymoon: starting is easy, the rest is hard.
- Rooftop solar: paradise lost.
- Impact of a Shadow Carbon Price on our Electricity Bills.
- Six fundamental flaws underpinning the energy transition.
- How to Build Low-Cost Nuclear: Lessons from the world.
- Dead and buried. Why our green hydrogen hope is gone for good.

Geoffrey McWilliam
Speaker Co-ordinator

SEPTEMBER MEETING REPORT

President Rod Binsted opened the meeting and welcomed members and guests to the first day of Spring, 1 September 2026. The President was sure that all present would be wondering what happened in history on 1 September:

- In 1715, King Louis XIV of France, the Sun King died after a reign of 72 years, being the longest reign of any European monarch in history.
- In 1923, the Great Kanto earthquake struck Japan devastating Tokyo and Yokohama killing well over 100,000 people.
- In 1939, Germany's blitzkrieg invaded Poland starting World War II.
- In 1969, a coup brought Muammar Gaddafi to power in Libya.

- In 1972, the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union occurred when Bobby Fisher defeated Boris Spassky at chess in Reykjavik.

Four guests were welcomed to the meeting, plus one new member.

Geoff McWilliam provided his speakers' report;

- Speaking today, to a record attendance – member Max Moore-Wilson AC on the State of the Nation.
- On 6 October – Aidan Morrison – Director of Energy Program at the Centre for Independent Studies who will provide insights into the true costs of energy.
- Professor Nalini Joshi, Chair of Applied Mathematics, University of Sydney on Quantum Computing on 10 November.

Bob Eckstein updated us on the activities program for the next few months including:

- Thursday 15 October a 90-minute guided walking tour of the Parramatta Female Factory at North Parramatta. The very interesting buildings were designed by Francis Greenway, under Governor Macquarie's orders. Spaces are available.
- In November a visit to the State Theatre is planned. Date to be confirmed.
- On 7 December, the Christmas Lunch will be held at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, Kirribilli.

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

INDUCTIONS



L to R: President Rod Binsted, Peter Duncan, Peter Deane, Geoff McWilliam, John Dunlop, Christopher Cullen, Tony Dodds, Richard Gordon.

Dr Richard Gordon

Dr Richard Gordon was introduced by Tony Dodds. Richard, apart from being Tony's own doctor, has been an eminent GP for 56 years, including 41 years at Lindfield. He is very well known and has been closely involved in student teaching and medical education as has his wife, Jill. He has also arranged post graduate medical programs for his GP colleagues. He has served on the Professional Standards Committee and the Medical Tribunal for the NSW Medical Council.

Richard is a life member of the Australian Sceptics and a past president of that organization. He is a member of the Killara Golf Club and was the Club Champion in 1978. Richard is married to Jill, and he has three children and seven grandchildren.

John Dunlop

John Dunlop was introduced by his friend of many years Christopher Cullen; in fact, they've known each other since their fathers were officers in the same infantry battalion in the Second World War. John's father became a knight and Christopher's a general! John joined Edwards, Dunlop and Company Limited becoming Managing Director 1978, a position that he held until the company was taken over in 1989.

After a number of years on the board of the Royal Alexandria Hospital for Children, John became President in 1983, a role he held till 2004, although he did continue on several committees for a number of years thereafter.

Christopher believes that John will be a great member.

Peter Deane

Geoff McWilliam had great pleasure in supporting Peter Deane's application. They have known each other for sixty years since studying civil engineering together at the UNSW. Peter graduated with honours. They were active in Undergraduate Society of Engineers holding two balls a year in the Roundhouse.

Peter worked as an engineer in both government and private enterprise in Adelaide, Singapore and Darwin. He has been involved in all aspects of the building industry for many years and is known as a doyen of the industry. Peter served for ten years on the Ravenswood School Council, has been a judge of the Master Builders Association for excellence in construction for major projects. He has also been chairman of the Greenwich Community Association.

Peter is married to Ricki, has two daughters and four grandchildren. He is a keen gardener, travels widely and plays golf. Sure to be a great member.

