



Association of Independent Retirees (A.I.R) Limited

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IN TOUCH

APRIL 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Earlier this year I encouraged all levels of A.I.R. to adopt a "make it happen rather than wait for it to happen" philosophy. Little did I know that a number of branches were already taking a pro-active approach to their local activities. Since that time I have visited a number of branches that have displayed amazing vitality in the way they operate. The strength of a branch is not the number of members or the resources it has, but the way in which it uses them. The introduction of the Branch Ideas Network (BIN), through the initiative of board member Ken McKay, has provided a vehicle for pro-active branches to move forward using useful ideas gained from outside their local branch environment. BIN has the potential to spread contagious enthusiasm

Autonomy is the hallmark for operation of our branches. Where branches operate in isolation, there is a high degree of potential for member disenchantment and for stagnation to occur. BIN provides a means for branches to take a fresh approach to the way they do business and attract new members. If your branch is not a member of BIN, then you may be missing an opportunity to improve your branch's activities.

The results of the Questionnaire survey are published in this issue of 'In Touch' The majority viewpoint evident in the survey results has enabled the board to move forward with some confidence that a new constitution will have the support of the majority of members. About a third of the responses to the Questionnaire contained additional comments and suggestions. Clearly branches and divisions have considered a wide range of implications of the changes, which has provided further reassurance to the direction the reform process is taking. Where appropriate, these suggestions may be included as sub clauses in the new constitution. All board members were appreciative of the efforts made to bring about a successful reform of A.I.R. organisation.

A further report outlining the newly identified provisions is contained in this newsletter. It is early days in the development of the draft constitution and

as this process unfolds some further refinements may arise.

The move to a contemporary company structure may bring about some savings in some items of current expenditure, which in turn may offset other cost increases. But this is conjecture and dependent upon the outcome of the way in which a restructure is dealt with at the AGM in November 2013. The 2013/2014 budget provides for a realistic allocation to develop a national membership program in conjunction with the divisions.

In order to bring to an end a repeat of the series of budget deficits over the past five years, the board has taken a decision to increase the annual membership subscription. In an earlier special communication to branches, I explained the inevitability of the need to deal with the cumulative effect of deficit budgeting. It was a difficult but necessary decision for the board. The directors are mindful of the impact on members and request your continued support by maintaining your membership.

Tom Rollo has resigned as the West Australia Division Representative (Director). The board acknowledges the contribution made by Tom during his 15 months' term. It is expected that the vacancy will be filled shortly by the West Australia Division.

National President

The Questionnaire was circulated on the 15th December 2012, when 71 branches/divisions were invited to respond. A total of sixty nine responses were received. Many respondents provided additional supporting details and comments. The range and scope of those comments cannot be reproduced in this article. All Directors have examined the details and many ideas will be added as enabling clauses within the Constitution and Rules and Procedures.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO 2013 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY:-

Part A – The A.I.R. Board				
	Geographic Representation	Election of Office Bearers	Pre-qualification of Directors	Reduction of size of Board
Queensland Branches	9	8	11	12
Queensland Division	1	1	1	1
Queensland Total	10	9	12	13
New South Wales Branches	11	13	9	15
New South Wales Division	1	1	0	1
New South Wales Total	12	14	9	16
Victoria Branches	6	4	7	7
Victoria Division	1	1	1	1
Victoria Total	7	5	8	8
Southern Cross Branches	0	2	7	8
Southern Cross Vic. Division	0	0	1	1
Southern Cross Total	0	2	8	9
Tasmania Branches	3	3	3	3
Tasmania Division	1	1	1	1
Tasmania Total	4	4	4	4
South Australia Branches	3	3	3	3
South Australia Division	1	1	1	1
South Australia Total	4	4	4	4
West Australia Branches	11	9	12	12
West Australia Division	1	1	1	1
West Australia Total	12	10	13	13
TOTAL	49	48	58	67
MAJORITY PREFERENCES	71% YES	70% YES	84% YES	97% YES

The general conclusions that are drawn from Part A are:

Geographic representation was supported by all Divisions (except Southern Cross Victorian Division) and a majority of branches.

For the election of Office Bearers, five divisions and the majority of branches favoured retaining the present method.

An overwhelming majority favoured some form of pre-qualification be set for Directors.

An overwhelming majority favoured a reduction in the number of board members.

Part B - Division and Branch Structure - Division Roles							
	<i>Retain 3 tiered Structure</i>	<i>Coordinate Branches</i>	<i>Administer & Instruct branches</i>	<i>Assist branches</i>	<i>State/Region Advocacy</i>	<i>Fee Collection</i>	<i>Members-at-Large</i>
Queensland Branches	10	6	0	8	10	1	2
Queensland Division	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Queensland Total	11	7	0	9	11	1	2
New South Wales Branches	12	8	3	12	11	3	3
New South Wales Division	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
New South Wales Total	13	9	3	13	12	3	3
Victoria Branches	7	7	2	6	7	5	1
Victoria Division	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Victoria Total	8	8	2	7	8	6	1
Southern Cross Branches	5	4	1	3	4	1	4
Southern Cross Vic. Division	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southern Cross Total	5	4	1	3	4	1	4
Tasmania Branches	3	2	2	3	3	1	1
Tasmania Division	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Tasmania Total	4	3	3	4	4	1	1
South Australia Branches	2	2	0	2	2	0	1
South Australia Division	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
South Australia Total	3	3	1	2	3	0	1
West Australia Branches	11	11	3	11	11	2	1
West Australia Division	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
West Australia Total	12	12	3	12	12	2	1
TOTAL	56	46	13	50	54	14	13
YES RESPONSES	81%	82%	24%	89%	96%	25%	62%

Note - 13 branches preferred a 2 tier structure.
1 division was split over structure.

