AAFICS represents retired officials from the United Nations and its agencies and funds. Former officials of other international organizations are also welcome to become members. We offer a link to UN retirees through occasional social events, as well as contacts for information and advice about retirement in Australia. We are affiliated to FAFICS in Geneva, the Federation of 63 Associations similar to ours and an essential source of advice on pension-related issues and on after-service-health insurance schemes. This newsletter has been prepared and circulated on a voluntary basis by the AAFICS membership.

The six-month period since our previous Newsletter has brought major challenges to the world, probably the most significant being the war (or ‘special military operation’ as Russia’s dictator has termed it) in Ukraine. With thousands dead, millions as refugees and massive infrastructural damage, the war continues with seemingly no end. Unfortunately, the UN Security Council's restrictive veto process appears to have again stymied any major global intervention in what some have called ‘a battle between democracy and autocracy’. However, as we would expect, our courageous colleagues in the frontline relief agencies, such as UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, are delivering vital aid under difficult circumstances. Meanwhile, here at home the big news has related to the holding of a Federal election and the installation of a new Government in Canberra. Here's hoping that election pledges will be kept and that the tone of debate in Parliament improves.

In passing, do you remember COVID-19? The lockdowns, the quarantining, the daily press conferences, the closed State borders, the social distancing, the masks, the PPE? All now seemingly gone from the news media. Since the first case was reported (January 2020), 8.38m Australians have had coronavirus while infection rates (July 2022) are running at an average of 35,286 per day. So far, 10,191 of our fellow Australians have died. Does that make the front pages of the daily newspapers? No. In airline terms, 10,191 is the equivalent of about one fully-laden passenger aircraft crashing in Australia every month for the past 2½ years. Would that make the newspaper headlines? Sure would. Stay safe and please get vaccinated. Editor
As we sit shivering through the wettest, coldest, windiest start to winter that any of us in the south can remember, naturally our thoughts turn to travel to warmer climes. And the international borders are open again. Some of us have been brave enough to rise to the challenge of dealing with eye-wateringly expensive tickets, lost baggage, inordinate queues, staff shortages and cancelled flights. However, I would caution you (on the advice of other retirees) to make sure that you have adequate travel insurance to cover COVID expenses as well as the above adversities. Those of you who have UN after service health insurance, will be covered for the medical costs of COVID, but not for accommodation or altered travel costs. The free travel insurance available on certain credit cards will not cover COVID related costs. So, please do your insurance research while planning travel.

Much of my time has been occupied with FAFICS matters as I am currently a Vice President. FAFICS is the federation of 63 National Associations of Former International Civil Servants. One of the advantages of Zoom technology is that we are meeting at least monthly. This is an improvement on the days of in-person meetings which meant between 2-4 meetings per year. One of the downsides of Zoom is that international meetings disadvantage Australians who join them at sometime between midnight and the wee small hours. FAFICS has focused on the development of new rules of procedure, which seems a rather arcane exercise that has been on-going for over four years. Basically, it is an effort to ensure that there is continuity and also succession planning for a group that is getting older. Needless to say, there are aging office holders who have previously been very senior in their respective organisations and find it very difficult to wind down. Pleasingly, there are new rules that have been adapted by a special Council session. This is the first step towards a FAFICS that is responsive to member needs. FAFICS has representation on the UNJSPF Pension Board, crucial to the management of our $80 billion pension funds. This is not only financial management, as a Planning Group has just been (re)established that focuses on matters of pension design and cost implications. An example of planning - Increasing numbers of UN officials have a much shorter term in the UN than previously, with many fewer indefinite contracts issued. If these staff are employed less than 5 years, should they be able to take a lump sum payment that consists of both their and their organisation’s contribution, rather than only their contribution as is now the case?

The FAFICS annual meeting, known as Council, of all the member associations will take place in Vienna from 18-21 July. I will not be travelling but will attend by video link. For the last two years, the Council has been held remotely, and there were great hopes that finally we would be able to meet in person. But (see para 1 of my report) apart from those in North America and Europe, the rest of us are all facing astronomical airfares for unreliable services. I will again be standing for the position of Vice President.

On the domestic front, we have all had a cost-of-living increase in our pension. Again, this year, a larger number than usual of CoEs were not received by UNJSPF in New York. With the help of the State Coordinators, we managed to locate almost all those beneficiaries,
including one who had just moved from a retirement village to care facilities and others who had moved overseas for work.

Wishing you a warm and comfortable winter!

Jennifer Ashton, AAFICS President

[Editor’s note: Congratulations, Jennifer, on again being endorsed by AAFICS and our New Zealand equivalent, AFUNO, to continue in the role of FAFICS Vice President. We all value your professionalism and commitment. Your column also reminds us that we, or our families or carers, should contact you (or State Coordinators) to advise when a change of address occurs. Having to chase retired UN officials who have forgotten to report their whereabouts, for CoE purposes, is an onerous task that should not be necessary. But thank you for doing it anyway.]

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

HISTORY REPEATS?

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

From “Punch” magazine, 24th April 1904.

Contributed by Mike Sackett, formerly WFP/UNDP, Queensland.
COOOEE!
REPORTS FROM BRANCHES

VICTORIA

Greetings from our Victorian members to all other members across Australia. We hope you have all remained safe and well.

For Victoria, the first part of year 2022 has followed the previous three years of constraints due to COVID-19 and its seemingly endless variants. That said, there has been very little to report on for this period, with member queries being minimal. This has also meant that the AAFICS Victoria Group has again been unable/unwilling to hold our annual meeting of members due to concerns about the risks to health. If we were all in the flush of youth and there was greater acceptance of mask wearing in Melbourne, the problems may have eased, but members have been reticent to return to group meetings as these new variants are presenting greater challenges to our existing vaccinations. It is worth taking the very good explanatory advice as laid down by the WHO to reduce the chances of new variants emerging. ([https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19/information/covid-19-variants](https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19/information/covid-19-variants))

On member concerns, the main issue has been on getting the UNJSPF app for the digital acceptance of their Certificate of Entitlement (CoE) authenticated. Whilst some members succeeded after experiencing some problems, others have just given up in favour of the old system of receiving/signing the CoE via post. These members have managed to complete all but the last stage, so they were unable get their Digital Certificate of Entitlement (DCE) issued.
The problem is the final stage involving facial recognition using their mobile phones and this being stuck at 10% biometric for an eternity, despite trying all forms of facial and lighting contortions. UNJSPF required the DCE process to be completed by the 23rd June, after which the CoE system reverts to the postal option. Eventually, it is inevitable that the digital process for issuing the CoE will be the main system used by UNJSPF. However, it is surprising that at a time when facial surveillance in the commercial world seems so successful, members should be having such difficulties with this facial recognition part of the UNJSPF process. It has to be made simpler.

