

NEWSLETTER

RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION

**COVID-19
SUPPRESSION**



MAY 2020

VALE BOB CLIFFORD

Vince Haywood

OUR MAY 2020 EDITION OF THE RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION'S NEWSLETTER CELEBRATES THE LIFE OF BOB CLIFFORD, WHO WAS A MEMBER AND A FRIEND TO ALL OF US.

Bob passed away on the 25th April 2020 following a severe fall. A funeral service for Bob was on the 5th May 2020 at *Saint John the Baptist* Catholic Church, Woy Woy. Sadly, members of our Association were unable to attend due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Fortunately, we were able to view the service via YouTube. Bob was born on the 9th August 1942. He joined the *Retired Members Association* in late 2000. He served on our committee from 2003 to 2015. Bob attended almost all the Association's committee and general meetings, and in later years this required him to travel to Sydney from the Central Coast. Bob and Irene came to our social functions and enjoyed the annual trips away right up to Moree in 2018.

I presented Bob with the Association's Certificate of Merit at the May 2016 General Meeting.

Bob and Irene were married in 1966 and they lived at St Marys for many years before they made a move to the Central Coast in 2013. Bob was a keen and talented sportsman. He played golf; although his putting needed some attention according to son Mathew. He played cricket and tennis, but his real passion was rugby league. Bob played for Parramatta in the Postal Institute Rugby League competition. A talented player who represented New South Wales against Queensland. He supported the Parramatta Eels throughout his life.

Bob joined the Postmaster-General Department (PMG) as a 1958 Technician in Training, the same year as many of our notable members. Bob worked at Burwood Exchange before moving to Customer Maintenance in the City and then finally the SDC in the City.

Bob was an absolute gentleman who enjoyed the company of his mates, and they enjoyed his company. Many of us will remember our lunches after a general meeting. Bob held onto his *Tooheys Black* listening intently to others and after would come into to the conversation with an entertaining story of his own.

Often when people make tributes to a person who has passed away, they speak foremost of their achievements. Perhaps, they overlook the most meaningful and important aspect of a person's life. That they lived amongst us, their

life became part of ours and ours there's. We should always take time to remember and celebrate this. Unquestionably, our lives with Bob Clifford had real meaning and was a privilege for all of us.

The *Retired Members Association* sends its condolences to Irene, son Mathew and other family members.

Thank you and Rest in Peace, our friend Bob Clifford.





Welfare News

Peter Hack

Colin Wilson is now looking pretty spiffy as he has enjoyed a haircut and replacement eyeglasses. We won't ask you where your old ones are.

John Hickey has also enjoyed a haircut, and both Col and John are now allowed visits inside their building. Visits are only via appointment

Sam Caltabiano is now home but still having ten weeks of rehabilitation to look forward to. Buckle down Sam.

John Loudon and Heather are still having health problems. We wish them well.

Irene Clifford is getting things sorted after Bob's passing. We are thinking of you Irene and wish you well.

Keith Macrae and Eddy Parrot hope to join the general meeting via computer.

Bob Hamblion is back in the swim again, but the wuss is wearing a wet suit. This is not the Bob we used to know.

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MEMBERS' TRIBUTES TO BOB CLIFFORD

I met Bob Clifford on my first day at Burwood exchange in November 1962.

He was doing routine testing on Keith line switches, and I was told by the boss (George Melville) that Bob was a fifth-year trainee. I remember that my first thought was 'how good is that?' because he has two months to go and I still had four years and two months.

Over the next few years, we became firm friends at work and outside work. There could be many stories to tell like card nights in the exchange on Saturday nights when Burwood still had the 24/7 shifts and the lunchtime footy games in Burwood Park where I always came off second best to Bob's ferocious tackling.

When I turned 18, I was invited to join Bob and the other young guys in Clarkies pub (just for a few) over the road from the exchange on Fridays after work.

There were also the family picnics with Bob at Wattamolla Beach as well as the Christmas nights out.

In about 1970, Bob asked me to join him in the Parramatta Postal Institute rugby league team where we played together for two successful years in the Postal Institute competition.

Bob was a very good player and represented NSW in the interstate matches against the dreaded Queensland enemy.

After Bob left Burwood to start in the City and the group at Burwood was disbursed because the shifts ended, we decided to have a get-together at the Lobsey household. That was in January 1967, and we have now been doing that every year at one of the group's homes since and Bob and Irene have been integral to these reunions ever since. Bob and Irene made sure that they never missed one.

Sometimes a year could go by, and I wouldn't see Bob, but when we caught up, it was like we were together yesterday.

About ten years ago, Bob told me about the *Retired Members Association* and said I should join. I am so glad that he did. We have since enjoyed the RMA trips away with them.

I have been privileged in my life to have such a friend as Bob has been, such a kind and caring man, a man who was loving to all and could also a bit of a scoundrel.