The general conclusions that have been drawn from this table are:-

An overwhelming majority favoured retention of the 3 tiered organisational model.

Responses favoured a strong division role in the coordination of branches, assisting branches, carrying out of state and regional advocacy and maintaining control over the members-at-large (state based) register.

There was minority support for divisions to be involved with:

- (i) Administration and instructing branches and
- (ii) Fee collection.

The clear majority outcomes from the survey provide a basis for the prescription of a new constitution as the next stage in the reform process. The Board expresses its thanks to all branches and divisions for their co-operation in completing this Questionnaire.

Max Barton, National President

THE CONTINUING PROCESS FOR CHANGE - A NEW CONSTITUTION

OVERVIEW

A new constitution will be developed, enshrining the key outcomes of the survey with supplementary enabling provisions to allow rules and procedures to be prescribed. As a guiding principle, the constitution will contain the fundamental conditions for the operation of the association. Where possible and consistent with the constitution, the detailed specification of requirements for the management of the association will be contained in the Rules and Procedures. In this way, the requirements can be modified to suit evolving association requirements without the complications and restrictions associated with changes in the constitution.

THE KEY OUTCOMES:-

- Retain geographic representation on the A.I.R. Board
- Retain current method of electing Office Bearers
- Prescribe skills required for the role of Director
- Reduce the size of the Board by eliminating some Office Bearers positions
- Retain a 3 tiered organisational model

Ancillary provisions :

- Constitutional recognition of members-at-large.
- National framework for membership and advocacy programs
- The use of electronic communication as far as possible.
- The control of use of company name, trade mark, motto and logos.
- Board to assign ancillary roles to directors
- Membership qualifications to include seniors who are semi-retired and/or planning to retire.
- Recognition of role of divisions in respect to :
 - Co-ordination of branches.
 - Assistance of branches.
 - State/regional advocacy.
 - Election of state reps.(Directors).
 - Initiation of awareness programs that promote and publicise A.I.R. activities.

- Establishment of new branches
- Recognition of discretionary options

DEVELOPING THE CONSTITUTION:

Within a generic framework, new provisions will be added to give force and effect to the key outcomes. Supplementary enabling provisions will also be added to allow detailed requirements to be specified in the Rules and Procedures. Further adjustments, modifications and amendments may be needed for clarity and to remove inconsistencies. Consequently, the changes foreshadowed in the following list are not necessarily a complete list of the expected changes that will come with a new draft constitution.

PROVISIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN CONSTITUTION:

State Representative.

One representative (Director) to be elected by each state.

Special conditions for 1 state representative to cover situation where 2 divisions are established.

Representatives shall be elected by branch delegates at the Division AGM.

Representatives shall be elected for a 2 year term, taking office following the close of the national AGM.

Divisions shall appoint representatives to fill casual vacancies.

The Board may appoint a representative when a Division fails to elect or fill their vacant position.

Representatives appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall hold office for the remaining quantum of the normal 2 year term.

Representatives shall not serve more than 2 terms (i.e. 4 years).

Transitional arrangements will allow incumbent representatives to complete their terms.

Terms of office shall expire by rotation to facilitate a turnover of ½ of the representatives each year.

Office Bearers

The President and Deputy President shall be elected by branch delegates at the national AGM.

Elected office bearers shall have a 2 year term, taking office following the close of the national AGM.

The President and Deputy President shall not serve more than 2 terms (i.e. 4 years)

The Board may appoint President and/or Deputy President to fill a casual vacancy.

Office bearers appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall hold office for the remaining quantum of the normal 2 year term.

Representatives may be appointed by the Board to undertake any office bearer position.

Transitional arrangements may allow incumbent office bearers to complete their terms.

Board may appoint office bearers in non-voting roles.

Directors' Qualifications

The Board will define basic skills required for directors and office bearers.

Nominees for office bearer positions will provide a detailed CV for circulation before holding election.

Directors will be required to accept ancillary roles allocated by the board.

The Board will have regard for individual special skills in assigning ancillary roles.

Divisions shall have regard for nominees' basic skills when determining state representatives.

Office Bearers and Directors must be financial members of the Association.

Board Size and Composition

The Board will be comprised of 6 state representatives plus 2 office bearers (President & Deputy President)

Ancillary Provisions

Recognition shall be made of members-at-large.

Responsibilities and discretion shall be assigned to divisions.

PEER GROUP REVIEW:

The draft constitution will be subject to an independent review by a peer group of A.I.R. members, who are not members of the Board. The task of the peer group will be to review and report within the following guidelines:

*To ensure the spirit of the key outcomes are properly reflected in the constitution.

*To examine the comprehensive cohesion of the provisions.

* To identify gaps in the workability and practicality of the provisions

* To remove inconsistencies, conflicts and redundant provisions.

Refinement and fine tuning is expected to flow from the report of the peer group. It is anticipated that the final form of the draft constitution will be available to A.I.R. members in September, prior to its consideration at the November AGM.

Max Barton, National President

ADVOCACY – A.I.R. IN ACTION

Actions on Pre-Budget Submission Lodged on 31 January 2013

Many thanks are due to members who made suggestions for matters to be included in the Commonwealth Pre-Budget Submission for the financial year 2013-2014. The Submission is available on the Front Page News Section of the Website www.independentretirees.com.au.

The most frequent suggestion was to continue to press for indexation of the Commonwealth Seniors' Health Card (CSHC), and to make it fairer for all retirees. The Pre-Budget Submission was strengthened accordingly.

A request for a taxation rebate on interest earned has been added to the Pre-Budget Submission following a member's suggestion. The rebate was originally proposed in the Henry Tax Review and then included in the Federal Budget two years ago, to the extent of \$1,000 of interest earned. The proposal was subsequently discontinued.