Another issue that re-occurs in different ways involves the Australian (government and the various institutions, hospitals etc.) recognition of UN retirees in Australia, our UN Pension and UN health services. In 2020, some members reported problems with bank loan applications being rejected when:

1. seeking loans for mortgage refinancing.
2. seeking general loans, and
3. upgrading of credit card limits etc.

Whilst realizing that age and level of income are big factors, the main reason given for these rejections was that the UN pension is a foreign income source that is regarded less favorably compared to an Australian-based income source. This situation depends very much on the banking/loan institution and does not apply to all of them. Westpac and Suncorp were OK, but NAB, Bendigo, ME, ING and ANZ were not. It seems that if you are seeking approval for 1-3 above, then providing sufficient background information using your pension statement, an assets statement, information on UNJSPF and explaining your situation, convincingly, will be needed and strongly questioning the rationale if rejected.

There were 64 members of AAFICS Victoria in 2021. This has now been increased by two new members this year. We extend our warm welcome to them, their partners and families: Dr. Soe Nyunt U. & Ma Wa Wa Kyaw (WHO) and Chris O’Brien (FAO).

It appears that the pen has been moving mightily fast in Victoria. Our two regular contributors to the AAFICS Newsletter (Drs. Peter Steele and Peter Dexter)* have continued their involvement in producing interesting and excellent material (in this Newsletter). Further, if you haven’t had a chance to read the excellent books authored by our two other resident scribes, I strongly recommend you do so - *Demon on Fire and Other Stories* by Madhavi Johnson (UNICEF), and *Reflections on a United Nations Career* by Ian Howie (UNFPA).

* We lost one regular contributor (Dr. John Clements) to warmer climes in QLD. I guess that is our loss but Mike Sackett’s gain. Keep up those always interesting articles, John.

**Mike Patto, Victoria State Coordinator**

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

After almost two years of not seeing one another because of COVID restrictions, several members of AAFICS WA and their families got together on 18th June 2022. The venue was
The Packing Shed in the hills above Perth in one of Bickley Valley’s vineyards, Lawnbrook Estate. It was a cold but clear day after consecutive days of rain. We were overjoyed to greet one another at last without masks. One was heard to say that after being confined to our homes for so long, it was exciting to plan what to wear for this outing and to be able to wear lipstick once more.

At The Packing Shed in Bickley, WA, 18 June 2022. Left to right: Monina S. Magallanes, Irene Taylor, Sheila D’ Silva, Sumathipala Wathugala, Kathleen Agacy, and Angela Dee. Behind left to right: Rani Kuldip Dogra, Lesley Taylor, Diane Summers and Andrew Cassels.

As in previous gatherings, family members were welcomed and indeed encouraged to join us. With increasing digitization not only in the operations of the UN Pension Fund but also in communications in general, many older members have difficulty navigating their way through technology. Family members have become indispensable to assist members stay in touch including driving them to reunions, be informed of developments and help during crucial times to liaise with the Fund to convert pension entitlements to survivor’s benefits.

Sitting at a long table in the warmth of a pot-belly stove close by, we enjoyed a selection of light country-style meals and exchanged stories of our working lives in many parts of the world.

We extended a warm welcome to new members Diane Summers and Andrew Cassels. Diane is a strategic communication specialist and, until recently, was with the Immunization team in UNICEF’s HQ, New York.

Andrew is a global health strategist and for many years worked in the WHO Director-General’s Office in Geneva. Over their long careers, they have enjoyed many years living in Nepal as well as a life on the road with assignments covering countries including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China. Diane, an Australian, and Andrew, who is British, have come to roost in Fremantle. They look forward to having more free time to explore WA and to visit family and friends in Europe and the UK.
AAFICS WA also welcomed Sumathipala Wathugala, or Wathu as he is commonly called. Wathu is a chartered civil engineer who worked for over 30 years in various assignments with the UN in the Middle East and Africa. He retired as Project Manager/Engineer in 2020 from the UN International Residual Mechanism on Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) in Arusha, Tanzania. He enjoys organizing virtual gatherings using video conferencing apps for friends and associates with the biggest group being former colleagues from the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (UN-ICTR).

Former UN-ICTR colleagues Sumathipala Wathugala (Wathu) and Rani Kuldip Dogra

Wathu, who lives in Sydney, was visiting his daughter and grandchildren in Perth. According to Wathu, one of the highlights of his stay in Perth was meeting up with his former colleague in UN-ICTR, Rani Kuldip Dogra, who introduced him to AAFICS WA. This was the first time Wathu became acquainted with AAFICS and what AAFICS does for its members. Wathu said that he was fortunate to attend the group lunch of AAFICS WA. He enjoyed meeting other
former UN colleagues and sharing life experiences during their time in the UN. Now in possession of a membership form, we are hopeful Wathu will consider joining AAFICS when he returns to Sydney. But he is always welcome to join our gatherings in the future when he visits WA again.

Regrets were received from Bill Kean, Stane Salobir and Sharon Van Buerle who were out of town, Phang Pin Suan and T. Siva and Luckshmi Sunderam.

Monina S. Magallanes, Western Australia State Coordinator

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

TASMANIA

After retirement from UNAIDS in 2012, I was the only Tasmanian member for some years. Fortunately, that’s changed and there are currently six of us.

It’s a time of too many once-in-a-century events – SARS, COV-2, diphtheria outbreaks, potential for ‘foot and mouth’ disease, and flooding. We cannot say that our retirement is dull.

