



Staying Connected

Issue 74, September 2025

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings members - What fabulous weather we are now experiencing in the latter part of September.

As my time in full time work has now concluded, it led me to focus on the theme of Probus Month, coming up in October:

"Reinventing Retirement"

For me, focusing on using my available time and making the most of it.

The background to my retirement has been a personal family journey, prompted by a recent speaker at our Probus Club on Decluttering our lives. We have recently taken up this challenge of decluttering, and it has made a huge difference in the way we think of our accumulated stuff.

It has been a very rewarding, enjoyable, and challenging experience. Going through 40 years of our collections, and in the process experiencing our lives over again, gives us an ability to look back and sort through our life events and the things that we saw as important at the time.

Now my thoughts are directed into the retirement conversation. Having experienced decluttering, I am looking at how to make the best of the valuable opportunities that lie ahead. Targets are travel, catching up with friends, and making time to catch up with family locally, interstate and overseas to share stories and memories.

Making the most of our time is important and how we choose to use it wisely is imperative.

My retirement won't be sitting on a park bench, but enjoying life's little pleasures with family and friends. Plus focusing on community and giving back wherever I can make a difference.

Our Probus Club also provides an opportunity to 'reinvent retirement', through activities, social engagement and camaraderie, important for everyone's well-being.

Graham Yates
President

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Russell Lea Probus Club acknowledges the Wangal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet and we pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

SEPTEMBER MEETING REPORT

Forty six members were in attendance. There were 12 apologies.

Club Policies

The Management Committee has finalised policies to support the Standing Resolutions clauses 20 to 22, passed by members at the July meeting. These policies cover Risk Management, Payment and Refund Guidelines and Privacy. Members were advised these policies are available on request at any time.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Carmen presented an updated financial report. A proposal has been submitted to Club Five Dock by Carmen, on behalf of our Club, for a grant to fund the meeting room costs in 2026.

Membership Report

Membership Officer Julie introduced and inducted two new members, Noy and Richard Goodman, into the Club. Membership is now 67 members. The meeting was advised that replacement name badges are available on request, for a small replacement fee.

Activities and Outings

Activities and Outings Officer Megan outlined recent activities, and events coming up in the next month and beyond. These are listed in the "For Your Diary" section of the Newsletter.

Guest Speaker

Sydney Harbour Trust guest speaker Marie Palmer painted a vivid and humorous picture of potential visitor destinations on and around Sydney Harbour. The Trust has responsibility for 10 sites around the harbour. A separate report on her interesting and entertaining presentation is included in the Newsletter.



New members Noy and Richard Goodman welcomed to our Club by Membership Officer Julie and President Graham.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday, 7 October 2025

(and every first Tuesday of month)
Let's Talk About Books, Canada Bay Club
2.00pm. RSVP John via WhatsApp.

Wednesday, 15 October 2025

Scrabble Club

Friday, 17 October 2025

Let's Do Lunch. Royal Oak Hotel,
Balmain at noon RSVP Trevor via Google
form (link in WhatsApp)

Monday, 20 October 2025

(and every third Monday of month)
Walking (9.15am) and/or coffee (10am)
at Carmels, 284 Great North Road,
Wareemba.

Thursday, 23 October 2025

Monthly Meeting, Club Five Dock at
10.30am. Guest Speaker: Shaun Rennie,
Associate Director of Opera Australia,
"Directing a Musical on Sydney Harbour"
Probus Month celebrations to follow at
Club Five Dock. Theme: "Reinventing
Retirement."

Sunday, 26 October 2025

"Side by Side" the Sondheim musical at
4.30pm. Genesian Theatre, Rozelle.
Purchase your own tickets. Dinner
option at Merton Hotel after play
(advise Jill if attending dinner)

Wednesday, 29 October 2025

"Kiama by Rail". Details to follow.

Thursday, 27 November 2025

Monthly Meeting, Club Five Dock at
10.30am. Guest Speaker: Tim Elchal,
Chiro/Osteo/Physio "Preventing Falls
and Maintaining Mobility"

Friday, 5 December 2025

SAVE THE DATE: Christmas Function.
Details to follow.

SEPTEMBER GUEST SPEAKER

“Extraordinary Places on Sydney Harbour”

Marie Palmer, Volunteer Presenter and Guide Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Marie painted a vivid and very entertaining picture of the ten Sydney Harbour sites in the care of the Sydney Harbour Trust, visited by 2 million people annually. The Trust protects former Defence lands and facilities, covering 145ha and 400+ buildings.

