



# Probus Club of Sydney

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## Newsletter

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MAY 2024

Issue 464

### MEETING DATES

#### MAY 7

MATT LANDOS

Of Fish and Men – Unintended consequences of pollution

#### JUNE 4

DON JOHNSON

Warringah Expressway

### ACTIVITIES

APRIL 22

Royal Botanical Gardens Tour

### CONTENTS

Future Guest Speakers

April Meeting Report

Guest Speaker Report

Social Activities Program

Book Review

A touch of Humour

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Gentlemen,*

It was great to see 74 at the April meeting, including 10 guests, and 50 stayed on to enjoy lunch together. Hopefully some of the guests may join and share in the camaraderie and events that makes our club so special. The meeting was very special, thanks to hearing 2 new members' inductions (Bob Eckstein and Val Kirychenko), 2 Life before Probus talks (Peter Dodds and Barry Woods) and our Guest Speaker, each of whom were fascinating and entertaining.

It was very timely to hear the excellent presentation by Sophie Farthing, who is at the forefront of AI issues and upholding human rights. I imagine that most of our members are a bit like me, having the impression that there are or will be many positives from AI and that Australia should strive to benefit from the good features, but also having substantial concerns about some negative aspects, especially in the hands of malicious foreign states and criminals. A summary of her presentation is set out below, including her comments on how governments are grappling with the challenge of providing an appropriate regulatory framework.

Ted Brogan has arranged in coming weeks some superb events which are described in the Social Activities section. We look forward to seeing you at as many of these as possible, as well as at the June meeting, when Vet Dr Matt Landos will surely be outstanding in addressing us on unintended consequences of pollution in the marine environment.

Best wishes,

**Peter James**

President

### **Note**

**To Register to attend the May meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club - [click here](#)**

**MAY 7**

### **Matt Landos** BVSc (Hons I) MANZCVS (Aquatic Animal Health)

Director, Future Fisheries Veterinary Service Pty Ltd



After graduating from Sydney University, Matt Landos began a career as a field veterinarian working with dairy cows in a rural practice in 1995. In 2000 he shifted focus to fish, prawns, oysters and abalone with NSW DPI-Fisheries, before departing to establish Future Fisheries Veterinary Service to consult to Aquaculture and Wild capture fisheries in 2005.

In 2008 he led an investigation in a Queensland fish hatchery, experiencing spray drift from a neighbouring macadamia farm, where fish embryos were developing two heads and dying. This opened a Pandora's box of how even minute trace exposures to chemicals alter animal and human development.

Through the prism of conserved evolutionary biology, comparative animal medicine, and ecotoxicology, an understanding of how pollutants could alter fish development, fish health, and fishery populations became clearer over time and with many more similar cases. Explanations of fishery declines, such as over-fishing, appeared inadequate as the role of pollutants had gone largely unconsidered. So too did many explanations of declining human fertility, changing behaviours of men, women, and learning difficulties in children. The fish are the harbingers of serious health consequences in humans.

He has written reports for the International Pollutant Elimination Network ([www.ipen.org](http://www.ipen.org)) on fishery declines due to pollutants and case studies illustrating the serious impacts on seafood.

During this talk he will focus on how pollutants like pesticides, surfactants, and flame retardants are impacting the viability of fisheries and to a significant extent, the health of humans through endocrine (hormone) disrupting effects. He will give insights into the way in which modern cultural adaptations obscure clear biological problems and some ways of moving forward.

