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The official newsletter of the Highgate (WA) Sub-Branch of the Returned & Services League of Australia

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## President's Report

With the JVP Roger granted a leave of absence, SVP Bob having an important medical appointment and President Norm out of action due to a fall I chaired the June meeting and tender this report on behalf of Norman G Manners.

Highgate member and Guest Speaker Brig Dick Lawler spoke about the history and the current situation in relation to the Corps of Commissionaires'. He was not put off talking even when the shadow of Martyn Thompson loomed above him as he clung to the podium.

### Citizen of the Year Awards

The awards were recently held at Burswood, Highgate Honour Avenues Group were a finalist in the Golden Swan category and although not winning we received a framed certificate of our nomination and involvement. The winner proved to be a Highgate member in Sir Charles Court, Congratulations to Sir Charles and his health continues to improve so lets hope we see him in the near future.

### Grant for HAG

The Botanical Parks and Gardens Authority have provided to Honour Avenues Group a grant of \$26,490 which will go a long way in assisting the capital works programme and the maintenance of existing plagues, service, regimental and units patches. Well done.

### Call for Committee Nominations

A call for Expressions of Interest in the Committee for the future, with the AGM to be held in October any member who would like to have the pleasure of serving Highgate please contact Norm Manners, Ron Adams or Ian Mulholland. The pay and conditions are marvellous.

### Ladies Night

After not having one for the last two years, we have a Ladies Night scheduled for Friday 30 November at ANZAC House. At the last meeting we had a show of hands of about 30 members interested in a Ladies Night including partners that would be about sixty people. We will move ahead with a cost which will be all inclusive and firm up the attendance figures etc by late September to early Oc-

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tober. In the meantime members not at the last meeting and wish to signify their attendance contact Ian Mulholland.

### Ian Mulholland – Life Membership

Members I thank you for my nomination and subsequent elevation as a Life Member. As I move back into the President's role in a few months I will venture to continue to keep the welfare of this Sub-Branch at the fore in the RSL and continue the various tasks that we undertake as a Sub-Branch such as; Honour Avenue Group, the Sub-Wardens in respect to commemoration activities, continued involvement at RSL State level, assisting all our members and to endeavour to increase Highgate membership and reputation within and without the ex service community.

Thank you  
Ian on Norm's behalf



### The Horrendous "Wheely Bin"

**(From now on Norm)** Did we not say, when first the wheely bin replaced the wheel-less, muscle required, carry out the front garbage bin, "Oh! what a blessing"? Yes, to a man and woman, and we thought "next to the disappearance of the pan, that was usually taken away at night, this is an advancement of the greatest social magnitude".

First a friend of many years, wheeling the bin down her drive, *walking backwards believe it or not*, tripped and broke a number of bones in one wrist (which is now quite misshapen) and badly sprained the other.

And, what a horrible and distressing thing to learn of the body of a baby in a wheely bin.

Now our much revered President is another victim. Although unseen by your editor, it is understood that his physiognomy is somewhat altered. The question is "Is this a bad or good thing?"

But, in a less frivolous strain, we were very sorry to

learn Norm that you had tripped, fallen heavily and suffered some real damage, when wheeling one of these instruments of potential disaster. Mend quickly, your cheerful presence is missed.

**Stop Press:** Was pleased to see a smiling (or was it a grimace of pain) face at the State Congress and am pleased to be able to advise that it is as handsome as ever.

Editor

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## STATE CONGRESS

The 91st State Congress was held over the weekend 30 June—1 July and was acknowledged as a success.

The proceedings will be covered in detail in the next issue of the Listening Post but, hot from the press, and for the early information of our membership we can advise you that all motions submitted by Highgate Sub Branch were carried.

The motions submitted to Congress and the outcomes were:

**State Branch:** That this State Congress endorses that the annual service member subscription for 2008 be \$40 with sub branches retaining 25% of that amount i.e. \$10 per member. *Carried*

A procedural motion to amend Rule 47 in matters relating to the operation of the ANZAC Club and compliance with the Liquor Licensing Act. *Carried*

**Wanneroo-Joondalup Sub Branch:** That this State Congress endorse that life membership be conferred on to those members who have 50 years continuous membership. *Carried*

That this State Congress endorse that the Gold Card entitlement be extended to all World War Two enlisted ex servicemen and women. *Lost*

**Highgate Sub Branch:** That this State Congress endorse the view that the anomalous and Discriminatory decision to classify DFRBF and DFRBDF pensions as unfunded be reversed and that payments to superannuants in these schemes be untaxed from 1 July 2007. *Carried*

That this State Congress consider the intent of

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### TESTOSTERONE AND ALZHEIMERS

A drug that really is 'man-made' is creating excitement at the McCusker Research Unit at Hollywood Private Hospital.

The male sex hormone testosterone is showing great potential as a drug to slow, and perhaps even reverse, the development of the sticky beta amyloid plaques that build up in the brain, which causes dementia in Alzheimer's disease.

Professor Ralph Martins and his team are investigating what he terms a "dream drug". Testosterone is a researcher's best friend on two levels. The first is that it is already available and in use for other purposes so some of the many years of required pre-market testing can be short-circuited. The second even more gratifying aspect is the action of this natural hormone is what Professor Martins calls 'multi-modal'.

The path that led to testosterone began back in the early 90's when an American team showed a build-up of amyloid when oestrogen levels drop at menopause. As aging is the major risk factor for Alzheimer's, and both oestrogen and testosterone levels drop with age, Professor Martins decided it was worth investigating whether hormones played a role in the development of the disease.

Six years ago, he was involved in a study involving a group of people being treated for prostate cancer. The treatment involved bringing down the testosterone level through chemical castration – and as testosterone levels dropped, amyloid levels in the blood rose.