The sites include North Head Sanctuary (Manly), Headland Park (Mosman), Cockatoo Island (Sydney Harbour), Sub Base Platypus (North Sydney), Woolwich and Macquarie Light House (Vaucluse). Plus, Marie provided fascinating insights into convict and other life on Cockatoo Island, the role of North Fort's military fortifications during World War II, and more.

Marie is one of the many members of the volunteer-led Trust, annually contributing more than 20,000 hours of their time and expertise. Her presentation was full of practical history and anecdotes, sharing her love of the Harbour by promoting sites which are now open to the public and being preserved for future generations.

The Trust's powerful vision is both simple, relevant and uplifting: “To create places on the world's best harbour that are inspiring, loved and shared”.

More information is available on the Trust website, where you can also subscribe to their e-Newsletter for updates.

<https://www.harbourtrust.gov.au/>



WHERE IS IT?

Clue

Significant marker in white Australian history

Last month

"Husband Drop Off" point
Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills

FAMOUS QUOTE

*"You only live once, but if you do it right,
once is enough."*

Mae West

RUSSELL LEA PROBUS CLUB POLICIES

Members may recall that the Club's new Constitution and Standing Resolutions were presented and passed at the July monthly meeting.

Since that time the Management Committee's sub-committee has been finalising policies to support the Standing Resolutions clauses 20 to 22.

Specific policies have now been developed by the sub-committee and approved by your Management Committee, covering the following areas:

- Risk Management
- Payment and Refund Guidelines and
- Privacy

These policies are available on request at any time.

While the Management Committee takes the lead in the development of a Management Policy, members have the opportunity to participate in the development of the Club policies and their adoption of any such policy.

OCTOBER GUEST SPEAKER

Shaun Rennie

Associate Director of Opera Australia

"Directing a Musical on Sydney Harbour"

O|PERA AUSTRALIA

Shaun Rennie is a theatre, musical theatre, and opera director. He is currently Associate Director of Opera Australia. His work has taken him from the Sydney Opera House to stages across Australia and now into Europe.

Shaun has directed big outdoor shows like "Guys and Dolls" on Sydney Harbour, as well as hit plays such as "Switzerland" at the Ensemble Theatre, and musicals like "Rent", which toured nationally. He also created new works, including the world premiere of "The Lovers" for Bell Shakespeare.

Shaun will finish 2025 in France, reviving an award-winning opera production in Lyon.

KIAMA EXCURSION BY TRAIN



Kiama is much more than its famous blow-hole. The Probus excursion on 29 October will include an Opal Card trip departing Central at 9.27am for Kiama, with spectacular ocean and other views from the train.

On arrival, the tour will take in the historic lighthouse, with the blow-hole nearby, along with views from the headland up and down the coast.

Kiama was a major source of blue metal (from basalt) and its history is still evident today, including significant buildings and a beautifully restored row of miners' cottages, all within easy walking distance from the station.

The town is also known for its food, offering a wide range of casual dining close to the station. A trip not to be missed.



FOCUS ON FOOD

NOW IN SEASON

The spring flush of Berries is with us, with good quality strawberries, blueberries and raspberries available. As I have previously reported with berries, good independent retailers are probably first port of call, as they are in the wholesale markets every day and fruit is on the shelf the same day.

In the citrus category there are still good volumes of later season mandarins and Navel oranges.

The tropical fruit season has started. Mangoes from around Darwin are available and should start to increase soon. Taste should also improve.



Good quality stored apples and pears are readily available, although there seem to be fewer 'special' promotions. It was interesting to see in WA recently that consumers are paying higher prices for apples than in Sydney, even though WA growers send significant volumes east.

If you feel like supporting California grape growers (mostly Republicans), their grapes are readily available and good eating.

Spring is a good time for vegetables. The Australian asparagus season is now in full swing with excellent quality (when managed properly by retailers). To freshen and store asparagus for a few days, slice 10mm from the stems and stand in water in the refrigerator.

Green vegetables, such as zucchini, broccoli and broccolini are readily available, although prices can fluctuate.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: INGREDIENT SUBSTITUTES

How often do we face the situation where a recipe calls for an ingredient, when we know most of it will not be used? Or when a common ingredient is not in the pantry when needed.