Peter Duncan

Peter Duncan was introduced by President Rod. Peter is a New Zealander by birth, graduated from St Bedes College in Christchurch and then awarded a LLB (Hons) from the University of Canterbury. In 1973 took up a role as a Crown Prosecutor in the Attorney General's Chambers in Hong Kong. In 1998, he commenced practice as a barrister, taking silk in 2004 and continuing in that role until retirement in 2024. He had extensive experience in drafting law, particularly relating to sexual offences.

Peter was the inaugural coach of the Hong Kong Sevens team in 1976 and he was also President of Hong Kong Rugby Union from 2016 to 2024.

Peter is married to Diana, has four daughters (three living in Sydney and one in Hong Kong) and eleven grandchildren.

LIFE BEFORE PROBUS

Dr Don Maxwell



Don Maxwell is an anaesthetist by trade. An anaesthetist puts people to sleep, but the real trick is to wake people up! He grew up in Sydney and studied medicine at Sydney University, graduating a few years after WW2. An interesting time. He became a resident medical officer at St Vincents, where many doctors were ex-servicemen, they had fought and/or been POWs and they were great teachers. He became interested in anaesthesia and decided to specialise becoming a registrar and subsequently acquiring his specialist qualification in 1960. He was offered a job at Oxford which he attended under Professor Sir Robert Macintosh, the world's first academic professor of anaesthesia.

Returning to Sydney in 1962, Don commenced specialist practice at St Vincents as an honorary medical officer and worked at the Prince of Wales Hospital. Anaesthetists were rare in those days. He became interested in teaching and took on the role of the State Chairman of the Faculty of Anaesthetists, the teaching body for anaesthesia. Later he became the President of the Australian Society. He loved his work retiring on his 70th birthday in 2000.

While in practice he became interested in the wine business, particularly growing grapes and making wine. He purchased the site of a former vineyard in the Pokolbin area of the Hunter Valley which he re-established with the help of his family. A winemaker was employed and when the first vintage was entered in the Sydney Wine Show it was quite a shock. Of the five wines entered, one was awarded a gold, three a silver and one a bronze. In subsequent years, the wine continued to win trophies and medals every single year.

Don has a very large family with seven children and along with his wife Jan, they have all been a great help with the vineyard – and they are all very close.

Dr Tony Joseph AM



Tony was born in Sydney and raised in Lithgow where his father was a country GP. He commenced boarding at Riverview at age 11 and graduated in medicine at Sydney University in 1977. He commenced residency training at Sydney Hospital and after two years he transferred to Darwin, then the UK. He returned to Sydney in 1982, spending six months in general practice with his father. After five years in Murwillumbah as a GP, he was ready for a change.

He became aware of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine taking on a role as emergency medicine registrar at the Royal North Shore Hospital in 1984 which included four years of training, jumping out of helicopters, etc. He qualified as an emergency medicine specialist in 1994. He worked as an emergency staff specialist at RNSH for 27 years until retirement in 2022. Roles included the trauma director in the emergency department.

In 1997, he co-founded the Australasian Trauma Society. He introduced the use of ultrasound at the bedside to diagnose life threatening conditions, now in general use.

Tony was also involved in education and training of junior doctors and an examiner at the College of Emergency Medicine for many years where he also directed training courses. Tony has also taught emergency medicine at a number of developing countries including India, Vietnam, Malaysia and Myanmar.

In 2004, Tony became involved in medical politics which brought him into conflict with the NSW Ministry of Health, largely relating to working conditions and the redevelopment of the RNSH, achieving significant improvements in both areas. He is convinced that senior doctors should have a say in running the health system, if it is to be run efficiently. Equally, a medical doctor should be appointed as director-general to run NSW Health.

Since retirement in 2022, Tony has taken on the role of improving health care in Vietnam and assisting local doctors in times of hardship.

Tony's wife Sally is an emergency physician and still works clinically. Together they have eight children and nine grandchildren. He is playing some golf, attending the gym and walking his ridgeback dog to avoid frailty and dementia.

STATE OF THE NATION

Max Moore-Wilton AC



In his introduction Geoff McWilliam described Max as a highly experienced former senior public servant with a distinguished career spanning government and private enterprise. His previous roles included Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and senior leadership positions in major organisations, including Sydney Airport.

Geoff mentioned Max's long-held view that public administration should be based on integrity, transparency and the public interest, rather than simply achieving some financial or political outcome.