So Professor Martins decided it was time to formally investigate the relationship between testosterone, memory, and the increased amyloid production that leads to Alzheimer's disease in humans.

His team is involved in two research trials. The major study is to be run in Indonesia because of the exorbitant cost of running a clinical trial in Australia but it will take at least a year to get underway so it was decided to run another small study in the meantime.

A ready-made opportunity presented itself when Professor Martins learnt of a group of men attending the Well Men Clinic in Como who were to have testosterone administered for another condition. The men aged between 45 and 72 had all come to the clinic complaining of fatigue and associated depression, and blood tests showed they all had low testosterone levels. Some also mentioned they were worried about mild memory loss.

The second study is observational which means the research is not conducted directly by the Martins' team.

Prior to starting the trial, the men agreed to have both a blood test and a memory test that was administered by the Alzheimer's research team. Further blood samples were then taken one month later and will continue every three months for 13 months.

According to Professor Martins, timing is of paramount importance in the management of Alzheimer's. "We think it is probably too late once the disease has clearly manifested so we wanted to investigate whether administering testosterone early on would help improve memory," he said.

The Well Men Clinic study subjects have been followed for four months so far. What the excitement is about is that the level of both LH and beta amyloid in the bloodstream – which are both linked with the development of Alzheimer's – decreased after the subjects took testosterone. The other highly

significant finding is that there has been universal improvement in certain aspects of learning and memory, such as the ability to remember word lists, after taking testosterone.

It is still early days and there are only 25 in the study so far but Professor Martins describes the results to date as 'very nice'.

"Even with these small numbers, the results are very clear. We are the first to show this effect with testosterone in humans," he said.

The larger and more sophisticated Indonesian trial will be run by a student of Professor Martins who is doing a PhD in neurosurgery. It is a double blind trial which means neither the subjects nor those running the trial knows whether testosterone or a placebo cream is being given.

There are 46 men in the study who all claim to have memory problems and who all have low testosterone. Of the men, 23 receive testosterone for six months and 23 receive the placebo. This is followed by a break of four weeks which is known as the 'wash-out period' then the two groups are swapped over.

Monitoring in the study is carried out via monthly blood samples and a sophisticated scan known as a magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) image. The MRS provides a baseline measure by looking at overall brain structure but it can also show functional changes in the chemistry of the brain which provide a measure of the health of the nerve cells.

Neurons (nerve cells) normally release particular chemicals or metabolites and these metabolites change when the neurons are 'sick'. According to Professor Martins, the metabolites released from supporting cells called astrocytes are of particular interest to the research team because these cells become inflamed in Alzheimer's.

As with any drug though, there are potential side effects. There is a risk that if you have the hormone-sensitive kind of prostate cancer, testosterone will flare it up so subjects with an enlarged prostate gland or a high Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) score are excluded from the Indonesian study.

According to Professor Martins, the incidence of prostate cancer in men taking testosterone is very similar to the incidence in the general public – and they usually fare better because they are so closely monitored.

What is of concern though, is that testosterone levels are dropping world-wide and no one knows why.

"It may be as simple as the obesity epidemic and high-fat diets but it may be more complex than that. It is a concern for many reasons - and the incidence of Alzheimer's is one," he said.

The destruction of the brain that occurs in Alzheimer's disease steals identities, ruins lives and burdens government economies but the world class research carried out by Professor Martins' team is unravelling many pieces of the complex dementia puzzle.

"Testosterone is more attractive than any thing else I know of so far because of its fascinating multi-function capabilities and the fact that it is already available on the market," he said.

"However it is early stage and we still need to show its real efficacy in a clinical trial. It looks very promising but it must be administered under medical supervision and people need to undergo the appropriate safety tests first otherwise they are playing with fire."

(With Thanks to Hollywood Private Hospital)



## RETIRED SUB-WARDENS REMEMBERED

**O**n 17 July last year Highgate presented beautiful pewter medallions to 16 members who had retired from duty as Sub-Wardens at the State War Memorial.

Some had carried out their duties at the State War Memorial for over 30 years and some close to 50 years. Inadequate written records (and failing memories!) meant we may have inadvertently overlooked some retired Sub-Wardens that had met the requirement of having attended most wreath laying services each year for at least ten years.

After catching those we inadvertently missed last year, we anticipate that each year we will be presenting a medallion to just the one or few members that retire that year.



On 18 June 2007 medallions were presented to Dr David Bennett ED, Ernst Baints, and Robert Mercer AM, RFD, ED, all of whom had served as Sub-Wardens, with distinction, over many years,

As money raised by the RSL should be used primarily for welfare, separate funding was sought for the medallions. Defence Service Homes Insurance provided a grant of \$1,000 and State Manager Ian Douglas presented the medallions on 18 June. Medallion manufacturer Buckingham Pewter donated the artwork and making the mould but Managing Director Ann Bradford was unable to attend on the day.

The Sub-Wardens perform an important duty that is greatly appreciated by the approximately 30 different organisations (45 organisations years ago), that

each year conduct a wreath-laying service on a day close to the anniversary of a day with special meaning for them. The silent dignity with which the Sub-



Wardens carry out their duty adds significantly to creating the atmosphere of quiet reflection and remembrance that is the purpose of each service.

Perhaps even more importantly, the silent service of the Sub-Wardens gives the clear message to



members of the public looking on, especially young people, that if those men consider it so important to turn out in the way they do, then there really must be something important on which to reflect and remember. Participation by the Sub-Wardens contributes to passing the message on to the next generations – the message that the sacrifice by those before them has made possible the wonderful open, free, democratic way of life we enjoy today; and that we must remain eternally vigilant to keep it that way.

*Phillip Skelton*