The last few years were challenging, living with a Government that openly questioned the role of the UN. It’s heartening to have a new Government that respects and endorses the role of multi-lateral agencies and is re-establishing Australia’s position globally.

The overturning of Roe versus Wade by the US Supreme Court is deeply worrying, and we see signs of similar views amongst some in Australia. It is a time for vigilance on many fronts where long-held international norms can be challenged. I am ever grateful for the experiences and people I met and worked with during my time in the UN and the insights from those years. I do wish Australians were as accepting of mask-wearing as South East Asians!

Recent plans to convene the Tasmanian AAFICS group were stymied by travel and COVID-19. We’ve been ever so grateful to Jennifer for her proactive leadership, excellent communication and effective networking. Any digital CE issues are resolved very fast, thanks to her contacts in New York. She is indeed ‘heroic’ in her dealings on our behalf. We strongly endorsed her continued role as an FAFICS Vice President and hope she doesn’t wear out with all the middle-of-the-night meetings.

Good luck to all travelling overseas now or later in the year. No doubt there’ll be many travel stories in the time of COVID-19 for the next newsletter.

Jane Wilson PhD, Tasmania State Coordinator

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

NEW SOUTH WALES

In March, NSW State Coordinator, Maurice Critchley, noticed this letter in The Age newspaper:

Putin’s attacks on Ukraine once and for all prove that without the US soldier dying in the tens of thousands, the United Nations could not keep the peace between a blind man and his guide; nor unite a pair of late adolescent virgin rabbits.

Howard Hutchins, Chirnside Park

Maurice’s eloquent response was published a few days later:
In support of the UN
Your correspondent is mistaken about United Nations peacekeeping (Letters, 3/1). The US does not provide the backbone. It contributes very few military personnel. Only 31 of the 75,085 uniformed personnel serving with the UN at December 31, 2021, were from the US, and that included 26 staff officers. Australia’s contribution was 26. Your correspondent’s dismissive comments about UN peacekeeping bear no resemblance to the good work that has been done, and continues, under the UN flag.
Maurice Critchley, former chief of mission support, United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

Queensland

Allow me to begin on a family note. Until recently our two daughters and their families were living the expatriate life in South Africa and Burkina Faso. Neither is involved with the UN; the oil industry and an international NGO respectively having taken them to these places. Over the years in retirement, Eileen and I have visited them in, variously, Thailand, Laos, DRC, Malawi and South Africa. All such travels of course came to a juddering halt with the onset of COVID so, like many others, we hadn’t seen our grandchildren since Christmas 2019. The good news is that the Johannesburg family have now relocated to Brisbane, and the Burkina mob are currently here on holiday, so we’ve had fun times getting together again. We hope other similarly-placed AAFICS colleagues have been equally fortunate.

AAFICS Queensland members at their winter lunch in Brisbane, May 2022
I see from the UNJS Pension Fund newsletter which came out in the first week of July that the Certificate of Entitlement mailings went out from New York on 5 July, for those of us (including your Qld correspondent) who have not yet opted for the digital CoE. I guess they will arrive in Oz towards the end of July. As soon as they do so, they should be signed, dated and mailed back. If you can do so, you could also, in addition, scan and email the CoE back to New York.

I was interested to see that the Pension Fund advised that June 2022 would be the first month in which anyone who had failed to return the 2021 CE would not receive their pension payment. You have to admit that 12 months grace is pretty good on their part. There is also a fairly straightforward reinstatement process for anyone who inadvertently fell through the cracks in 2021.

The Pension Fund news update also included various references to the health of the Pension Fund up to 31 December 2021. In a nutshell, it looks pretty robust. The Fund seeks to achieve a real (i.e. US inflation-adjusted) return on investment of 3.5% over the long term. While this isn’t achieved in every individual year, the target has been exceeded in pretty much any multi-year period you care to nominate over the past 50 years. Judging by how financial markets have gone backwards in the first half of 2022, I suspect this year may be one of those loss-making exceptions. This shouldn’t be anything for any of us to be too concerned about, especially, as at 31 December 2021 the actuarial valuation of the Pension Fund was showing a surplus of 2.3%. While that may not sound much, by historical standards it is pretty good.

Finally, for AAFICS Queenslanders our Spring lunch has been provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 19 October at a Sunshine Coast venue yet to be decided. Interstate AAFICS members will, of course, be most welcome. I expect to be able to advise the new lunch venue by early August and will send round a note at that time.

Mike Sackett, Queensland State Coordinator

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

NO COMMENT

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The Australian government has brushed off criticism from the UN Secretary General labelling it a “holdout” after Scott Morrison refused to strengthen the nation’s 2030 emissions reduction target.

The Communications Minister, Paul Fletcher, branded António Guterres a member of the UN “chattering classes” after he used an address to a sustainability summit to take an extraordinary public swipe at Australia’s climate efforts.

Reported in The Guardian, 22nd March 2022
SO HOW DID I COME TO BE A MEMBER OF AAFICS?

How many people have, with the best of intentions, exhorted me to “plan my career”? I became conditioned to expect the “where do you plan to be in five years time?” question at every interview. It was not like that for me. Whatever path my working life took me along can only be put down to three things.

First, naivety - I was generally blissfully unaware of what might happen with the next career move. I simply went with the flow.

Second, my father’s advice - “It doesn’t matter what you do in life, but whatever you do, do it well and try to do your best and be the best.” If a job is worth doing, it’s worth doing well.

Third, a willingness to take a chance - to step out into the void and follow my passions.

It all started for me during the early days of television in Queensland when an American physicist, Dr Julian Sumner Miller, presented a series entitled “Why is it so?”, based on dramatic demonstrations of the laws of physics. It made science fun.

So, high school was all science and mathematics for me. As my high school days became numbered, I had to think about what I would do next. No one in my family had ever been to university, but it seemed the logical progression for me. My best subjects were maths, so
engineering seemed a fit, but I had no passion for it. Biology and animal biology was the fascination. Medicine was a possibility, but I was squeamish about dealing with sick and injured people. There was this course called Veterinary Science and, although I knew little about it, it must have had something to do with animal biology. You see, I really never had a pet - the family had a Border Collie for a while when I was very small, but every time I encountered it, the thing bit me. I was confined to inside the house for the year or so that we had it. It was donated to a dairy farmer. The canary and budgerigars did very little, so we never spent a penny at a veterinary surgery.