Opening Remarks

Max began by making it clear that his presentation would reflect his **personal views rather than an objective commentary**. Drawing on decades of experience in government, business and public administration, he described Australia as a fortunate country, but one that is currently **"confused and concerned."**

Our country has experienced a gradual drift in public policy over the past 20 years. While prosperity and relative stability have made Australians comfortable, significant structural changes have occurred around us.

Max placed this in the context of major global changes:

- The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a different geopolitical order.
- The declining dominance of the United States.
- The rise of China and India.
- Russia's attempts to retain its position as a major global power.
- Increasing uncertainty about Australia's place in a changing world.

Australia's Post-War Development

Max reflected on the Menzies era as a period of significant economic and national development. Two developments were of particular importance:

- Australia's strengthening relationship with the **United States**, providing greater security following the upheaval of the Second World War.
- Our transition towards a more internationally competitive trading nation. He particularly credited John McEwen with recognising that Australia needed to move beyond its traditional dependence on Britain as an export market.

A major example was the development of Australia's iron ore exports to Japan following the removal of export restrictions.

Whitlam and Structural Change

While Gough Whitlam was an important figure in Australia's political development, particularly in opening Australia's outlook towards **China and Asia**, Max commented

that the Whitlam period also began an important structural transformation of the Australian Public Service including:

- Reduced independence of senior public servants.
- Growth in the influence of politically appointed staff.
- Increasing control of departmental advice through ministers' offices.
- A gradual shift from the public service developing policy towards primarily implementing government policy.

Fraser, Hawke and Keating

While critical of Malcolm Fraser's administrative style, with his government frequently operating in a state of crisis, Max argued that **John Howard learned valuable lessons from observing Fraser**, particularly about the importance of orderly Cabinet processes.

He spoke positively about aspects of the Hawke government, particularly the relationship between government and the union movement. He singled out **Bill Kelty** as an important figure who understood the need for structural economic reform while maintaining support from organised labour.

The Hawke-Keating era also produced one of Australia's most important structural reforms: **compulsory superannuation**. Max expressed concern that the subsequent development of the industry superannuation system, with industry funds becoming major institutional investors, has significantly altered the way capital is accumulated and controlled within Australia.

Political Advisers and the Public Service

Max expressed strong concern regarding the enormous expansion of **ministerial and political staff**. He contrasted his experience working with John Howard, where he insisted on being able to speak directly with the Prime Minister, with the contemporary system in which large numbers of political advisers sit between ministers and professional public servants. This has resulted in :

- Political advisers reviewing and altering departmental recommendations.
- Reduced direct access between senior public servants and ministers.
- Weakened quality of government advice
- Increasing influence of communications and media advisers.
- Ministers becoming less willing to give a definitive “no” to proposals.
- Political messaging increasingly influencing policy decisions.

Education and Social Change

While acknowledging the importance of removing the historical barriers that prevented women from receiving equal educational and professional opportunities, Max commented that the expansion of universities and changes to tertiary education had altered the intellectual and political character of Australian institutions.

He particularly identified the growth of:

- Social sciences and humanities.
- Debate surrounding colonialism.
- Indigenous rights.
- Women's rights and equality.

The Legal System

Max argued that Australia has increasingly adopted elements of an American-style approach to litigation and review.

He highlighted:

- The high cost of major court proceedings.
- Expensive royal commissions and inquiries.
- Growth in specialist tribunals.
- Multiple layers of appeal and administrative review.
- Increasing legal complexity surrounding government decisions.
- Significant public expenditure associated with these processes.

While acknowledging the importance of justice and due process, his argument was that the system has become **too complex, expensive and cumbersome**.

Government Spending and Dependency

In contrast to our present financial position, Commonwealth Government debt was substantially lower when Howard left office. Max commented that controlling public expenditure requires continual scrutiny of government departments and programs, rather than occasional attempts at major reform. He is particularly concerned about the increasing proportion (50%) of Australians receiving some form of government support. He added that government assistance can create greater expectations of entitlement and make meaningful expenditure reform politically difficult.

A central concern is the possibility that **younger Australians may ultimately be financially worse off than their parents' generation**.

Leadership and Singapore

Max argued that Singapore succeeded despite limited natural resources because its leadership established a clear long-term vision and communicated difficult expectations to its population.