In many circumstances there are practical alternatives. For example, here are five ideas:

- Spring onions as an alternative for chives
- Basil or celery leaf for parsley
- Plain flour + baking soda for self-raising flour
- Asiago or Romano cheese for Parmesan
- Interchangeable macadamias, almonds or hazelnuts

THREE QUESTIONS: MAUREEN RILEY

Introduction

To coincide with this month's Newsletter feature on food, what better than to profile Maureen Riley, who together with her husband Dennis, has been a restaurateur for almost 40 years. Maureen was front-of house, while her husband, an excellent chef, trainer and mentor, was back-of-house. For 16 years they successfully opened and ran 'The Peppercorn' French restaurant in Drummoyne, followed by a six year gap, then a new 'The Peppercorn' restaurant in Roseville for 17 years.

What led you into the restaurant industry?

When my husband Dennis left school he accepted an apprenticeship under the guidance of his brother, who was the executive chef at the Hilton in the Gold Coast. It was here that he first learnt the art of French cooking then went on to expand his skillset, working in many high end hotels and restaurants both in Australia and overseas even becoming head chef himself.

When we returned to Australia from a year abroad in London together we bought our family home in Drummoyne and took the leap to open our very own restaurant, also in Drummoyne, which we called The Peppercorn. This allowed us to combine Dennis's passion for French cooking and hospitality and my passion to create a restaurant that was a welcoming and inviting space to relax, laugh and enjoy a long meal.

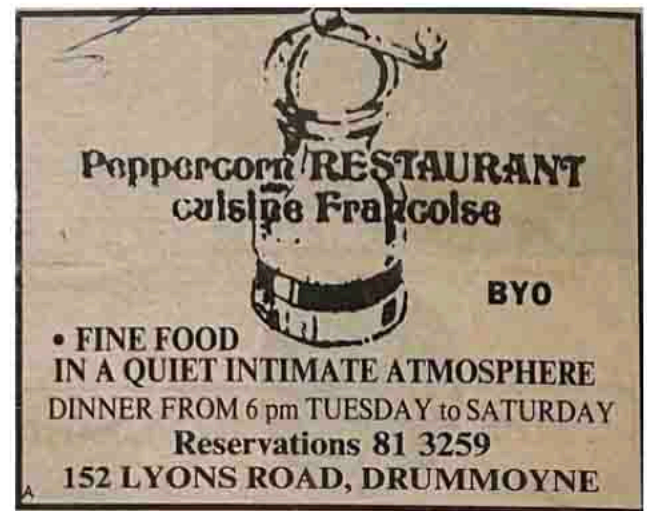
The reason we chose the name 'Peppercorn' was because the restaurant was a small space that offered intimate fine dining and contrary to our guests, who believed it was named after Dennis's highly regarded peppercorn sauce.

What were some of the major changes you saw and experienced over time?

We have witnessed many changes. Some significant changes include the banning of smoking in restaurants and the restrictions on drink driving, which truly changed the way in which people dined.



Maureen, husband Dennis and family in The Peppercorn Restaurant, Roseville



Ad for The Peppercorn, Drummoyne



Review two years opening in Drummoyne

The length of time people dined shortened and we saw a rise in demand for wine by the glass rather than the bottle.

The expectations of the diner changed over the years too. For example, they still want high quality food served, but they want it served faster.

Multiculturalism introduced a wide variety of produce and ingredients to Australia and available almost year round, and bringing many different flavours and cuisines to choose from.

Continued.....

THREE QUESTIONS: MAUREEN RILEY continued

Avocado was once considered a delicacy served with thousand island dressing but now is readily available to anyone and smashed on to toast. The availability of produce in Australia now is second to none.

Marketing has revolutionised the way we promote restaurants. We once relied solely on location, word of mouth and the local newspaper to promote our restaurant, which slowly evolved to building websites and online reviews.

Now there is an array of platforms available to promote business through social media and food ordering apps and delivery services. Even the humble handwritten menu was replaced by Word documents, with the introduction of home office printers and now some restaurants even offer QR code menus on your smartphone.

What were some highlights in each of the restaurants?

On reflection there have been many highlights. First and foremost was our menu, which featured signature dishes such as French onion soup, duck l'orange, rabbit pie, seafood mornay, crème brûlée and Crepe Suzette just to name a few. These dishes were so highly requested we were unable to remove them from the menu, as our regular clientele came especially for them.

Our restaurant was the venue for many special occasions, such as birthdays and anniversaries and it was a pleasure to be part of them. It was hard work but we enjoyed it and stayed in the restaurant business until we retired in 2016.

FISH BATTER FROM THE WEST

WA's Bunbury Farmers Market (whose size makes Harris Farm Markets look like a corner store) has an excellent and simple recipe for their "Farmer's Fish Batter".