Government reluctance to lower the Deeming Rate in line with reductions in the RBA Interest rate attracted a number of comments. The Deeming Rate is used by Centrelink for assessing income from assets held by retirees to determine eligibility for the Age Pension. This item was not included in the Pre-Budget Submission because it was the subject of ongoing discussion with the Minister leading to the recently announced one-half percentage reduction in the deeming rate.

A number of comments stressed the desirability of re-statement of issues covered in previous Pre-Budget Submissions, including abolition of the work test and reduction of the minimum withdrawal rate in superannuation. This has been done.

The need for greater flexibility in the funding of aged care facilities was raised, including alternatives to accommodation bonds to allow retention of the family

residence and the ability to use reverse mortgages. The Pre-Budget Submission was adjusted to strengthen this area.

A recommendation for increased funding for research into health care issues, especially dementia and Alzheimer’s disease was proposed, but has not been included until agreed as A.I.R. policy.

Following release of the Pre-Budget Submission, a Media Release was issued on 31 January pressing for a major review to simplify regulations controlling retirees’ income, the first recommendation contained in the Pre-Budget Submission.

The President, Max Barton, asked: “Why should retirees have to go through regulatory, costly, complex processes, which cause unnecessary worry – the last thing elderly retirees need?” He said: “The best retirement model for Australians is one that allows them to have responsibility for their own financial affairs within a framework of assistance and minimal regulatory control. This applies equally to those with superannuation and those without, the latter including small business owners who were unable to build superannuation while working.”

A further Media Release was issued on 11 February calling for a Productivity Commission Inquiry into Superannuation to stop the destructive discussion between vested superannuation industry and union interests which, together with daily political attacks, were destroying the confidence of Australians in superannuation. Seven more months of public stoush and debate between the parties is clearly unacceptable. However, there are serious issues that

need to be addressed. Agreement between the parties for a Productivity Commission Inquiry would take the discussion where it properly belongs, a considered forum outside the public arena.

A constructive meeting was held in Canberra on 18 March between the Shadow Minister for Superannuation, Senator Mathias Cormann and Barry Ritchie, expanding on issues in the Submission.

Divisions, Branches, and members are urged to use the Pre-Budget Submission as a basis for representations to their Federal MP’s until the Budget is brought down in May.

Barry Ritchie, National Deputy President.

INCOME TESTING OF THE PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE REBATE AND OTHER MATTERS

A number of issues were discussed at the **Individual Taxpayer Advisory Forum** held in Canberra on Tuesday 19 March, when Barry Ritchie represented A.I.R.

1. Arrangements for Income Testing of the Private Health Insurance Rebate were presented. Income thresholds and rebates for 2012-2013 are set out in the Table. The figures in the Income Threshold column below (including \$84,0001 for singles) are the existing rebates.

Income Thresholds	Singles	>\$84,000	\$84,001–97,000	\$97,001-130,000	>\$130,001
	Families	Double the amount for singles (plus \$1,500 a dependent child)			
Rebates	Under 65 years	30%	20%	10%	zero
	65-69 years	35%	25%	15%	Zero
	Over 70 years	40%	30%	20%	Zero
Medicare Levy Rates		Zero	1.0%	1.25%	1.5%

Private Health Funds will provide an annual member statement to each adult on the policy showing the share of premiums paid and the share of rebate already paid. (Note: For two adults, the premium will be halved for each.) This statement is very important as it provides the information to complete the Personal Income Tax Statement for the Financial Year for each adult. The ATO will calculate the allowable rebate from the Personal Income Tax Statement and

provide an Assessment on the Assessment Notice of the Rebate adjustment to be paid or rebated.

Income is not the same as normal taxable income but includes other amounts such as reportable fringe benefits, total net investment losses and reportable superannuation contributions. The additional data will be collected through e-Tax or the hard-copy Personal Income Tax Statement.

2. An income test for the net medical expenses tax offset, although not yet law, was introduced in the last Federal Budget. Income will also be based on adjusted taxable income. It is proposed that taxpayers will be required to include net medical expenses in their return, rather than self-assess as in the past. Taxpayers with an adjusted taxable income above \$84,000 as singles (\$168,000 for couples or families) will only be able to have an offset of 10% for eligible expenses incurred above \$5,000. Below this income threshold, taxpayers can claim an offset of 20% for expenses incurred above \$2,120. It was pointed out that any medicines purchased from a pharmacy can be claimed.
3. An update on Super Reform was provided. Issues arising during the development of Superstream (the common back office system) and MySuper were discussed. The Inspector General has agreed to examine the penalties and procedures applying to excess contributions to superannuation, an issue that has caused much anger in the community. Results are unlikely to be known until the second half of the year.
4. A presentation on the approach to debt collecting showed that the percentage of bad debts has been climbing steadily since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. This appears to be a very accurate reflection of the steady weakening of a large part of the economy and increasing cost pressures on the community. It may reflect a decrease in the perception of payments that have to be made against telephone and credit card commitments.

Barry Ritchie, National Deputy President.

A.I.R. SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

BABY BOOMERS

The Baby Boomers Group (BBG) was established in March 2012 and has now 181 members, making it the second largest special interest group in A.I.R. The Board has endorsed the plan to greatly expand the group and work will begin on this shortly.

The Baby Boomer Group has been established to provide an additional flow of information to our younger members and to those considering joining A.I.R.

Our objective is to demonstrate the relevance of our organisation to the baby boomer generation - though any member is welcome to receive the information

we provide. The group sources items of interest from the public domain and emails it directly to members who have elected to receive the information.

Recent bulletins to members have dealt with the relevance of A.I.R. to younger members, a report on the financial and psychological readiness of people considering retirement, superannuation results for 2012 and an economic insight into 2013.

The Baby Boomer team welcomes new members. The only requirement is that you have an email address, so that you can receive our monthly bulletins. The service is of course free. If you would like to join us, simply send an email to your Branch Membership Officer (BMO) who will make the necessary arrangements for you to receive all future bulletins.