The comparison was used to make a broader point: Australia needs leaders prepared to articulate a clear national direction rather than continually responding to immediate political pressures.

In his view, Australia needs to:

- Concentrate more strongly on long-term national objectives.
- Be prepared to make difficult decisions.
- Reduce political emphasis on short-term popularity.
- Learn from successful international examples.
- Focus on productivity, competitiveness and future generations.

Questions & Discussion

Nuclear Power

Asked whether John Howard's decision regarding nuclear power had been a mistake.

Max said the political circumstances at the time were important. Public opinion was strongly influenced by concerns about nuclear safety, and Howard, a highly pragmatic politician, did not believe there was sufficient public support to pursue nuclear energy.

Nuclear power remains a difficult political issue in Australia today.

The Liberal Party and Professional Politics

Asked about the state of the Liberal Party, Max drew a distinction between the organisational cultures and capability of Labor and the Coalition and commented that:

- Modern politics requires a highly professional organisation.
- Labor has developed strong political and campaigning structures.
- The Liberal Party needs to become more professional.
- Successful politicians need to understand Parliament as an institution.

- Both John Howard and Anthony Albanese benefited from extensive parliamentary experience.

NDIS

While the NDIS has expanded considerably beyond what was originally envisaged Max commented that **once government programs and entitlements become established, structural reform becomes increasingly difficult.**

Career Politicians

In response to a question about the increasing number of career politicians who have little professional experience outside politics, Max commented that Parliament benefits from people with experience across:

- Business
- Agriculture
- Professional services
- Government
- Public administration
- Community organisations

rather than from political staff or activist backgrounds.

Honours System

As a recipient himself, Max supports retaining an honours system because he believes **service to the community should be recognised.** He believes our existing system is broadly effective and appropriately administered through Government House.

Australia as a Republic

Max believes it may be time for Australia to **revisit the question of becoming a republic.** He expressed considerable respect for Queen Elizabeth II but questioned whether future generations of Australians would retain the same attachment to the British monarchy. His preferred model would not resemble the US presidential system. Instead, he favoured a largely ceremonial Australian president selected through Parliament, with limited powers and a defined term.

United States and Presidential Power

The discussion broadened into concerns about the concentration of presidential power in the United States. Max argued that the US constitutional system was deliberately designed with checks and balances between the President, Congress and the courts. In his view, those safeguards have weakened as political institutions have become increasingly partisan.

Vote of thanks

In closing, the vote of thanks was given by Rob Thomas who acknowledged the speaker's long reputation for being **fearless, frank and intelligent,** both as a senior public servant and as a leader in industry.

The overarching message from the presentation was that Australia remains an extraordinarily fortunate country, but **long-term structural weaknesses have accumulated and now require stronger leadership, clearer priorities and a greater willingness to make difficult decisions.**

Alan Locke

RECENT EVENTS

A Walking Tour of the Sydney City Circle Train Stations



At 10.00am, on September 8th, thirty of us met at Platform 1 of Central Railway station, to start our tour: Secrets of the City Circle Walking Tour. This is a regular tour initiated and conducted by our guide, Marc-Philippe Cote.

We proceeded from station to station, Central, Museum, St James, Circular Quay, Wynyard and finally Town Hall station, learning of the history and seeing landmarks of each. The tour was highly entertaining, in good part due to Marc's pace, sense of humour, knowledge, and stentorian voice. We started at Central at the site of Royalty and Vice-Royalty's (and General Macarthur's) entrance portal – less than 50 metres from the site of a riotous soldier's uprising in 1916 (bullet holes still visible).

There were items of interest throughout. Museum Station was remarkable for its old advertising posters and lovely old tiles. At St James we learnt of the underground tunnels variously used in the past as air-raid shelters and mushroom farms, and more recently for TV and movie filming. At Wynyard, the wooden escalators of the past (in which Stiletto heels were a hazard) hang from the ceiling.

We had a simple lunch afterwards at the Eternity Café at Town Hall Square. The tour was very much enjoyed by all. It is run by Marc every weekend and booking can be done on-line. He now also runs a tour of the Metro stations.