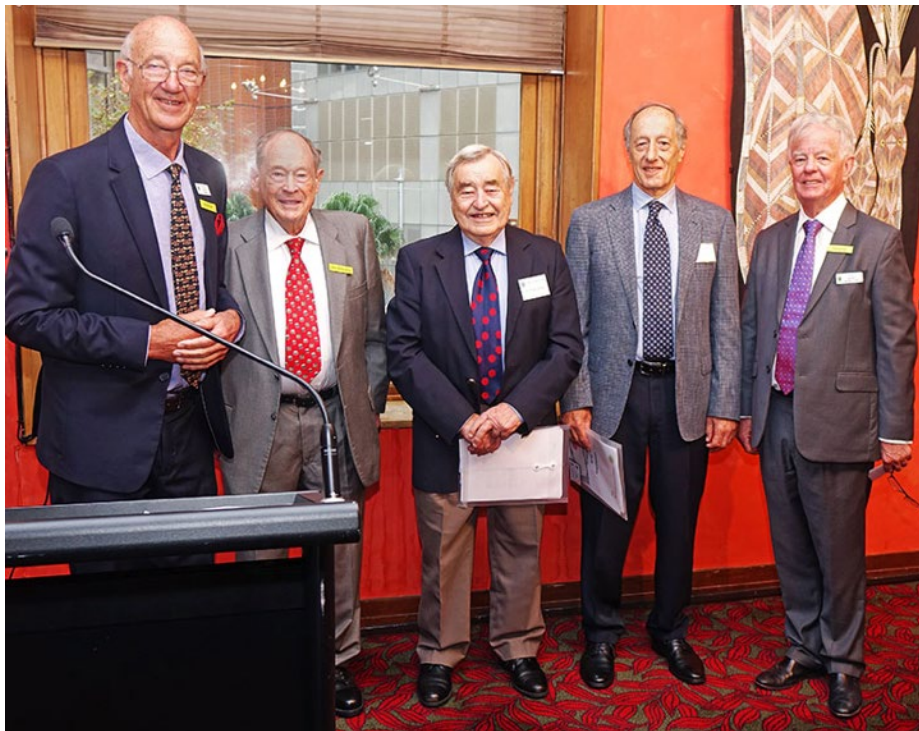
**Geoff McWilliam**

## APRIL MEETING REPORT

Our new President, Peter James, opened the meeting with some words indicating how he was looking forward to the year. He then welcomed 11 guests, which must be a record. He reminded members that annual subscriptions were now due.

There were committee reports from Geoff McWilliam as the new speakers coordinator who asked for suggestions for potential speakers in the next year. Ted Brogan (Activities coordinator) spoke of the tour to the Great Synagogue and of the future tours to the Botanical Gardens and the Bradman Museum in May. He made note of the Winter Lunch to be held at the Killara Golf Club on 23 July, the speaker being Anna Louise Bouvier and the Christmas Lunch at the Royal Sydney Golf Club on Monday 9 December.

### Inductions



Peter James, John Doherty, Val Kirychenko, Bob Eckstein, Geoff McWilliam

### Bob Eckstein

Geoff McWilliam introduced Bob Eckstein as a new member. Bob trained in medicine at Sydney University and became a specialist pathologist. He was the head of the pathology department at Royal North Shore Hospital. He was known for training many medical students and trainee pathologists. He had an enormous commitment to the profession, being involved in the Academy of Pathology nationally and internationally.

Bob and his late wife had 4 children and 10 grandchildren (although 3 of the ten were still 'in utero' although Geoff suggested they were in vitro!). His partner is Katherine Macdonald who Geoff's wife has known for 70 years. Bob is committed to remaining fit, playing golf at North Ryde and keenly following rugby league.

## Valentine Kirychenko

John Doherty introduced Valentine (Val) Kirychenko a civil engineer who was born in the Ukraine. He is a chemical engineer and a doctor, trained at the university of Sydney after he arrived in Australia in 1949. After graduating in medicine he became a medical director with GIO and then a medical officer in the army, air force and the police. He still works as a management consultant in the medical area and still writes papers on engineering and medicine. He is the author of 'Lydia's Child' (his mother was Lydia) which is the interesting story of his family.

## Life Before Probus

### Peter Dodds



Peter was an anesthetist for 47 years. He is the father of three children – his greatest achievement – two sons and a daughter. Both sons have autism, one mildly the other in a severe form. He told us the common misconception about anesthetists is that they have poor communication skills, can't talk to patients and are totally uninteresting! He challenged that view unsurprisingly! He claimed that some of the most humorous people are in the anesthetic game because they have to put up with surgeons all their life!