I am going to miss him.

Merv Savage



My memories of Bob are of our conversations over lunch following the General Meetings. Bob often spoke about rugby league and the Parramatta Eels. However, on one occasion, Bob told us a story of when he arrived at a convent in Strathfield to repair a phone. The convent was attached to a catholic school run by the Loreta Sisters. A Catholic congregation founded in 1609 dedicated to the education of young ladies who would later take their place in society.

By way of further background, this was in the 1970s. The Union during this time was waging an industrial campaign to have technicians and senior technicians classified as

sub-professionals instead of trade persons. Hey, it was about a pay rise, not titles. The Union prevailed; we all received a pay rise.

Back to Bob, he knocks on the front door of the convent. A Loreta sister answers the door, Bob greets and tells her that he is here to repair their phone. The nun tells Bob he should have gone around the back and entered via the tradesman's entrance. Bob replies, Sister, but, I am not a tradesman; I am a sub-professional. The nun somewhat apologetic allows Bob to enter the convent via the front door.

Paul Rewhorn



MEMBERS' TRIBUTES TO BOB CLIFFORD (CONT'D)



I did not know Bob in his working life, but I have fond memories of him within the RMA, he and Irene were always a pleasure to have around. Bob joined the RMA in late 2000 and was a committee member from 2003 to 2015. It was also very sad that his brother passed away on the same day.

REST IN PEACE

Bruce Muirhead

Bob was in the same year as me, a 1958 trainee. He and I and the wives always attended out 5-year reunions in Port Macquarie, but I didn't get to know him really well until we both ended up on the RMA committee. To me he was a nice unassuming bloke who loved a yarn with his mates while he drank his Tooheys Black. He was a Parramatta NRL supporter.

He really enjoyed our socials, especially the annual trip away. He would make a point of thanking me personally for organising it. I have no startling stories about him. I simply enjoyed his company.

John Lane

On the 13th January 1958, 26 keen young men filed into a hut at Albert Rd. Strathfield to begin their Training as telephone technicians TIT'S, Bob Clifford, Bob Hurford and Bob Hamblion filed into and sat at the same workbench, what's the odds 3 Bob's in a row? In Section 14, Mates Forever. Our first instructors Dicky Bird and Ralph Foster.

Bob Clifford will be sadly missed by his Family, and many friends.

Bob Hamblion



Tony Monk



The *Retired Members Association* is sad to report that member Tony Monk passed away on Sunday, 29th March 2020 after a prolonged battle with brain cancer. A family service was held for Tony.

Tony was born in 1941. He joined our Association on the 10th June 2009.

Tony migrated to Australia has a young person. He had only just returned to his homeland for a visit. He was a 1958 Technician in Training, Section One at Alexandria Training School.

Tony spent most of his career on Operations at Lakemba Exchange and the Homebush SDC. Tony's passing comes just a short time after his mentor Les Bloxom's passing. Lex encouraged Tony to complete his Electronics Communications Certificate. Tony went on to become a PTTO2 as an ARE11 specialist in Sydney's Inner West.

The *Retired Members Association* extends its sympathy and condolence to Tony's wife Judith and daughters Samantha and Belinda and their families



Douglas Milne



The *Retired Members Association* is sad to report that Doug Milne passed away on Sunday, 5th April 2020.

Tony joined the *Retired Members Association* on the 14th September 2006.

Doug was born in Glasgow. He and his family migrated to the then known Rhodesia. Tony migrated to Australia in 1964. He worked for Ericsson until he joined Telecom at the Burwood Subscriber Installation Depot in 1973. There he was known as "Mr Records" for his meticulous attention to this every aspect of the job.

Doug and wife Jan retired to Port Macquarie in 1997.

Doug was a happy, smiling man, popular with his workmates who will sadly miss him

The *Retired Members Association* extends its sympathy and condolence to Doug's wife Jan, other family members and friends.

The Flu Vaccine is Now Available



While we are in the mist of a flu season and Covid-19 epidemic it is more important than ever to have the flu vaccine.

For seniors to experience both the flu and Covid-19 within a short timeframe, this may weaken the body's immune system. This could have a serious consequences such as pneumonia or longer recovery times..

The flu vaccine may be in short supply, therefore it s advisable to phone ahead to your GP to make an appointment.

While you are having your flu vaccine, speak to your doctor about having the vaccine for pneumonia.

The pneumonia vaccine may present risks for certain pre-existing medical conditions. Therefore it is important to talk with your doctor.





VALE JACK MUNDEY

Paul Rewhorn

JACK MUNDEY PASSED AWAY ON THE 10TH MAY 2020. JACK WAS A UNION LEADER WHO MADE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS MAINSTREAM. HE SAVED SYDNEY FROM THE DEVELOPERS WHO IF THEY HAD THEIR WAY, SYDNEY WOULD LOOK ENTIRELY DIFFERENT TODAY.

