

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS 1993

The memories of my year as President of Melbourne Legacy in Legacy's 70th year are highlighted by the privilege and pleasure of filling this special and honoured office, by the wonderful support and friendship I enjoyed from both within and outside Legacy, and the awareness of the continued high standing of Legacy in the community. Unfortunately this feeling of satisfaction was blighted somewhat in the closing days of my term in office by developments relating to the future structure of Melbourne Legacy, but more of that matter later in my report.

The 70th birthday of Legacy was suitably recognised and Legacy seemed to gain considerable value from the various commemorative activities. Clive James, an immediate Post World War 2 Junior Legatee, proved a very good choice as Legatee Personality of the Year although his actual visit to Australia was rather remote from Badge Week. Another former Junior Legatee, Brian Edwards from Perth made a significant impact with his Mission Matilda II as did the R.A.A.F. team of runners who completed a relay run from R.A.A.F. Scherger at Weipa to Melbourne. Legatees were invited to march as a group at the head of the Melbourne ANZAC Day Parade and our well groomed, disciplined group of about 300 Legatees made a very good impression. The F.R. & P.R. Committee did a great job during the year in presenting Legacy to the public and in their fund raising efforts.

The concern about the inability to get Post World War 2 Legatees more involved in the management of the Club had built up considerably in 1992 and it was apparent that positive action had to be taken to meet the problem. The Planning and Review Committee was given the task early in the year to undertake a study and make recommendations on the ongoing structure of Melbourne Legacy with particular reference to the immediate future. The Committee made well considered and some quite radical recommendations, many of which were adopted by the Board of Management. Of particular significance was the reduction in the number and size of committees and the requirement for adequate representation of Post World War 2 Legatees on committees. There was some adverse reaction from older Legatees who feel they are being "shelved" but most thinking members realise that the organisation of the Club needed to be adjusted to allow younger working Legatees to be more involved and responsible for the operations of the Club.

The P. & R.C. recommended that some smaller inner metropolitan Branches should be combined. This is a logical step, not only for more effective and economic operational reasons but also to encourage better comradeship within the Club especially for the comparatively few and widespread younger Legatees. There has been considerable resistance to these proposals but I feel that, in due course, the rational argument for change will be accepted.

Reports by my predecessors indicated that there has been continuing consideration of the extent of the President's commitments and the desirability of delegation of his responsibilities to the Vice Presidents and others. I am a strong supporter of delegation as a principle particularly in regard to operational matters such as Pensions, Housing, Widows and Public Relations. However, I believe that in the representational field there is an understandable expectation, particularly from within the Melbourne Club and our fellow Victorian Clubs, that if possible the incumbent President of Melbourne Legacy should attend the annual Changeover functions as well as making a routine visit to the Groups and Branches of the Melbourne Club. The President is in office for a year only and I consider that these representational commitments are very much an essential part of his duties.

The Revision of the Rules of Melbourne Legacy Club had been continuing for two years. The task was finally completed and the Revised Rules were ultimately approved at the E.G.M. just before the A.G.M. in February 1994. The changes recommended in the P. & R.C. report already mentioned and subsequently approved by the Board were incorporated in the Revised Rules. The approval of the Revised Rules was a prolonged and difficult task not helped by some pedantic resistance to change shown by a small number of Legatees. Those involved in the Revision of the Rules completed a difficult and thankless task with skill and dedication.

The value of Widows' Clubs was reinforced during the year and it was appropriate that our 70th Widows' Club was established at Maffra in the Club's 70th Year. Other highlights of the year included the expansion of the Junior Plain English Speaking Award which does much to bring Legacy and its values to the attention of the younger generation - further expansion of the Award is a strong and worthwhile possibility. The Schools ANZAC Service at the Shrine of Remembrance was well attended as was the Church Service at the start of Legacy Week, but both these activities require careful nurturing.

The major issue of the year for Legacy, both nationally and in the Melbourne Club, was the widening of eligibility for membership which required amendment of Clause 4 of the Code of Legacy. This matter led to quite virulent conflict of views within Melbourne Legacy which had already become apparent when a proposal for change was considered in 1992. Following a submission by a significant number of Past Presidents the Board decided early in 1993 that this and other proposed Code changes would be the subject of a Plebiscite of all members of Melbourne Legacy following quite an extensive briefing programme on proposed Clause 4 changes presenting both sides of the argument. The Board did not present a view on the issue. Only a third of Melbourne Legatees voted but those who did voted approximately 5:2 in favour of the discretionary changes to Clause 4 subsequently approved at the National Conference. Following the Conference action was taken to include the discretionary clauses in the Revised Rules of the Club which were later considered at an E.G.M. and approved. However, at a subsequent E.G.M. immediately before the A.G.M. in February 1994 at which about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Club members voted, either directly or by postal vote, the discretionary changes to Clause 4 were rejected by a significant majority who apparently accepted the argument that Club's membership problem could be overcome by enlisting suitable but otherwise ineligible members into the Legacy Foundation of Victoria. This radical change of opinion had been achieved by a well planned, secretive and strongly biased campaign by the key Legatees opposed to accepting a broadening of Clause 4. The eventual outcome of this very important issue was a great disappointment to me, as was the manner by which it was achieved. I completed my term as President feeling that I had failed to fulfil adequately my responsibilities.

During my time as President I was very fortunate to enjoy high quality support from Legatees and staff. In what was a very demanding and, at times, difficult year for the Club the performance of all the Operational Committees was first class. I admired particularly the contribution of the Board Members, the Chairmen of Committees and other key Legatees. The same applies to Group Presidents, Branch Chairmen and others in key positions in the Groups and Branches. A lot happened in Melbourne Legacy in 1993 but there were very few traumas (to my knowledge). I should mention that our operations were helped considerably by the support and understanding received from D.V.A - our relationship with Brian Flynn and his key staff is very good.

The Legacy House staff is excellent - professionally competent and a joy to work with. My special thanks go to the Executive Officer, Terry Walsh, and the senior members of the staff. We are very fortunate as Legatees to enjoy such excellent support - the costs involved are well justified.

Despite the qualification I expressed earlier in this report 1993 was a memorable year for me, and also for Ann. Our thanks go to all the Legatees and their wives who gave us such great support and friendship. It was very sad that Allan Quayle, as a result of his accident, could not succeed me, but I know that George Woodward will do a mighty job.

*John Stevenson*