He was educated at St Aloysius at Milsons Point, becoming school captain and captain of the 1st XV. He studied medicine at UNSW and then trained as an anesthetist, one year in Sydney followed by 3½ years in England at St Thomas's and St Bartholomew's in London. He gained his Fellowship in England and then returned to Australia where he became a Fellow of the Australian College. For the next 10-15 years he 'trawled' the western suburbs of Sydney trying to establish a practice since there were then few private hospitals and work was difficult to get. Eventually his practice became settled at the Mater Hospital in North Sydney and later at North Shore Private.

His eldest son was born in 1991 and after a couple of years they discovered he was autistic but at that time there were very few facilities in Sydney or even Australia (compared to the UK and USA who were much more advanced). In 1994 Peter, along with several other parents set up an organization to look after children with autism. After 11 months of pestering governments and large organizations they were able to set up a school called Giant Steps in Gladesville and had enough money to send teachers to Canada to a program which helped them develop the skills to look after children with autism. They started with 12 students in 1995 but now they have 160 clients here in Sydney and an offshoot in Melbourne. In the last 20 years they have helped over 2,000 clients with autism. The program is partially government funded and partially privately funded. Each year they need to raise about \$4 million. The school had made a huge difference to clients with autism.

Autism is a life long condition involving impaired social and verbal communication and restrictive and repetitive behaviours. There are some people who are quite gifted who give autism a bad name since the majority are severely affected and about 40% are non-verbal for life.

As well as his highly enjoyable career he has also made time for himself as a keen golfer, skier and cyclist as well as yacht racing every Wednesday evening. He has organized and led multiple cycling tours to Asia and Europe.

## Barry Woods



Barry was born in Portsmouth in 1940 at the time when the Germans started bombing raids on the city, given its importance as a naval base. His father was at sea with the Royal Navy so he, with his mother and grandmother moved to stay with friends in a little village called West Ilsley in Berkshire for the duration of the war which he enjoyed immensely. They stayed in the local pub and Barry can remember talking to local farmers in the bar who gave him little pots of beer to drink!

He remembered the bombers flying overhead, the Italian p.o.w.'s and American troops going to D Day. After the war he returned to Portsmouth where he attended the Grammar School. He recalled his time in the Army Cadet Force at school and particularly mentioned a visit with his cadet corps to a regiment in Germany where they were taken to see the Belsen concentration camp, a sight he has never forgotten.

When he left school he chose to study chemical engineering at the University of Wales and then joined Esso Petroleum as a process engineer. His most memorable moment was sharing a 15<sup>th</sup> century manor house with six other bachelors which fortunately was close to a nurses training college! His next job was with Amaco which had bought a British lubricating oil company and so he became an instant lubricant specialist.

He met his wife in London and they decided to migrate but first he joined ICI and became a plant manager on an ethylene cracker. He applied to come to Australia as a ten pound pom and was accepted. He joined Ampol where he spent the rest of his working with the company. After his first year he was promoted to chief process engineer and subsequently held several different positions, eventually becoming refinery manager in 1981 where he stayed for 8 years before transferring to Sydney to become General Manager Manufacturing and Supply with a wide portfolio. He retired in 2000.

He has two grown up children and two grandchildren and he and his wife enjoy travelling. He likes walking, gardening and entertaining

## GUEST SPEAKER

### Sophie Farthing

Head of Policy Lab, Human Technology Institute, UTS

#### AI – Government Policy



In his introduction John Doherty pointed to Sophie's high level education and experience in the field of human rights law in the UK and Australia, culminating in her current role leading the Policy Lab at the HTI within the University of Technology Sydney.

Sophie described the Human Technology Lab as a multi-disciplinary organisation that applies human values to new and emerging technologies. It provides independent expert advice to government and organisations, identifying policies, tools, training and data science solutions to support human-centred technology. HTI brings

together the best of academia, industry, government, and civil society to demonstrate how human values, including human rights, can and should be imbued in emerging technologies.

Her talk focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is revolutionising how we interact and communicate, receive information, and access services. First, she covered key definitions. There is no universally accepted definition of AI, rather the term covers a cluster of technologies. Put simply, AI involves an engineered system or computer program that generates outputs, fuelled by data, such as recommendations, forecasts or categorisations, for a set of human-defined objectives.