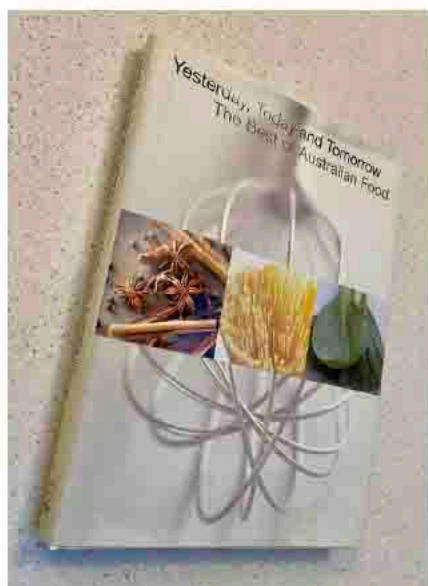
Here is their three-step recipe that will serve 4-6.

1. Seasoned flour: combine 1 cup self-raising flour, salt & pepper in a bowl and set aside
2. Batter: combine 1 cup self-raising flour, salt & pepper, 2 cups sparkling mineral water. Mix with a fork until batter is the consistency of a crepe batter.
3. Coat the fish of choice in the seasoned flour, followed by the batter, then deep fry until golden brown.

Enjoy!



"YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW - THE BEST OF AUSTRALIAN FOOD"



First a little background to this important book.

To acknowledge the 20th Anniversary of the Food Media Club Australia in 2003, its members, who represented the best of Australia's chefs, cooks, food writers, broadcasters and producers, contributed over 80 recipes as relevant today as they were 22 years ago.

Rick Stein, who provided the Foreword, stated "Looking through Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, I was struck by the large number of ingredients that would be regarded as unusual in Britain, but which obviously quite easy to get hold of in Australia. There's great confidence in using these ingredients in dishes that have a relaxed Australian way about them."

President Lyndey Milan observed in her Introduction "Before European settlement in 1788, there was a strong indigenous Australian cuisine, ecologically sustainable, centuries old and uniquely developed in isolation."

"Today, Australia is universally regarded as being at the forefront of world cuisine with food that is fresh, vibrant and cooked in myriad styles, reflecting our diverse multicultural society. Influences have been successive waves of migration, Australians' fondness for travel, the availability and affordability of fresh produce and the Australian character, which has always been willing to experiment and adapt and 'have a go'.

When it comes to food and food ingredients, we certainly are "The Lucky Country".

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Some time ago Telstra did a survey to find out why there was a significant uptick in mid-afternoon communications.

The answer, which I think we can all relate to, was quite simple – "What's for dinner?"

Circumstances have probably not changed, even in retirement. So to help with the answer, here are some local and quick ready-made solutions:

- Arancini or Meatballs in a beautiful Italian spaghetti sauce - Carmens, Wareemba
- Pasta Gallery' ravioli (many choices) – Paesanella, Haberfield. Drop the frozen ravioli in boiling salted water for three minutes and its ready
- Artisan curries (fresh and frozen) – Aum Spice Centre, The Strand, Croydon
- Concord Rotary Farmers Market specialist food vendors – 1st and 3rd Sundays each month
- Lebanese Cuisine - Jasmin 1, Five Dock (allow 20 minutes for pick-up)
- Afghan Cuisine – Bamiyan, Five Dock. On line order at <https://bamiyanfivedock.twirll.com/menu>



ARE MEAL PREP KITS A GOOD IDEA.....?

Contributed by Megan Nelson

I am not a good cook - at least not with meat, vegetables, fish, chicken etc. However, in a household of two, it's not always fair to have just one doing all the main meal cooking.....and we can only eat so many hamburgers in a week!

I was determined to do my share but needed some help - yes, I have many cook books, given to me by ever-hopeful family members over the years but alas, I have looked at the pictures and they are back on the shelf.

Perhaps a Meal Prep kit might help - you order the 'box of goodies' - and get the recipe with all the ingredients. One big advantage is that the kit provides the amount of each ingredient required by the recipe, thus reducing the need to answer the question "Now what am I going to make with a third of a head of cauliflower, some left-over soy sauce and an onion??"

I chose 'QuiteLike' meal kits on the recommendation of a friend - signing up was easy and I loved the look of the website. Bright colours and cute graphics. Now to choose my two meals for the week.....mmm.....beef, fish, chicken, koftas, curry, noodles etc etc. There was a large variety of recipes, all of which sounded good.

I chose a Greek Lemon Chicken with a salad, (whose name I had never heard) and a lamb, carrot and lentil curry with turmeric rice. The box was duly delivered and landed with a bang! on the doorstep at 7am. I jumped out of bed and raced to the door, retrieved the box and unpacked everything, including a free tea towel.