Ken McKay, Group Leader (enquiries welcome at mckayjk@hotmail.com)

410 RETIREMENT VISA ADVOCACY GROUP

Changes of Direction with Ministry Reshuffles:

Senator Chris Evans' resignation from the Labor Government front bench and as Leader of The Senate prompted Ministry changes.

Because of his help over the years, we wrote to the Senator to thank him for his positive help when in the Immigration portfolio. We received a personal reply in which he reiterated his commitment to a pathway for Permanent Residence for 410 Visa Holders and, in giving best wishes for our future endeavours, stated that it had been a pleasure working with our Group.

Nicola Roxon resigned as Attorney General, prompting another change. We have contacted Brendon O'Connor, the current Immigration Minister, giving him a copy of our updated Background Paper and current views on the numbers of 410s still resident in Australia and the likely positive effect on any suggestion that 410s may cost Treasury significant amounts of money in the future.

The Paper concentrated on the positives of contributions to the economy (in some cases, over many years) and the volunteering factor. We will see how the Minister responds to this latest approach.

Scott Morrison, the Shadow Minister for Immigration, has been followed up because he will visit WA again during the run up to the Federal Election. We have reminded him of his professed support for our cause and that we look to him to advance that cause if, as seems likely, he may be the next Immigration Minister in a Coalition Government.

At the end of December, the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) issued a report in response to

approaches by representatives of the BERIA online website discussion forum.

This concerned the availability of Reciprocal Health Care Agreements (RHCAs) and a change to the very expensive Overseas Visitors Private Health Insurance, which all 410s are obliged to carry as a condition of their visa. In both cases, 410s were knocked back, because representatives chose to highlight the lack of RHCAs cover for those 410 holders who did not live in Australia and proposed only to visit.

The reaction to this situation was immediate and vocal from 410 holders around Australia, disappointed by the failure of another attempted negotiation with Government officers, together with the fact that the better interests of the majority who did reside in Australia were not properly represented. Indeed, many have gone on to call for the visa to be removed from those who patently have no intention of settling permanently in this country.

The Immigration Department has recently issued an enhanced 676 Tourist Visa, which allows applicants with family in Australia to apply for a 3 year visa which mandates visits of up to 12 months at any one time during the currency of the visa. This neatly takes care of the requirements for those 410 holders who have chosen to live offshore.

As we have always accepted the need for a 10 year probationary period before any grant of permanent residence, the latter would automatically exclude offshore visa holders from qualifying. There are currently now approximately 3,500 410 visa holders residing in Australia and looking for permanent residence, very different from the numbers only 4 years ago.

The DOHA Report was referred to the Age Discrimination Commissioner. The Hon Susan Ryan ruled that DOHA had not breached the letter of the law in relation to the operation of The Age Discrimination Act 2004, but advised that we should pursue the Department over the application of RHCAs for 410 holders who arrived after 1998, as the decision handed down in the Report is patently unfair. Watch this space!

Peter Kerr, Co-ordinator

E-mail: rvhg@independentretirees.com

COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND DEFENCE FORCE PERSONNEL: Urgent need for a co-ordinator.

A.I.R. formed this special interest group to gather information that could be used to protect the interests of members who are in receipt of

Commonwealth or State pensions. There is information about the Group on the A.I.R. website.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to find a member to coordinate the Group activities, and the number of members who have expressed their interest in joining the group is low. If the Board cannot find a coordinator soon, then the Group will fold. Any interested members should please contact Max Barton.

The Board currently has been considering a Policy Proposal to provide more flexible taxation outcomes for this group of members. It is likely to be put aside unless the Board can establish that more members are keen for the Group to continue.

Ian Gresswell, (Melbourne South East Branch)

A.I.R. WEBSITE HOME PAGE UPGRADE NOW PROVIDES FREQUENT NEWS ITEMS

The Home Page of the Website has been altered as from January 2013 to contain up-to-date news items in the central section. An extract is shown below.

Call for Action as Health Insurance Premiums increase over double CPI

22 February 2013 Private health insurance increases 5.6% against CPI of 2.5% effectively reducing rebate for retirees over 65. Minister urges families to.....[Read more](#)

Mature Age Workers benefit from changes to super from 1 July

15 February 2013 An ATO Media Release sets out changes to super from 1 July for mature age workers. [Members please log in to read more](#)

A headline is included (coloured deep blue) for news items that are available both to the public and also to members. The date of the news item is shown at the beginning of a short précis Clicking on the words "Read more" (in blue) will take you directly to the detail of the news item and a contact name is provided for obtaining further information.

For items restricted to 'members only,' the headline is in the A.I.R. red colour. Clicking on the words "Read more" (in blue at the end of the précis) will take you directly to the detail of the news item.

Members are encouraged to look at the home page frequently, because new items are being placed weekly and old items removed. Please also spread the word as the home page is now being viewed by our external stakeholders, including the media.

Divisions, Branches and members are encouraged to send items for inclusion, so that we can sell the broad coverage of A.I.R. members' interests. For instance, a recent news item covered initiatives by the Baby Boomers special interest group.

Please send articles or requests for further information to britchi1@bigpond.net.au.

Barry Ritchie, National Deputy President

DIVISION REPORTS

Victoria Division

Since December 2012, Victoria Division has

- Emailed the Model Branch Booklet to all branches.
- Revised the Victoria Division Handbook to include Division Membership Officer (DMO) and Branch Membership Officers (BMOs).
- Updated the Victoria leadership roster of National, Division and Branch executives.
- Downsized the Division newsletter to a two page communication, "To the Point", which is to be produced in turn by individual branches.
- Reviewed the Victorian Law Reform Commission Succession Laws six consultation papers namely Wills, Family Provision, Intestacy, Executors, Debts and Small Estates. With the intention of producing a public perspective. Vice President Joan Heard AM attended the Commission's Roundtable on 28th February.