I grew up in suburban Brisbane with only some tangential family connection to farming and had only seen rural areas on driving holidays to Sydney or Cairns. Veterinary science was listed as a scholarship area in a State Government booklet on careers in the public service. I secured a scholarship on the basis of being bonded to work for them for six years - one year longer than the course - as a government veterinary officer. The commencing salary was $4405 per annum. If my contact with a corner store vet was non-existent, one can imagine how well I understood the role of ‘rural, government vet’. I was sixteen when I interviewed for the scholarship. I was not only wet behind the ears, it was January in Brisbane and I was sweating nervously and profusely, so every part of me was wet.

I spent about ten years in various country posts - Cairns, Emerald, Atherton, and Townsville and even worked in the field on the outskirts of Brisbane for a time. During this period, I learned a lot about everything rural and about pathology and the way diseases “work”. I was sent to university in Townsville to complete a Masters degree focusing on how diseases spread - an emerging area of science known as ‘epidemiology’.

In Brisbane, I established a small epidemiology unit, worked with some high-profile disease issues and, having taught myself to program computers, developed some disease databases. From this field office, based at the Animal Research Institute, I moved into head office in the city and assumed a supervisory role of the eradication programmes for bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis, the mainstay of our operations at the time. Later, the government developed a penchant for restructuring itself which, for me, meant that I kept changing job title and responsibilities.

One job that I wanted to dodge involved exotic disease planning and preparedness, ‘exotic’ meaning not present in Australia. That sounded boring. I could not avoid it after one restructure and became quite depressed at the prospect of working in this ‘do nothing’ area. From that point on, Australia, and particularly Queensland, experienced a series of major disease emergencies. I changed the name of my unit to ‘Emergency Response Capability’, partly because as Manager my acronym became MERC and MERC had classy connotations. As an aside, years later I created a temporary position for myself during an equine influenza outbreak and I called it ‘Equine Influenza Epidemiological Investigations Officer’ so that my name tag read ‘E-I-E-I-O’.

Every two years, Australia was invited to send a vet to a unique three-week course in the United States where some eighteen exotic or ‘foreign’ diseases are demonstrated. The opportunity was rotated around the States, the Northern Territory and Canberra, so one Queenslander could go every sixteen years. I was selected for this in 1988. My emergency involvement and the knowledge gained from this course set me up as somewhat of an expert in the field and I started running training courses around the country and in Indonesia.

At one of these in Adelaide, David, an Englishman who worked for the Commonwealth, and myself served as the two imported speakers. Being a weekend course for private veterinarians, David and I were left to our own resources on the Saturday night so decided to dine together. But David confessed to being a diabetic and said that the choice of restaurant would be dependent on his insulin levels just prior to dinner. After the test, he announced that
he needed pasta so it would have to be Italian. I was later surprised to hear David conversing with the restaurant owner in Italian. I asked him how he came to know Italian and he replied that he had worked for a period with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) based in Rome.

My immediate thought was ‘Wouldn’t that be great, working and living in Rome?’ It may seem surprising, given my later career twists, that I did not then and there commence to plan to work for FAO. But I did not. I simply continued on naively doing what popped up as best I could and being prepared to try new things.

Years later, a chap who managed our laboratory in Townsville moved to an FAO post in Bangkok. He sent me three job advertisements for staff, regular programme jobs within FAO in Rome. I applied for two of them. One involved the European Foot and Mouth Commission and, naively, I had no idea that the unwritten key selection requirement was that the job would only go to a European. The other seemed like an internationally-slanted job description of my role in Queensland at the time. I did manage a phone interview for that position but the interview was not my best and the job went to a consultant who was already essentially doing the job, which did not, in fact, fit the description they had written.

I was now on the mailing list and when avian influenza (bird ‘flu) emerged in the early 2000s, FAO quickly used up its supply of rostered consultants and put a call out for more. I was fully employed in Queensland, but imagined that I could do a consultancy during my holidays so I filled in the form. Sometime later, they asked me to go to Indonesia for six weeks. I had worked on avian influenza in Australia and had lectured at courses in Indonesia for the Australian Government.

A while later, my wife and I planned a holiday in the Middle East. It was all booked when FAO again asked me to go to Indonesia. Not wanting to offend them, I replied that regrettably I was unable to go as I would be travelling in the Middle East. FAO interpreted this as ‘he is also a Middle Eastern expert’ and soon after my return to Australia asked me to go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for two weeks, again on bird ‘flu.

I agreed and, by chance, I was staying in the same hotel as a New York-based World Bank officer who was there with a Japanese Professor of Medicine, also on bird ‘flu, and we happened to meet in the lobby. We compared notes, which was most helpful. He said that he had a list of human health experts but had no veterinarians as possible consultants. Would I be willing to work with him? Of course!

Shortly afterwards he arranged a mission for himself and me to Egypt to assess their bird ‘flu capabilities with a view to future funding. My Queensland employers were getting a little tired of my absences on leave so I asked him to restrict the mission to just eight days, including travel.
I was unaware that my World Bank report went to FAO until my phone rang at 11:00pm one night when a senior person from Rome woke me up to talk me into returning to Egypt for three months to start up a project on improving their animal health sector. So, off I went to Egypt, taking long service leave for three months. The project was going well when they asked me the inevitable question about extending for another three months. This was simply not possible, given my employment situation, but I agreed to return for three weeks some months later.

During a delegation’s visit to Cairo at this time I learned of a recently established unit in Rome known as the Crisis Management Centre for Animal Health, and met the new manager, the ex-Chief Veterinary Officer of Germany. Hers was a consultancy arrangement, but they had established a regular programme position for a veterinarian within the Centre. Some months later, I was approached and asked to come to Rome for six months as a consultant to fill the new position while they advertised it.