Bob Eckstein

FUTURE EVENTS (Please see the website & emails for further details and bookings)

A Visit to the Historic Parramatta Female Factory

- **Thursday 15 October 2026**

At 10:00 am on Thursday 15 October our outing is a 90-minute guided walking tour of the Parramatta Female Factory, 5 Fleet St North Parramatta. **Bookings Available.**



This immersive tour will bring to life the extraordinary stories of the women and children who shaped the colony's early history, including the experience of being a convict, how they lived, what they did and what happened to them.

The majority of women convicts housed at the Female Factory were engaged in the manufacture of wool and linen fabric. A smaller number were employed as hospital nurses and midwives, servants to officers, or in caring for orphans.

It is mostly flat although there are a few spots where the ground is uneven. **Closed shoes should be worn. There are rest spots along the way.**

Members are asked to assemble at 9:45am at the Parramatta Female Factory Bicentenary Memorial Wall situated under a large tree near the main entrance.

Cost \$20/pp. The maximum number is 32.

Following the tour, we have a booking in the Heritage Room, *Havenstone*, 5 Fleet St, a short walk from the Female Factory. *Havenstone* is a walk-in dining venue which does not take bookings, however they have reserved their Heritage Room for us where they offer a platter of sandwiches/ wraps and garden salad with choice of coffee, soft drink, water or tea for \$22 pp. We can pay individually at the restaurant. Orders from the menu are not possible for a group. **Final numbers for lunch are required 3 days prior to the event.** Kim Oates will send registrants an email 3 days prior to the event to obtain the number required for catering.

Although there is no parking on site, 4-hour parking is available in Fleet Street. Free parking is available at the Parramatta Leagues Club parking station except during major games (Eels or Panthers). It is a 600m walk to the Female Factory.

By rail and light rail: Take the train to Parramatta, exit to Parramatta Square, take the light rail to the Ngara stop and follow the footpath to cross Greenup Drive to the Female Factory (250m).

A Tour of the Historic State Theatre, Market Street, Sydney. TBA Date November 2026



Since its opening in 1929, The State Theatre in Market Street, Sydney has captivated the hearts and minds of patrons with its majestic elegance. Join in a guided tour of this magnificent and unique building and discover why it's known as the Palace of Dreams. During a fascinating tour, you will:

- Experience the grandeur of standing in a 2000 seat auditorium beautifully framed by 13 hand-cut crystal chandeliers
- Observe the eclectic elements of the Theatre's Gothic, Italian and Art Deco design
- Be mesmerised by the world's second largest hand-cut crystal chandelier, the Koh-i-Nor
- See the original mighty Wurlitzer Organ, the voice of silent movies (pending availability) and more.

Recognised for its great historical significance and high architectural quality, this is your chance to be enchanted by the State Theatre Sydney.

The date for the visit in November and further details will be provided by email and the Club website in the near future.

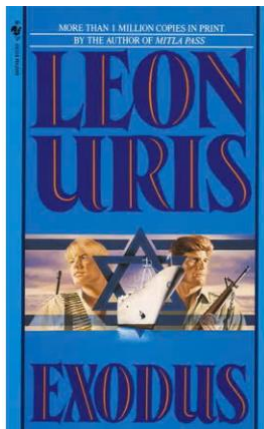
Organiser: Peter Nochar M: 0401 424 400

Kim Oates, Bob Eckstein & Peter Nochar
Activity Coordinators

BOOK REVIEW

EXODUS

by Leon Uris (1958) – 599 pages – Fiction



Conflict in the Middle East is as old as the Bible, or older. Jerusalem is sacred to the Jews, Christians and Muslims. The Middle East is in the news every day and has been for most of our lives.

Written in 1958 for an American audience, this book was intended to trace the history of the foundation of the State of Israel. It was written by a Jewish author and is very pro-Israel and historically inaccurate – being intended to convey to American readers the history of conflict in the Middle East and the plight of the Jews. It had a dramatic effect in its day and is apparently

second only to *Gone with the Wind* in the number of copies that have been sold.

However, despite its length and other shortcomings, it is a salutary reminder of the struggles that have taken place throughout the whole of the 20th century – as well as their historical anti-cedents. Thus, for modern audiences, it helps to put the current conflagrations in context, albeit with a pro-Israel bias.

So, it is worth re-reading for modern audiences. While it is a novel and is not historically accurate or unbiased, it does paint a graphic picture of conflict, struggle and heroism.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

Perspective Matters



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