In addition:

- All branches completed the National Restructure Questionnaire.
- Three branches, (Wimmera, Melbourne Bayside-Glen Eira and Albury/Wodonga) have arranged or are in the process of organising local financial seminars.
- One branch has enjoyed highlighting the talented grandchildren's skills through dance and vocal performances at two meetings.
- Branches are in the process of making appointments to speak with state politicians about the State Pre-Budget Submission (PBS).

Albury-Wodonga spoke with NSW State Member for Albury Greg Aplin MP on 11th March. Wimmera's guest speaker in April is Senator Bridget McKenzie.

- Proving popular in Branches is the individual member life history/story either in a newsletter or orally at a monthly meeting.
- Branches are increasingly using the local radio and local papers to promote A.I.R.
- Still creating interest, interaction and enjoyment are the investment and discussion groups being held in the Bendigo and Echuca-Moama branches.
- Hamilton is promoting discounts for members for private health insurance.
- Melbourne North West continues to produce an informative newsletter, whilst Geelong has an informal lunch followed by a meeting.

Linda M Martin, Division President

Western Australia Division

With a pending Western Australia State Election on 9th March 2013, it was proposed by the WA Division Committee of Management at their meeting in early October 2012 that the Division form an Advocacy Group to coordinate the A.I.R.'s activities during the election process. This Advocacy Group, together with its terms of reference, was endorsed at the WA Division meeting on 30th October 2012. The Advocacy Group will be led by the Perth Southern Suburbs Branch under the Chairmanship of Charles O'Donnell. Every other Branch was asked to provide a representative to the Group. At the same meeting, it was decided to make the following four issues the focal points of the Division's Pre-Election Submission (PES) to candidates standing for election:-

- Establishment of an appropriate Photo Identity Card for Seniors
- The Country Age Pension Fuel Card to be made available to Seniors Card holders over 65 years who are eligible for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card
- Conditional waiver of Stamp Duty on the purchase of a place of residence by a retiree
- The provision of parking bays for seniors and volunteers at metropolitan railway stations.

The Advocacy Group then researched these topics and wrote the Submission with the secondment of the

Division Secretary to assist in the final drafting. The following are the achievements of the Advocacy Group leading up to the Election:-

- An attractive Presentation Folder was designed and produced, the inside cover of which details A.I.R.'s Vision and a very brief Company history, together with a list of all WA Branches with their contact details. The PES, printed on Company letterhead with an Executive Summary, was given to the Candidates in these folders.
- Business Cards were printed for all presenters and these contained the Company logo, the name of the presenter, their Branch name, their personal telephone number and email address.
- Approximately 40 pivotal candidates were contacted with the majority of whom we had "face-to-face" discussions concerning our PES.

The Premier of Western Australia, (Colin Barnett) and the Leader of the Opposition, (Mark McGowan) were aware of our submissions, and we received written responses from both

Details of our submission were reported in our leading community newspaper and the seniors' publication "Have-A-Go" News

We invited candidates to meetings of all but two of our twelve Branches, where representatives from both the major two parties either debated or discussed our PES. These included Dr Kim Hames, (Deputy Premier), parliamentary secretaries, shadow ministers and other members.



At a meeting of the Perth Southern Suburbs Branch, Charles O'Donnell introduced Liberal candidate Dr Mike Nahan (a Parliamentary Secretary) and Labor candidate Mr Bill Johnston (a Shadow Minister) The Mayor of Victoria Park, Mr Trevor Vaughan, acted as Moderator. Both candidates and the Mayor complimented A.I.R. for its well-presented Submission

and for its professionalism. Community newspaper reporters attended and Charles was interviewed at the conclusion of the meeting.

At each Branch meeting where the candidates spoke, there were visitors present and we have subsequently received many expressions of interest from people contemplating joining the Association.

We have thus far concluded from these meetings that the request for the Photo Identity Card will be successful, as both major Parties said that they would pass this recommendation. The Liberal candidates were generally sympathetic about the stamp duty waiver, subject to detailed financial examination of the matter. The Division plans to prepare a Pre-Budget Submission to present to the successful party.

In addition to advocacy, the Western Australian Division has been active in attempting to both gain and retain members. The Division is assisting Branches with newsletters, financial record keeping and the like. President Don Keene attended meetings of three Branches to assist them to keep afloat, and it is very pleasing to report that they are still operative. In fact, the Perth Branch won the Maureen Kingston Award at the recent National Conference after doubling its membership to over 70.

A new e-mail-only Branch has been formed to cater for country areas outside the geographical range of existing Branches. Sponsorship is being sought, and publicity is occurring in more than 50 rural newspapers.

The professional folder described above contains information which is appropriate for use as membership packages for prospective members, including the Division Vision and our new Membership Application Form. All Division and Branch printed stationery is now headed with the trading name, "Working for Australians in Retirement" beneath the Association's formal name.

Finally, it is felt that one of the axioms missing in some areas of the Association's publicity is that A.I.R. is fun!!

Don Keene, Division President

Southern Cross Victorian Division

The Division continues to spend considerable time on discussion around membership. To date we have contained losses and have increased membership after the first 2 quarters by 38, including 3 new financial members for Canberra.

Canberra has highlighted a problem which must impinge on the financial wellbeing of some Branches. At present, Canberra has 70 financial members, but 25

of these are life members who bring experience but no membership fees to the Branch or Division.

Branches have been encouraged to carry out a SWOT analysis of their Branch [Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats]. The suggestion is that this analysis should be carried out by relatively new members, rather than long serving members who may bring an historical emphasis rather than an up to date impression. After carrying out the analysis, a series of strategies should be developed to drive the Branch forward.