Having worked for the Queensland department for around thirty years, I figured I was due a sabbatical so applied for leave without pay for six months. I was granted it, but it did not go down well and I was warned that this was the last time such leave would ever be agreed to. My wife also took leave and off we went to Rome.

When I arrived in Rome, I was disappointed to discover that they had not yet advertised the position. I knew that the process took many months and that six months would never be enough. The job was advertised a couple of months later.

My boss at the time, a French vet and FAO’s Chief Veterinary Officer, encouraged me to apply. I was really not all that enthusiastic, but on the second last day I completed an online application, really only to keep my options open. On the last day, my boss asked if I had applied and I said that I had on the previous day, online. That sent him into a spin. With lots of “Mon dieu’s”, he had his two secretaries racing around FAO headquarters checking that my application had been received before the deadline. Twenty minutes later the secretaries...
returned reporting that my application had been received. The boss’s demeanour changed
and he said that, of course, there would be lots of applicants and only a small chance that I
might succeed.

Come September, I said a sad farewell to my staff and to Rome and I returned to Brisbane to
find that my old job had been reassigned and I was instead made manager of all of the State’s
animal health laboratories. In October, I was given a telephone interview for the Rome job and
then heard nothing more. By the following July, I had really put FAO out of my mind when
FAO’s Human Resources sent a message asking if I would accept the job under the terms of
a contract that they had attached. I agreed and was waiting to receive a contract to sign when
they told me that my earlier agreement had completed the process. So, I became an FAO
employee without even realising it. The naïvety had carried through to late middle age.
Fortunately, the contract period offered was two years and I had enough long service leave to
last for the period at half-pay so I would not have to relinquish my ‘real’ job.

Two years later, it became clear that further contracts would be forthcoming and I cut my ties
with my employer of thirty-six years. Tenure could not be granted in Rome until at least six
years service had been completed, which in my case occurred shortly before reaching the
then compulsory retirement age of sixty-two. I retired a little early so that I would not have to
to endure two hot summers in a row, and joined AAFICS when the opportunity arose.

So, I hope that the reader will realise that this twisted tale demonstrates my lack of career
planning, my naïvety (for how many times have I used that word), my attempts to make the
most of every opportunity, and my preparedness to step into the void, albeit with contingencies
protecting me when possible.

Perhaps it all started with a pasta dinner in Adelaide, but that really did not start any sort of
master plan. I like to mentor young people in their careers these days, but I never - ever - say
to them that they should plan their careers.

Ian Douglas, formerly FAO

[Editor’s note: thank you for this fascinating tale and photos, Ian. Your experiences of the
almost unfathomable UN employment system will resonate with many colleagues. As we go
to press with this Newsletter, great concerns are being raised about the ‘foot and mouth’
outbreak in Bali, Indonesia. Here’s hoping your vast professional expertise will be called upon
to ensure Australia stays safe.]

UNITED NATIONS PLANS FOR REVITALISATION

The Member States of the United Nations are growing increasingly concerned about the need
to reinvigorate multilateralism in international affairs.

The maintenance of international peace and enhancing the global rules-based order are core
responsibilities under the UN Charter, but a major problem is that many Member States are
no longer, if they ever fully were, practicing what they say they believe. Multilateral cooperation
through UN institutions, such as cooperation about nuclear disarmament, has been eroded.

This comes at a time when the world is confronted by a complex of issues whose successful
management is fundamentally dependent on strengthened international solidarity and
cooperation. Pandemics, epidemics, global warming, the increasing number of wars of which
the Ukraine–Russia war is only the latest, historically high numbers of refugees and displaced people, widening wealth disparities, loss of biodiversity, degraded oceans, and an increasingly poorly regulated and threatening cyberspace all demand urgent multilateral action.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has made it the mission of his second term in office to spearhead efforts to revitalise multilateral cooperation. These efforts must confront an increasingly complex and rapidly changing international system. Populism is in the ascendency in many countries, dampening enthusiasm for international cooperation and amplifying the voice of big financial institutions, business conglomerates, energy companies and even powerful individuals, with the result that policy is often distorted.

Do these revolutions make the UN weak and ineffective? The Member States think not. During the 75th anniversary of the UN on 21 September 2020, the Member States unanimously agreed in the General Assembly to ask Guterres to develop recommendations to advance the common agenda and respond to current and future challenges. He undertook widespread consultations, resulting in sweeping proposals reflecting a significant body of international thinking framed in uncharacteristically direct language.

The options and suggestions set out by Guterres are presented as necessary pathways, rather than the more usual menu of discretionary choices which allow States to opt-out. No other global institution has this credibility because no other has the legitimacy from a membership
of all national governments. No other organisation can speak with as great authority as the UN General Assembly. When Member States agree, they have unique global political weight.

Guterres’ report, *Our Common Agenda*, focuses on multilateralism spearheaded through the UN. It puts the UN at the centre of the proposed initiatives, leveraging its universal convening power that gives all 193 Member States an equal voice and increasingly includes representatives from the private sector, civil society, and academia. It means the Common Agenda will benefit from the UN’s unique role in safeguarding global values, ethics and norms, as well as its global presence and its technical expertise.

The Common Agenda builds on the September 2020 75th anniversary Declaration by which the General Assembly recognised the ‘achievements of the UN’ but also its ‘moments of disappointment’ and committed to an agenda of reinvigorated multilateralism, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the framework. The Agenda outlines a strikingly imaginative, ambitious strategy for how these objectives might be pursued to the end of ‘a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system,’ including new, crisis-ready ‘emergency platforms,’ more robust approaches to global issues, and a greater emphasis on youth and their role in the future.

The *Agenda* persuasively argues that:

> States have at their disposal an organisation whose very purpose is to solve international problems through cooperation. The United Nations presence is global, its membership is universal, and its activities span the breadth of human need. Its fundamental values are … found in every culture and religion around the world: peace, justice, human dignity, equity, tolerance and of course, solidarity (p18).

These values alone inspire a serious examination of the policies proposed. But how might they be received in the wider Australian community and by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments? Several of the segments will inevitably raise eyebrows and attract controversy. Proposals include a new agenda for peace, multi-stakeholder dialogues on outer space and a Global Digital Compact. They cover global economic governance, taxation, climate change, and biodiversity. Turning to the ‘infodemic’ plaguing our world, the Agenda has suggestions to end the ‘war on science’, and lending support ‘for a global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information.’