Jack was born in October 1929 on the Atherton Tablelands west of Cairns. Jack moved to Sydney at the age of 19 and became a metalworker and later a builder's labourer. He played Rugby League for Parramatta for three years.

During the 1960s, Jack was a crusading unionist and an advocate for a wide range of issues from safety reforms on building sites to broader topics such as feminism and gay rights. Unions at the time did not identify with such matters and not something for a Union to pursue.

Jack was elected to secretary of the NSW Builders' Labourers Federation (BLF) in 1968. At first, Jack fought and won improved pay parity with the tradesmen on building sites and achieved safety reforms.

Jack had gained the trust of members when the BLF embarked on environmental causes, introducing green bans on building sites that would have seen the destruction of historic sites and the removal of public housing from the inner city. Developers were running sway; there was a property boom; the likes Sydney had never seen before. If the developers had been successful, they would have bulldozed "The Rocks", Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst and Glebe. Scores of heritage buildings in Sydney's CBD, Kelly's Bush Park in Hunters Hill, parts of Centennial Park and the Botanical Gardens would be gone forever.

The BLF did not have it all their way; they faced stiff opposition. Some developers hired muscle to intimidate BLF members and their supporters. The developers also had a powerful political ally in the then Premier Askin, and history now tells us he was deeply corrupt. Jack and BLF members on a few occasions were placed under arrest.

Jack was not just a great Union leader; he inspired many of the people to stand alongside the Union. Jack Munday strongly believed unions had an obligation to act with a socially responsible purpose that extended beyond wages and conditions.

As you walk among "The Rocks" today, you will realise the inspiring legacy that Jack has left us.





GOVERNMENT REVIEWING MEDICARE REBATES FOR EYE INJECTIONS.

John Lane

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO ALERT RMA MEMBERS OF CURRENT TASKFORCE REVIEW OF ABOUT 5,700 SERVICES, LISTED ON THE MEDICARE BENEFITS SCHEDULE (MBS). THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS INFORMING THE PUBLIC THAT THE REVIEW'S PURPOSE IS TO ENSURE EACH ITEM ON THE MBS IS SAFE, EFFECTIVE AND RELEVANT.

The immediate concern is for sufferers of macular disease who rely on regular eye injection to keep their condition manageable. The Taskforce has almost finished their review of ophthalmology items as part of a draft report. The Taskforce has recommended the rebate provided to patients for an eye injection reduce from \$259.75 to just \$80.85; almost a 70 percent reduction.

The Macular Disease Foundation of Australia (MDFA) has commissioned research to investigate the Taskforce's recommendations would have on the macular disease community. Health Minister Greg Hunt now has the MDFA report. The MDFA had asked for more affordable access be made available before any changes in MBS rebated are considered. This is to ensure patients will not be negatively affected.

The MDFA reports at this stage that Mr Hunt says he understands the difficulties that sufferers of the macular disease currently face and has committed to working with the MDFA.

The *Retired Members Association* will keep across this issue and asks our members with the macular disease to regularly check the MDFA website.



COVID-19 AND THE ECONOMY

Paul Rewhorn

AT THE TIME OF THE APRIL 2020 NEWSLETTER, WE WERE IN ISOLATION. THERE WERE EARLY SIGNS THAT COVID-19 INFECTIONS WERE ON THE DECLINE. WE WERE UNCERTAIN AS TO WHERE EVENTS WERE LEADING US. TODAY, WE HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE THAT WE ARE OVER THE WORSE BUT REMAIN UNSURE OF THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME FOR THE VIRUS IMPACT AND FINANCIAL RECOVERY.

Today, State governments are easing restrictions with indications there will be further easing in coming weeks. We are fortunate in Australia that we have had good governance at both a State and Federal level. The governments have worked through the issues based on sound medical advice. Australia has done well in containing the virus, comparing well with other countries. Our infection rates are low, and we are saving lives. We have had 101 COVID-19 deaths to date. Four people have died per one million people in Australia, compared this with 597 in Spain, 537 in the UK and 285 in the US.

For the UK and the US, the infection rate curb is slowly beginning to flatten but still with a long way to go. If you watch the media coming out of the US, you will despair for the American people. They have a President who repeatedly ignores his medical advisors and promotes fake cures and misleads them. In March, he told them the pandemic would be over in a few weeks and later that the economy would be open by Easter.