The Division Handbook was revised in January 2013 and all Branches of the Division completed the Board re-structure questionnaire.

The Barwon Branch, the newest A.I.R. Branch (commenced early 2012) continues to progress happily. While membership stood at 27 at time of writing, a recruitment campaign has been initiated, involving the sending of letters to a number of Probus clubs in the region, outlining A.I.R.'s objectives and inviting interested people to attend the Branch's forthcoming meetings.

In place of a Division effort during Seniors Week, Branches have been encouraged to "piggy back" on the activities run by their local municipalities. The idea is to run some form of program which will appeal to non-members. If A.I.R. activities are advertised in the Council programs, then this represents a cost-free way to publicise A.I.R. before the general public.

Branches have been reminded that local municipal councils carry out many programs related to retirees. We should be aware of the opportunities for advocacy at the local government level. Individual branches are best situated to carry out this important exercise. In line with this principle, the Melbourne Eastern Branch has been involved in the City of Whitehorse Housing and Neighbourhood Character Study.

Discussions around Pre-Budget Submissions have been carried out with both Federal and State parliamentarians. Recent leadership changes at the state level in Victoria have opened new channels of which we hope to take advantage. A formal meeting with the State Assistant Treasurer has been arranged for early April.

Many of our members will be aware of the Warrnambool Branch's participation in the debate concerning superannuation, shown on the ABC's 7.30 Report on Wednesday 6 March.

Whilst A.I.R. was not specifically mentioned, the Warrnambool banner which displayed the A.I.R. trade mark featured prominently. For those who missed the program, a DVD supplied by the ABC (courtesy of Greg Hoy, Business Correspondent) will be displayed on the

A.I.R. website. Greg Hoy will hopefully provide a sympathetic ear in our quest for greater recognition of A.I.R. and self-funded retirees in general.

Rod Carter, Division President

Queensland Division

Whilst Cyclone Oswald has spent its force over most of the Queensland coastline from Rockhampton to the border and on into NSW, leaving a trail of devastation, the Queensland DMC has been extremely active, engaging a range of activities aimed at the growth of membership and improved advocacy. The recent two day DMC meeting included some in-depth discussion on both these issues, with excellent outcomes.

Branch members have been working with the Queensland Productivity Commission investigating electricity costs. The Division has provided submissions aimed at controlling the increases expected to be in the order of 17.5%. The majority of the cost (some 60% in the price of electricity) is due to the network charges component.

Continuing efforts are being made to have the Federal Government convene a forum to discuss the insurance industry's costs to consumers and the lack of transparency in operation. As predicted in our previous media releases, a large number of people did not reinsure, due to cost increases of excessive proportions.

The Division has submitted its Pre-Budget Submission to the State Government in person. Three proposals were well received by the State Treasurer. The submission was discussed in what can only be described as a very friendly and amicable exchange. The proposals included transfer duty when downsizing accommodation, eligibility for the Queensland Seniors Card to be reduced to age 60 years (currently 65 years) as per other states, and an expansion of the pensioner rate subsidy scheme. We are hopeful that the recommendations will receive Parliamentary support.

The Division Executive is continuing its program of Branch visitations. This has proven to be very well accepted by branches, besides improving relationships with all members.

The Members at Large branch now consists of some 41 members, who will be receiving their first newsletter shortly. A media campaign is to begin with all the regional newspapers and community radio stations, promoting A.I.R. in general and the Members-at-Large Branch availability.

Eddie Childs, Division President.

South Australia Division

This last year has not been a good one for the SA Division, with closures at Mount Gambier and more recently at Adelaide (the oldest branch in the state).

These branches had 60 and 140 members respectively, but closed due to their inability to form management committees. In the case of Adelaide, a plan involving Holdfast Bay Branch providing leadership, secretarial and financial help was implemented in an effort to keep the branch open, but was to no avail. In each case, members of the closed branches have been invited to join another existing branch of their choice. We still have 3 vibrant branches in Fleurieu, Whyalla and Holdfast Bay, all of which are very active in their communities.

At the Division level, we put submissions to the State Government, seeking the abolition or reduction of stamp duty paid when a retiree downsizes by purchasing a smaller dwelling more suitable to their needs. We pointed out that this could bring a lot of larger homes more appropriate for younger people onto the market and the whole exercise could be revenue neutral.

We received a reply saying that our concerns were noted but the funds were not available to comply. However, soon afterwards, the Government abolished stamp duty on purchases of new dwellings in the Central Business District of Adelaide, in order to stimulate building activity there. We have since re-lodged our submission and are awaiting a reply.

On behalf of the Whyalla branch, we made a submission in relation to the Patient Assisted Transport Scheme. This programme provides travel and accommodation subsidies to people who need to travel long distances for specialist medical help. The level of support has not changed since implementation and recent changes to the required paperwork have further complicated the system.

The division supported the Fleurieu Branch in its efforts to retain local doctors and to ensure that medical services such as emergency, obstetric and post-operative care are not jeopardised in other country areas. It appears that the outcome in this instance has been successful.

Don Overall, Secretary, AIR Holdfast Bay Branch
(for **John Yard**, Division President)

New South Wales Division

Congratulations are extended to several NSW branches who have achieved their 20th anniversaries

in recent months. Many long serving members and in some case inaugural office bearers were present for these celebrations. More NSW Branches will achieve their 20th anniversary throughout 2013. Hopefully, they will celebrate in style, involve their local area dignitaries and recognise the contributions of their long serving members and inaugural office bearers.

We hope to finalise our recommendations to the state Government at our forthcoming NSW Division Management Committee meeting. Our goal remains to protect the interests and needs of partly and fully self-funded retirees within NSW, both in city and country locations, to secure understanding and acceptance by the NSW Government and to ensure that the independent lifestyle and entitlements of self-funded retirees are enhanced and are not eroded.