Suggestions likely to garner widespread support include gender parity initiatives, more inclusive consultations to harness the voice of youth, a Futures Lab, and a Declaration on Future Generations. However, questions may be raised about the proposal for a UN Special Envoy to ensure that policy and budget decisions by States factor in their impact on future generations.

The Common Agenda includes recommendations on protecting the rights of peoples more broadly and the role of international law to secure these rights, ranging from the very concrete to the more aspirational. Notable is the proposal for a multi-stakeholder effort to reduce violence world-wide in all its forms, including violence from criminal groups and interpersonal violence in the home.

There are several recommendations that go to the heart of how the UN functions. Working towards a ‘UN 2.0’ able to offer ‘system-wide solutions to 21st century challenges’, the Report envisages an institution more inclusive, responsive, and consultative and ‘a reliable guardian for our future’.
The necessity for strengthening global cooperation to address the existential crises facing humanity is increasingly clear. Our Common Agenda offers a wide-ranging, integrated and compelling strategy of the next major steps. It is vital that they be implemented by the next Australian government.* The Labor opposition’s plan to appoint a dedicated ambassador for human rights is a step in the right direction. Strengthening international institutions as a way to reduce conflict and tackle global problems is in Australia’s national interest, and all our interests.

Copies of the whole strategy, Our Common Agenda, are readily available at https://www.un.org/en/un75/common-agenda

Erika Feller AO and John Langmore AM

*[Editor’s note: Erika was Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in UNHCR before she retired. John was Director for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the UN Secretariat from 1997-2002. Both are now at the School of Government, Law Faculty, Initiative for Peacebuilding, University of Melbourne.]*

*This article on the UN’s ‘Common Agenda’ was first published (May 2022), prior to the Federal election, in ‘Pursuit’, the University of Melbourne’s magazine.*
NEARLY 7,000 KILOMETRES ON MOTORCYCLES!
QUEENSLAND TO TASMANIA AND BACK

Was it a New Year's resolution or was it when fortress QLD reopened its borders? Not sure when we decided that it was time to visit the southern-most state of Oz. No doubt the odd glass of red wine (or two) encouraged our decision-making process.

Who is “we”, you ask? Well, apart from us UN retirees (Kerry and Klaus) there was another Hervey Bay couple riding a BMW motorcycle, namely Paul and Anne (no prior UN affiliation though). Paul had just purchased his brand-new BMW R1250RT touring bike and had picked it up from Melbourne a few weeks earlier to test out his new steed and get used to a big tourer (coming from a Triumph Tiger 1200). We rode our trusted R1200GSA adventure bike - so two ‘triple blacks’ were ready to hit the road in mid-February.

We did not ride in tandem all the way as Paul had taken off from Hervey Bay a couple of days earlier and would join us in northern NSW, while his partner, Anne, had decided to fly to Melbourne and join us there. After checking over our GSA and getting a fresh rear tyre (Pirelli Trail to match the front tyre) we departed the Fraser Coast on 15 February for Dalby.

Day 1 saw an uneventful ride around the Bunya Mountains with the weather being kind to us (which remained the case for most of the trip).

Day 2 took us to the QLD/NSW border town of Texas. We saw first-hand the damage caused by the earlier floods along the Dumaresq River as we made our way over Mt. Pleasant into Tenterfield.

On day 3 we followed the New England Hwy southbound and turned off at Nemingha (just south of Tamworth) towards Willow Tree and rode onwards to Muswellbrook. There we teamed up with Paul again who had ridden around the Oxley Hwy and Thunderbolt’s Way the days before.

Day 4 was very interesting as we headed for Denman, backtracked a bit on the Golden Hwy to Sandy Hollow to follow the Bylong Valley Way via Rylstone to Kandos, all great little country towns with lots of history. Turning off at Ilford we headed for Sofala and took another back country road to Bathurst. Of course, we had to ‘conquer’ the mountain track in Bathurst with the obligatory standing start from the grid (no burnouts though - easy on the clutch was the order of the day!) So, it was a BMW first and second with no Holden or Ford in sight, something the local media totally failed to witness and to report – unfortunately. Imagine the sponsor money we missed out on!

Keeping west of the Great Dividing Range, we took a lesser known and very quiet route to Trunkey Creek and south towards Crookwell where we turned off to Gunning, followed by a short spurt on the Hume Hwy for a well-earned rest at Yass.
Day 5 started off with another short(ish) ride on the Hume heading west to Gundagai where we turned south to Tumut to catch some twisties. A terrific road with lots of hills running across the foothills of the Snowy Range, through pleasant little towns like Batlow and Tumbarumba to the VIC mining town of Corryong (site of the old Mt. Elliott gold mine). There we hit the Murray Valley highway (it runs parallel south of the perhaps better known Murray River Road) which is anything but a highway, as it meanders west towards Wodonga. However, at Tallangatta we veered off and took (part of) the Great Alpine Rd to the historic and very picturesque township of Beechworth before heading to Wangaratta. Paul (a.k.a. “Ironbutt”) had enough energy left to carry on to Melbourne, but we decided to call it a day and stopped in Wangaratta for the night.

Our destination for day 6 (Sunday) was Melbourne, but avoiding the Hume we decided to ride through the picturesque King Valley to Mansfield. This is, of course, a popular Sunday destination for Melbourne’s motorcyclists with the main attraction being the 60+ km stretch between Mansfield and the Whitfield pub. We were told to watch out as these roads are heavily policed - especially as the route east of Mansfield leads to the snowfields and people are quite often in a hurry (getting there or heading home). As it turned out that was the least of our worries!