AI has increasingly formed part of the public conversation in recent years. There are a number of factors fuelling the rise of AI. The availability of massive data sets, increased computing power and the advances made in specific technologies relying on both of these things, such as machine learning algorithms and automation. In the past 12 to 18 months, we have also seen the emergence of 'generative AI' tools, which create text, images and video from written commands.

HTI approaches new and emerging technologies using a human-centred lens, informed by international human rights law. Human rights provide a set of substantive norms grounded in three core international agreements: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Conventions on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These documents, along with several

other conventions, protect the civil and political freedoms that underpin Australian democracy, our right to equality and non-discrimination, and the rights to privacy and freedom of expression and assembly, the right to life and freedom from torture.

She discussed specific examples of how AI is impacting our human rights, both positively and negatively. AI is being used, for example, to better understand the capacity across emergency hospital departments in Queensland, and to give independence back to people with a disability, such as through the use of 'smart glasses' for people with a vision impairment. On the flip side, there are hugely concerning uses of AI that are threatening the very fabric of our society, such as the role of social media in distributing mis and dis-information, lethal autonomous weapons and curated news feeds that seek to influence democratic elections.

Given the complexities of the current debate, the key question is how do we ensure AI gives us the future we want, and not one that we fear?

Governments all over the world are grappling with this tricky policy question. The era of self-regulation by big technology companies has been proven to have significant shortfalls when it comes to protecting human rights and Australian society. What is required is a multifaceted regulatory response, one that is human-centred, and involves self-regulation and co-regulatory models, as well as hard-edged legal obligations.

The session finished with questions from the floor, covering the benefits—or limitations—of regulation, the need for strong community consultation and a constitutional question of whether the federal or state and territory governments should be taking the lead.

In proposing the vote of thanks, Sean Wareing expressed members' appreciation of Sophie's illuminating an area that for many of us is new and not easily understood. Given AI's potential for both good and bad, he reflected that managing both the benefits and the risks would be increasingly important for our generation and particularly for our children and grandchildren.

We are also very grateful to Sophie for providing a written summary, which is incorporated in the above

***Peter James***

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

### Future Activities

#### **Bradman Museum & International Cricket Hall of Fame. All about cricket!**



This Museum is now a world famous venue for cricket followers wherever the game is played. Standing beside the Oval where the legendary Don Bradman played his early cricket, it houses Bradman memorabilia (including his bat), a variety of interactive displays and on demand audio together with exhibitions about other cricket greats from around the world. The Museum will provide volunteer guides.

The Museum suggests that we have lunch at the Bowral Bowling Club a short walk from the Oval.

Parking is normally available in the surrounding streets and members may wish to consider car pooling for the journey from Sydney. Alternatively for those who do not wish to drive, there is a regular train service from Central Station. It is recommended that those who choose the train join the 8:48am train from Central, which incorporating a change at Campbelltown, arrives at Bowral at 11:05am. Bowral station is about a 15 minute walk from the Museum. Trains return to Central approximately hourly.

Bowral is a pretty Southern Highlands town with good hotels and restaurants and members may consider staying the night before or after the Museum visit.

Cost is **\$30.00** per person

#### **For your diary**

Visit to the Archibald Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW. Monday 24 June. Details to follow.

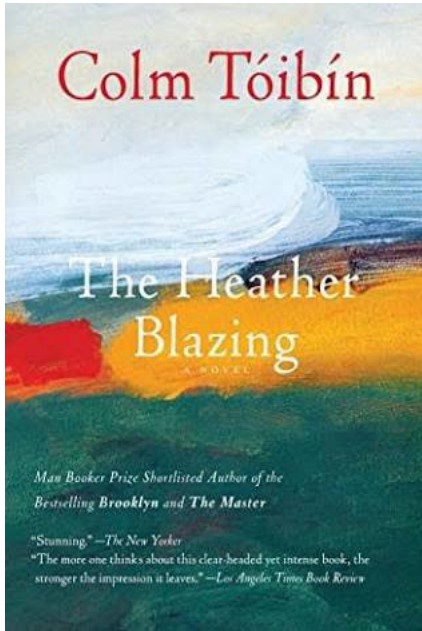
#### **Winter Lunch**

The Winter Lunch will be held at Killara Golf Club on Tuesday 23 July. The guest speaker will be Anna-Louise Bouvier, the well known Health and wellbeing commentator.