Following the implementation of the NSW Whole of Government Ageing Strategy released in 2012, some innovative initiatives have been commenced. We appreciate the opportunity to have input in this process with the Minister Andrew Constance and the Office for the Ageing.

Tech Savvy Seniors

It is accepted that many seniors have not had the opportunity to learn how to use smart phones, tablets and computers. As part of the Strategy, the Tech Savvy Seniors Program (developed in partnership with Telstra, community colleges and the State Library) will provide training for people over the age of 60 who have not had the chance to learn to use new technology

Public-Private Partnerships for Population Ageing

The Strategy commits the NSW Government to creating an open dialogue with the private sector in order to maximise the commercial opportunities arising from population-ageing. Key stakeholders have been involved in exploring options for forging partnerships and making the most of expanded markets and public-private partnerships in forums established by the NSW Government

Local Government Grants

To assist councils in developing and implementing plans for older people, grants are being awarded to councils across the state to fund a range of projects, including ageing strategies, pedestrian access, mobility plans and age-friendly exercise equipment.

Employment

The Strategy identifies a number of actions to support mature-age workers including strengthening the skills base of people 45 and over and removing barriers that hinder full workforce participation.

Education across life stages

The Office for Ageing will launch an education awareness campaign to promote the message that 'ageing well' starts with better planning in mid-life. The project aims to encourage people to make decisions in their middle years about their health, finances, employment options and housing choices.

Strategy to respond to abuse of older people and the establishing of a dedicated Helpline

This policy is in the final stages of agreement. Catholic Healthcare will establish and operate a NSW telephone Helpline and Resource Unit, which will initiate a program aimed to reduce abuse of older people.

Robert Curley, Division President

BRANCH NEWS

Northern Tasmania Branch

Northern Tasmania Branch, the largest in Australia, has just recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a special meeting on 15 February.

The Branch President, Graeme Barwick gave a particular welcome to Lady Sallie Ferrall, widow of the Branch's inaugural President, Sir Raymond Ferrall.

Rob Cleary, Division President, presented the Branch with a 'Certificate of Congratulations' from the National Board and introduced the tape of the inaugural meeting held on 19 February, 1993 with 500 in attendance. In this taped introduction, Sir Raymond Ferrall (chair) outlined the background to the A.I.R. organisation and spoke of the objective of members as "independence in retirement," describing those self-supporting retirees who worked and saved for retirement as "forgotten people" Sir Raymond welcomed the National President, Maureen Kingston, and introduced the Hon. Geoff Davis, (then Queensland State President and previously a Tasmanian MHA).to address the meeting. Geoff Davis gave an inspiring talk about the background to the establishment of A.I.R. and its importance in representing the then one million self-funded retirees in Australia.

After the taped presentation, Rob Cleary introduced the nine surviving Branch Presidents and invited them to briefly address the meeting about highlights of their time in office.



Former Branch Presidents: Rob Cleary, Glenn Robinson, Faith Layton, Bob Mainwaring, Coleman O'Flaherty, Lady Sallie Ferrall, Roger Valentine, Dick James, Graeme Barwick (Past & Current President)

Rob Cleary, with the Mayor of West Tamar (Mr. Barry Easter), presented certificates to past office-bearers and recognised inaugural members. It was a privilege to have in attendance the Hon. Geoff Davis and Lady Sallie Ferrall.

Following the special meeting, 95 members and guests attended a Luncheon on Monday 18 February at the Riverside Golf Club.

Thanks are extended to the small committee who helped organise these memorable occasions, especially Sue Shea, who kept everything flowing.

The branch is in the process of organising another Retirement Expo for May 2013. In 2012, two years after its memorable 2010 National Conference, the Branch conducted a most successful Expo with over 350 attending. This year, an expanded event will have more exhibitors and will include a lifestyle and health focus, in addition to finance.

Wendy Robinson, Branch committee member

Bundaberg and District Branch. Queensland.

Bundaberg celebrated its 20th Birthday with 20 original members attending the celebration, most of whom are still regular attendees at meetings. National Treasurer John Wenban addressed the meeting and Myra Cullen (aged 96 years) cut the cake. The branch was commenced by the Hon Geoff Davis Some 250 people attended the first meeting and 179 became members.

Eddie Childs, Branch President



Celebrations at Bundaberg

Les Kent, Kate Smith, Betty Campbell, Eileen Pickup, John Wenban (at rear), Meynel Sommerfield, Col Campbell, Jim Fleming, Myra Cullen, Dawn Fleming, Marie Harding.

With this in mind, we decided to promote our Forum as having only independent speakers. We particularly emphasised that there would be no financial institutions trying to sell their products. We believe this was the key to our Forum's popularity.

The Forum was only going to be successful if we could extensively publicise the event. We could not afford an expensive advertising campaign, so we embarked on a publicity drive, some of which was successful and some a total waste of time.

Interestingly, the source of about 80% of attendees was an article sent to a local free weekly newspaper.

If any branches want further information, please contact me on robgrover@hotmail.com or 0417 732 242. More comprehensive details will be placed on the A.I.R. website.

Rob Grover, Branch President

Macarthur Branch, New South Wales

The Macarthur Branch celebrated its 20th anniversary in February with a special birthday event which included 26 founding members. The Division President (Robert Curley) and Deputy Division President (Cynthia Wagner) were present, along with a number of local dignitaries. Robert presented certificates to all continuing members.

On 26 February, more than 40 members also attended a lunch at the Campbelltown Catholic Club, where the inaugural meeting took place in February 1993.

Edward Wilson, Branch President.

Gold Coast Branch, Queensland

The Gold Coast A.I.R. Branch held a Baby Boomers Finance Forum on 23 March, to provide information that Baby Boomers need to consider as they plan for and enter retirement.