That night, I was excited! I was going to cook a main meal which would have more than a tin of salmon and some pasta in it. The recipe card had lots of pictures and clear step-by-step instructions. What could go wrong?? First up, get the turmeric rice going. I heated a little butter in a saucepan and tipped the little packet of turmeric and then the packet of cumin seeds in.

Listening with my ear close to the saucepan for the cumin to start popping, I was getting anxious as there was only dead silence. I checked the recipe and, horror-struck, I read the instructions and realised I had tipped in three times more of each ingredient than the recipe called for (always note the * - it means you won't use a whole packet - bit late for that). So....called in my friend who suggested we double the amount of rice - a good idea!

Then it was on to the curry. The lamb was, in fact, mince so that went into the pan with a little olive oil. I felt I was getting my rhythm, stirring away, but wait....a funny looking 'thing' was in the middle of the meat. Again, my friend to the rescue - she pulled out the piece of plastic that had been on the bottom of the meat. Glad we weren't going to be chewing on that! The rest of the recipe came together uneventfully - you can't go too wrong slicing a carrot and opening a tin of lentils! The meal was tasty and I was pleased to have made something from scratch - I learnt a lot with that one recipe!

I like the variety, clear instructions and convenience, and my friend is grateful to have the cooking load shared. This week we had a chicken and pumpkin curry with ginger rice as well as sticky beef and udon noodles. Next week it's baked chicken and sweet potato curry with cumin rice (I'll know what to do with the cumin this time) as well as a hot-smoked salmon soba noodle bowl with ginger soy dressing. The servings are generous and there are usually leftovers for a second meal. For me, a non-cook, this is a worthwhile option for now.

FOOD IN THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"

The urge to de-clutter, thanks to our excellent June Guest Speaker Georgia Holmes, led to a review of books in our home. One book hiding in plain sight was "Outback Heritage", published in 1982, featuring memories of Goodooga (my outback home town).

Here is a brief extract about food in the so-called earlier 'Good Old Days'.

"Fresh meat was only available the day it was killed. The rest of the time, the meat was corned in a cask or dry salted. From this diet it was quite common for people to have stomach complaints. Many had to have a drink of some type of painkiller after each meal, especially if they were middle aged.

The only type of primitive refrigeration was the drip safe (vented metal chamber relying on evaporation) and the charcoal cooler (another chamber relying on wind for evaporative cooling, with water running through charcoal). To cool drinking water, the water bag was in vogue in various shapes and sizes (again relying on evaporative cooling of the canvas water bag)."



The Coolgardie Drip Safe, invented on the WA goldfields in the 1890's.



Water bag

"FOOD RULES - AN EATER'S MANUAL"

By Michael Pollan

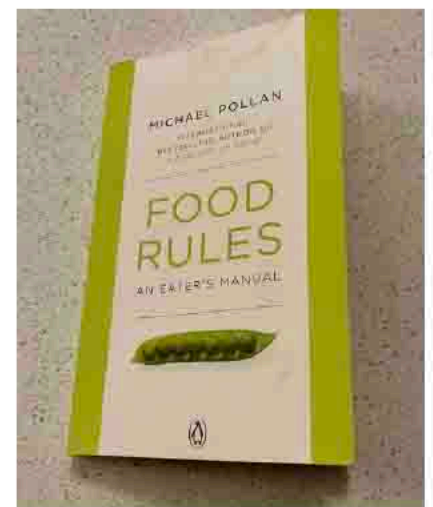
International journalist Michael Pollan believes for thousands of years, humans have eaten well and stayed healthy, without the need for nutrition scientists steering people in complex and unhealthy directions. His basic seven word mantra is:

"Eat food (such as fresh produce, meat, dairy, seafood, deli on the perimeter of the store), not too much, mostly plants".

Here is a further selection of his 64 rules:

- Eat when you are hungry, not when you are bored
- Do all your eating at a table
- Eat your colours

Continued.....



"FOOD RULES - AN EATER'S MANUAL" - continued

- Buy smaller plates and glasses
- Eat some foods that have been predigested (fermented) by bacteria or fungi e.g. yoghurt, kimchi, sauerkraut, soy sauce, sourdough
- Don't eat breakfast cereals that change the colour of the milk
- Have a glass of wine with dinner
- Avoid food products containing ingredients that a third-grader cannot pronounce
- Avoid food products with the words "lite", "low fat" or "non-fat" in their names
- It's not food if it arrived through the window of your car
- Don't get your fuel from the same place your car does, and
- Break the rules once in a while