We took a little side trip on a dirt road to Power’s Lookout. clambering out on the rock of its namesake bushranger (an Irishman with an infamous track record) - and that nearly threw a spanner in our itinerary. Heading back to the main road, the red warning lamp on the dash alerted us to a problem - yes, the new(ish) Pirelli rear tyre was going flat fast! Not what we needed with some 300 km to go to Melbourne Port and having to catch the Spirit of Tasmania ferry the next morning. We pulled over as far as we could on the dirt road, lightened the load (panniers off etc.) and inspected the tyre with the bike on the centre stand. The Pirelli was pretty deflated already, which made it hard to find the leak. We sacrificed a bit of drinking water, pouring it over the tyre but no familiar bubbling sights or sounds. We were right on the edge of Telstra coverage, but did manage to contact BMW Road Assistance - it pays to keep that little insurance running.

There was a bit of vehicular traffic going both ways but, disappointingly, no-one stopped to offer their assistance, even including another GS rider (thanks, mate!) Eventually we waved someone down to give us a hand. Luckily, that kind person was very helpful and did indeed have an air-compressor; so we re-inflated the tyre and managed to spot the leak, a bit of a gash from a sharp stone by the looks of it. I plugged the hole with two plugs but no joy, still leaking. A third plug followed with the same result; we were running out of options. Fortunately,
another 4x4 stopped, driven by a beefy South African bloke who was also a GS rider, and he had a tyre repair kit with more (and thicker!) plugs. This time, the plug held and we quickly geared up to carry on to Mansfield (about 40 kms away). The first driver was going the same way, so he offered to shadow us, which turned out to be a life saver. Sure enough, the battered Pirelli started to leak again and we were forced to pull over several times, pump up the tyre and carry on ever so gently (the windy road did not help matters either). 

Eventually, we reached Mansfield and limped into a service station, where we offered our ‘escort’ free coffee and a diesel tank refill which they declined (the kindness of strangers.). No chance to find an open tyre repair shop on a Sunday arvo, but luck was on our side once again. A group of friendly VIC bikers had pulled in and they offered their assistance. So, we plugged the tyre once again - how many more plugs?! But this time it seemed to work. We re-inflated the stricken Pirelli and the pressure held firm. So, we called off the BMW ‘rescue team’ and took off on our final 250 kms to Melbourne. A rather nervous journey with one eye constantly on the dash battling the afternoon traffic on the road to Yea and then south to Yarra Glen with Melbourne (almost) in sight. But the tyre held with the pressure just dropping ever so slightly - all good and we reached the city. One more top-up of fuel and air at the servo and off to the hotel for a well-earned coldie! In the meantime, Paul had called some of his contacts in Tassie and managed to organize a replacement tyre in Ulverstone to be fitted on the Tuesday! Quite an incredible feat on a Sunday afternoon.

Off to the ferry on the morning of day 7 (Monday) with a long queue of cars and (fewer) bikes lining up at the docks. The Pirelli rear tyre played along with the air pressure holding. Once the checks and paperwork were done, we were onboard, bike strapped down and off on our day cruise to Devonport. As expected, the Bass Strait was a bit breezy, but the voyage went fairly smoothly, even out in the open seas. We got to our destination in good time, getting off the ferry in Tassie being quick and simple. We spent the night in Devonport after enjoying some excellent Tasmanian seafood and wine.
On the morning of day 8, we rode straight to Ulverstone (about 25 km west of Devonport) to get our new tyre. Goodbye Pirelli and welcome Michelin (a new rear tyre was fitted). The guys at the bike shop in Ulverstone were very helpful and did an excellent job. We had a little stroll around Ulverstone with its rich agricultural tradition (there is also a chance to see penguins walk up the beach each night at Lillico Beach) before heading west on the winding coastal road via The Big Penguin (in a town called - you guessed it - Penguin) to Burnie which is a really more of an industrial hub around the pretty Emu Bay. On to Wynyard we went, a popular holiday spot for beach activities and fishing, where we briefly stopped at the windswept Table Cape, with its lighthouse and spectacular views of the coast and farmlands. A few kilometres further west, we tucked into the spectacularly white sands of Boat Harbour Beach for a seafood lunch.

Paul and Anne had already carried on to Smithton on Duck Bay, the last stop before Arthur River and the Tarkine Wilderness area with Marrawah (a surfer’s paradise if you do not mind the cold) on the coast of the Southern Ocean. Our destination instead was the historic town of Stanley in the shadow of The Nut, a huge 200m high volcanic plug. The town boasts beautifully preserved colonial buildings now housing cafes and B&B cottages. Of course, we had to take the open chairlift ride to the top of The Nut looking out for seals and penguins - without much luck though. Again, we enjoyed some beautiful seafood washed down with more wine before settling into our historic cottage accommodation.

On Day 9 we caught up with our co-riders again as we backtracked along the coastal road to Somerset where the Murchison Hwy starts meandering through the central Tassie ranges. A twisty ride towards Hellyer Gorge where we briefly stopped in the rainforest-clad valley. However, quickly descending fog and gusty windy conditions made us continue on south. Rosebery is typically the main stop along here but we decided to continue on another spectacular ride to Zeehan where we took the lesser road over the low watershed between the Badger and Little Henty Rivers. From there it was a fairly fast and open run past the impressive Henty Dunes (offering quad rides) around the back of Ocean Beach to our next stop for two nights, Strahan. This seaside town proved to be a popular holiday destination for two and four-wheelers alike as it is an ideal spot to explore the rugged West Coast.

Day 10 was a rest day for our steeds, but not for us. We had booked a boat cruise through Macquarie Harbour, Australia’s second largest natural harbour and six times the size of Sydney Harbour! The cruise took us southwest, first to the aptly named Hells Gates at Macquarie Heads, a very shallow and narrow stretch of canal requiring exceptional navigation skills for boaters. The weather gods smiled on us (again!) and even our skipper was impressed as it is apparently rare for the cruise boat to be able to venture into the Southern Ocean - even ever so briefly. Heading back in the harbour we set afoot Sarah Island which was used as a penal settlement where convicts were forced to work under some of the harshest conditions. The prisoners’ stories are captured in The Ship That Never Was play (and book) about the last great escape from the island.

The cruise took us further south in the magic Gordon River where we stopped at the Heritage Landing to stretch our legs and see the remains of a historical Huron pine logging site. Back
in Strahan we had a brief look at the impressive Ocean Beach before enjoying yet more Tassie cuisine and beverages.