Over 170 people attended the Forum, with 28 signing up as new members on the day. By charging for morning tea and running a multi draw raffle, we covered all our costs and made about \$200 profit plus a share of the new members' fees.

While many Baby Boomers benefit from professional financial planning advice, regrettably some advisers seem more interested in selling their products. There is a real call from Baby Boomers for independent, comprehensive advice as to the opportunities and pitfalls that arise at the time of retirement.

North Central District Branch, Western Australia

The Guest Speakers at the Branch meeting on Wednesday 6 February were two candidates for the W.A. seat of Mount Lawley in the state elections (9 March) - Michael Sutherland (Sitting member and Liberal Party candidate), and Bob Kucera (Labor Party candidate).



The attendance, with the assistance of other W.A. branches, was about 3 times that of a normal monthly meeting, helping to ensure that the requests of A.I.R. be taken seriously.

After the meeting, the Branch received a thankyou email from one candidate with the recommendation to contact the Federal candidates ASAP and ask them to address the Branch.

The other candidate expressed pleasure that there is a group like A.I.R. to "show the government just how important we 'independent seniors' are".

Joy Rourke, Branch Secretary

Albany Branch, Western Australia

Members are pleased to note that there have been flashing '40kph speed limit' signs installed near some of the local schools. This is something we have been working on for about 3 years (as have some other community groups). Local police recorded fewer than usual instances of speeding near schools in the first week. We hope that heightened awareness of the speed limit will mean greater compliance (and fewer fines) and that it will not be long before all the other local schools acquire similar signs.

Wendy Minchin, Branch President

VALE – JO SMYTH

Ishbel Josephine Smyth was a Golden Graduate of the Queensland University of Technology with a Certificate of Teaching, and was an Associate Member of Research and Design for Ageing International Network.

Jo completed a Volunteer Tutors Training Course 1991, a Certificate in Adult Literacy from the Yeronga TAFE, 1993, and a Certificate in Office Administration from the Ithaca TAFE in 1998.

Jo joined A.I.R. in 1992 and held positions as Branch Secretary, Branch President, Division Secretary, Division President, Company Secretary and Public Officer.

In 2000, Jo was appointed a member of the Ministerial Advisory Council for Older Persons, Queensland Department of Seniors and, in 2005, was appointed Chair of the Queensland Aged Care Planning Advisory Committee.

She was a consumer representative on the Aged Care Reform Group, Queensland Health, the representative for A.I.R. on the Sector Liaison Committee (a group of representative peak bodies) advising the Seniors' Unit, Department of Seniors and was an active member of Older People Speak Out.

In addition, Jo served on A.I.R.'s Constitution Review Committee, the Pre-Election Policy Committee and the Health and Aged Care Research Group.

Jo was made an Honorary Life Member in 2006.

She passed away on 13th March 2013.

PROPOSED AGED CARE REFORMS

Press Release, 13 March 2013

Five bills were introduced to the Federal Parliament on 13 March, necessary for the continuing implementation of Living Longer Living Better reforms. These bills were read twice and then the Selection of Bills Committee met in private session on the same date.

The latter committee resolved to recommend that the provisions of:-

- the Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013,
- the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency Bill 2013,
- the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013,
- the Aged Care (Bond Security) Amendment Bill 2013 and
- the Aged Care (Bond Security) Levy Amendment Bill 2013

be referred immediately to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 17 June 2013.

This committee is to undertake detailed considerations of the bills and the full impact of how these changes to the aged care act will affect providers, older Australians and their families and carers. This committee noted that possible submissions for evidence may be sought from several organisations including the Association of Independent Retirees Limited. If you require more information on the planned aged care reforms, please refer to the "proposed legislative change" section at:

<http://www.livinglongerlivingbetter.gov.au> website.

PROTECTION OF CONSUMER RIGHTS FOR SENIORS

Press Release, 15 March 2013

The Age Discrimination Commissioner, Susan Ryan, said that World Consumer Rights day presented an opportunity to highlight the importance of catering to all consumers, including the rapidly growing sector of the population made up of older people. "Older people make up a growing number of Australian consumers," said Commissioner Ryan. "Despite this

large and growing cohort, businesses large and small are missing out on the spending power of over three million older people.”

“The media and advertisers fail to target their products to older Australians.” Commissioner Ryan said that less than half of over 60s were online, so there is still plenty of work to do with an estimated two million older people. She said that, if they lack internet savvy, older consumers were shut out by new technologies.

“Older consumers need more assistance to understand their rights as consumers and protect themselves against scams and rip offs. All consumer bodies must do more to inform older people of their rights.”

Commissioner Ryan said that, with this in mind, the Australian Human Rights Commission would soon be releasing a booklet called *Your Rights at Retirement*, which would inform older people about protecting their rights and their security – particularly their financial security – at retirement.

RELIEF FOR RETIREES AS DEEMING RATES CUT ON PENSIONS (excerpt from the **Australian Financial Review**, 13 February 2013).

Seniors’ groups have welcomed the federal government’s decision to drop the deeming rate for the first time in four years, but the timing in election year has raised eyebrows.

“Pension deeming rates would be reduced from March 20, in effect increasing the average part-rate pension by \$6.80 per fortnight,” Families Minister Jenny Macklin said the change is estimated to affect up to 1 million retirees. The deeming rate will decrease from 3% to 2.5% for investments up to \$45,000 for single pensioners or \$75,000 for a couple. The upper deeming rate will decrease from 4.5% to 4% for balances over that amount.

The Queensland President of the Association of Independent Retirees, Eddie Childs, said the cut was a “substantial improvement” to the situation of part-rate pensioners whose income comes from both pension payments and personal investments.



Cartoon by Mark Knight, Herald Sun 5 June 2012 – re-printed with permission