A Columbia University study found that if Trump had acted just two weeks earlier, there would be thirty-six thousand fewer deaths. Trump now seems intent on opening the economy early and doing away with restrictions despite the risk of the pandemic's resurgence. Already, in Alabama, there has been a spike in infections and hospitals are running out of beds and equipment. There are fears this will happen in other parts of the country. Turning back to Australia, our biggest threat now is complacency. Physical distancing and regular hand washing are going to be the norm for us well into the future. Another potential risk is the oncoming common cold and influenza season. The common cold and influenza have similar symptoms to those of COVID-19. There is a chance that individuals will mistake their COVID-19 symptoms believing they have a common cold or flu. Such a mistake

has the potential for the COVID-19 virus to spread quickly in the community. NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has warned people even if they have the slightest sign of sore throat or other symptoms to go and have the COVID-19 test. You will hear Premiers often telling us the strategy from now is to test extensively and tracing as the economy slowly begins to open.

While the Premiers and the Prime Minister have worked together to deal with the suppression of COVID-19, this may not be the case for economic recovery. It seems there will be little bipartisanship between the federal government and the Labor opposition as to how the country should recover. The Prime Minister has referred to his prediction of a quick economic recovery as "snap back". Meaning, the economy quickly will recover just as fast as it had when it fell into recession and significant unemployment. Now, he predicts the recovery will take the form of a "V" shape, just taking that little longer to recover than first thought.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg claims the private financial sector will lead the economic recovery. He would do well to remember that millions of Australians are now unemployed. Small business and private contractors comprise 60 percent of the economy. They are going to need capital to restart their businesses and for consumers to start spending.

Before the bushfires and COVID-19, economic growth in Australia had been sluggish. This has been the case since the GFC in 2009. The federal government, since their election in 2013, have focused their economic management policy solely on balancing the budget. They have always blamed the Labor government for their spending during the GFC for the budget deficit. Now, the government will have created a far higher budget debt. Hopefully, the government does not return to the posture they had before the current recession.

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COVID-19 AND THE ECONOMY (CONT'D)

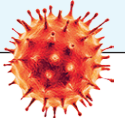
The Federal Government will do well not to gloss over the challenges they face. There is now massive unemployment. Before the current crisis, Australians already had the high household debt at 200 percent to earnings ratio; second only to Switzerland. The government will need to lead with infrastructure investment, support for small business. The country continues to have too much underemployment. The government needs to invest in workplace skills and encourage companies to invest in products and services that require a highly skilled workforce. We need to ensure for those who remain in long-term unemployment, that they receive decent financial support not the \$40 per day paid under the old Newstart.

The government will also do well to take note that the disruption to trade has created severe shortages in many essential products and services. We have become too reliant on overseas countries. I will give you two examples. First is fuel supplies. The government belatedly realised that Australia has on average only a month's fuel reserves. The government purchased \$100 million of fuel, but Australia has only a month's storage capacity. The government has had to store the fuel in the United States. Kind of defeats the purpose of strategic reserve. The second example is Telstra and other companies who have been unable to service their customers. Telstra lost its call centres because of lockdowns in the Philippines.

I wanted to cancel my Foxtel sports package. The Telstra call menu recommended I do this online. I went to their website to find the Foxtel part was down, as far as I know, it is still down. A helpful hint, I emailed Telstra in Melbourne informing that I was cancelling the sports package and adjusted my monthly payment accordingly. Three weeks later, Telstra called me to confirm that they had cancelled the sports. How is that for service?

You should still restrict your outside movements and visits.

While we can still leave our homes more as restrictions ease, we need to choose wisely our locations. For example avoid indoor spaces where there are large crowds.



Social distancing rules have not changed

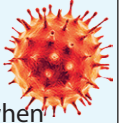
Remember we need to keep strict distancing. Stand no closer than two metres from the person next to you.

Careful where you place your hands

Do not touch surfaces; Avoid touching your mouth or face.

Easier said than done!

Therefore, take a hand sanitiser and wipes with you when you leave home. **It is now keys, phone, wallet and sanitiser when you leave home.** Clean your hands frequently. When you enter a store, use their hand sanitiser or wipe, this mostly benefits fellow shoppers and on exit do the same, this time, it benefits you.



The flu and common cold season carry a particular risk for COVID-19 infection.

First, you should get the flu vaccine. Catching the flu and COVID-19 in succession may weaken your body's immune response to a second infection, whether it is COVID-19 or the flu. For our age demographic, the consequences could be severe.

Make no assumptions.

If you develop symptoms such as a fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness or shortness of breath, no matter how slight, have a COVID-19 test. Do not assume you have a cold or the flu. And do not delay just to see whether your symptoms subside the next day. If you have Covid-19, even with the most slightest of symptoms, you are highly infectious to others.

Download the Covid App.

The federal government is urging Australians to download the Covid-19 app to their smartphones. This to assist with contact tracing and alert you, if you have encountered a person with a COVID-19 infection.

The government does not have a good track record when it comes to privacy. Raiding journalists' homes is just one example. However, the government tells us that only the health department can access the information and the app relies on you uploading the phone's data. When the crisis is over, you can and should delete the app. The public good should override privacy concerns on this occasion.