#### ***Ted Brogan***



### The Heather Blazing by Colm Toibin (1993) – 243 pages – Fiction



An early work by the brilliant Irish writer, with very little action but much subtlety. In my recent review of *Lola in the Mirror* I described that book as "more than an airport thriller, but less than a literary masterpiece". While "Heather" is less than a literary masterpiece, it is written by a master. However, in contrast to *Lola*, very little happens.

Many of you will know Toibin as the brilliant Irish writer of *Brooklyn*, *The Master*, *The Magician* and many other works of fiction and non-fiction.

While set in and around Dublin in loving detail – it is not about bloodshed and only remotely about politics. It focuses on the domestic life of an Irish judge and his family. The background and upbringing of the judge lead to family problems

which play out in great detail. Apart from which nothing happens.

So, worth reading for lovers of Ireland and of this famous author who, as always, writes beautifully. An early work, but one in which his emerging skills are obvious. Others may want more action. Still others will soak up the Irish background and flavour and may get more "Irish" out of it than I was able to do.

**David Castle**

## A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

### The Dangers of Golf

Wife: 'Where have you been? You said you'd be done with golf by noon!'

Husband: 'I'm so sorry honey, but you probably don't want to hear the reason.'

Wife: 'I want the truth and I want it NOW!'

Husband: 'Fine. We finished in less than four hours, had a quick beer in the clubhouse. I hopped in the car and would have been here at 12 on the dot but on the way home I spotted a young lady struggling with a flat tyre. I changed it in a few minutes and next she's offering to pay me. Of course I refused but then she told me she was on her way to the bar at the Sheraton and begs me to stop so she can buy me a beer. She was such a sweetie I couldn't refuse and before you know it one beer

had turned to four and I guess we were looking pretty good to each other....then she tells me she has a room in the hotel less than 50 steps away.

She suggested we get some privacy while pulling me by the hand and next thing I'm in her room, clothes are flying, the talking stopped and we were in bed together. It must have gone on for hours because the next thing I knew it was 5:30. I jumped up, threw my clothes on, ran to the car and here I am. There. You wanted the truth, you got it.'

Wife: 'That's a complete and utter load of crap. You played 36 holes, didn't you?'

### **The art of seduction** *(From Frank Barr-David)*

With a very seductive voice the woman asked her husband, "Have you ever seen twenty dollars all crumpled up?"

"No," said her husband.

She gave him a sexy little smile, unbuttoned the top 3 or 4 buttons of her blouse, and slowly reached down into the cleavage created by a soft, silky push-up bra, and pulled out a crumpled twenty-dollar bill. He took the crumpled banknote from her and smiled approvingly. She then asked him, "Have you ever seen fifty dollars all crumpled up?"

"Uh... no, I haven't," he said, with an anxious tone in his voice.

She gave him another sexy little smile, pulled up her skirt, and seductively reached into her tight, sheer panties... and pulled out a crumpled fifty-dollar bill.

He took the crumpled banknote and started breathing a little quicker with anticipation.

"Now," she said, "have you ever seen \$100,000 dollars all crumpled up?"

He said "No!" trying to hide his arousal.

She said ..... "Check the garage."

### **The Driving Lesson**

A wife was making a breakfast of fried eggs for her husband.

Suddenly, her husband burst into the kitchen. "Careful," he said, "CAREFUL! Put in some more butter! Oh my gosh! You're cooking too many at once. TOO MANY! Turn them! TURN THEM NOW! We need more butter. Oh my gosh! WHERE are we going to get MORE BUTTER? They're going to STICK! Careful. CAREFUL! I said be CAREFUL! You NEVER listen to me when you're cooking! Never! Turn them! Hurry up! Are you CRAZY? Have you LOST your mind? Don't forget to salt them. You know you always forget to salt them. Use the Salt. USE THE SALT! THE SALT!"

The wife stared at him. "What in the world is wrong with you?! You think I don't know how to fry a couple of eggs?"

The husband calmly replied, "I just wanted to show you what it feels like when I'm driving."

## HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member [Click here](#)

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