The many tight twisties of the Lyell Hwy awaited us on day 11 as we made our way to Tassie's capital, Hobart. The first stretch to Queenstown works its way up a long ridge above the King River Valley and luckily there was no rain in sight as this road could potentially be treacherous when wet. More caravans and motor-homes to look out for as this is probably one of Tasmania's most scenic and exciting roads to ride/drive. Queenstown's hillsides show almost no vegetation with the smelter's fumes having done their dirty work over the years. After a brief coffee stop at the railway station (with an interesting little museum) we continued over Mt Owen to Nelson Falls, crossing Lake Burbury on the way. Nelson Falls is a short walk off the carpark near the main road, but well worth it.

Heading further east along the Nelson Valley and the various ranges (Raglan, Collingwood, Loddon, King William, Cheyne to name a few) the road divides Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park to the north, from Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park to the south. More spectacular views and curves along the next 100 km to Derwent Bridge, the gateway to Lake St Clair and the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. We stopped at the Visitor’s Centre for a break and to take in the scenery; further excursions in the National Park require permits or booking a boat trip on the lake, but the cruising times did not work out for us. We pledged to come back and bring along our hiking boots!

More twisties awaited us along the road to Bronte and more fantastic views following the Derwent River Valley. Bronte Lagoon is supposed to be the geographical centre of Tasmania as we made our way past Tarraleah Falls (with the giant pipes of one of The Hydro’s, the Tasmanian Hydroelectric Commission) towards Drying Ground Ridge and for our lunch/fuel stop in Hamilton. This rural town sits on the banks of the Clyde River with beautiful views of
the Great Western Ties. Apparently, Hamilton was home to a bustling mix of breweries, inns and an illegal liquor trade in the 19th century. We decided to remain law-abiding citizens and rode on unimpaired.

The countryside then flattens out a bit as we continued to New Norfolk, with the town claiming yet another one of the ‘oldest pubs in Australia’. Apparently, Budweiser grow their hops in this area and run their own research facility…which makes you wonder why their beer tastes so awful. After that, the Derwent River widens and becomes more dominant in the landscape as we rode past Bridgewater (where we glanced at the convict-built causeway near Granton) and finally into Hobart. What a great day of riding and scenery! That evening, we enjoyed a memorable dining experience at the iconic Drunken Admiral Seafarers Restaurant on Hobart’s waterfront.

Hobart was our stopover place for the next three nights with more adventures and sightseeing awaiting us.

On day 12 we got seaborne (not airborne) again as we left Hobart southbound on the Channel Hwy along its riverside suburbs, a lovely road with corners of just about every radius with good tar and generally good sightlines. Heading to Kettering to catch our ferry, the highway follows the coast very closely in long, sweeping corners. Being two up and lighter with no panniers added to the fun! The ferry to Bruny Island across the waters of the D’Entrecasteaux Channel (named after Bruni D’Entrecasteaux, a French 18th century explorer) takes around 20 minutes, but queueing times can be significantly longer (as we discovered on our way home!). The ferry drops you off on North Bruny from where one heads south past the photogenic Neck Beach with Isthmus Bay on your right (west) and Adventure Bay on your left (east). The latter was our main destination as the Bruny Island Cruises depart from there. There are a couple of operators, with Pennicott Wilderness Journeys probably the best known and most popular, for good reason. We enjoyed a brilliant ride in one of their speedboats way down the rugged coastline of South Bruny all the way to the bottom end of Boreel Head, Tasman Head and The Friars. Nothing between us and the Antarctic from this point on, we were told. Great boating skills and plenty of wildlife, seals, birds etc. Well worth the money but we recommend to take the early morning ride as the afternoons on the Tasman Sea can get quite choppy.

As we took off from Adventure Bay, we even spotted an albino wallaby - our first one ever. We took a quick look at the west coast of South Bruny as there is an historic lighthouse (built in 1836) on Cape Bruny but the dirt road south of Lunawanna was not to our liking, especially with threatening rain clouds moving in. At the end, we did encounter a few light showers as we headed up north again. However, sampling some freshly chucked oysters and a wedge (or two) of Bruny Island’s iconic cheeses made up for it.

Being a Saturday afternoon, there was a long line of cars waiting to get on the ferry back to the main island but we managed to do some ‘lane splitting’ and got in front of the queue, joined by a couple more GS riders from NSW. The friendly ferryman actually waved us bikers on first to the apparent dislike of the four-wheeling crowd - grumble, grumble (get over it!!).

Day 13 was spent sightseeing in Hobart, with the city offering a buzzing mix of arts and culture, fine wine and food, not to mention a rich history. The Georgian-era sandstone buildings tell
stories of a bygone era and some of the museums and galleries are simply outstanding. The Salamanca markets are a culinary delight and the adjacent old town of Battery Point is full of interesting historic houses, little shops and cafés. Good thing we were more or less ‘maxed out’ with our luggage space. While our friends managed to dash up Mt Wellington the day prior and did enjoy a clear view of the city, we had less luck with the weather on that day - the summit was covered in clouds all day.

On day 14 we bid farewell to Hobart, heading out over the tall Tasman Bridge (hoping that no large vessel would hit the pylons and bring the bridge down - as shown in the Maritime Museum!), past the airport and across the long double causeway to Sorell. Although we had planned a quick dash to Port Arthur, the weather had other ideas (uncharacteristically blowing in rain clouds from the east instead) and we had to alter our plans. So, we followed the Tasman Hwy via Triabunna to Swansea donning our rain gear. With the easterly gusting at nearly gale force, the ride to Bicheno (just north of Freycinet National Park) was not overly enjoyable. Time to hunker down at our AirBnB and wait for better weather, but at least the bikes got a (free) wash!

The lady at the Bicheno AirBnB welcomed us warmly and handed us the keys to her little chalet set amongst some horse paddocks. There was something oddly familiar about her, at least for my (Klaus') Aussie co-riders. Then the penny dropped - the owner was former Olympic swimmer Shane Gould, who won five medals in 1972! Apparently, Shane divides her time between Sydney and Bicheno. What a pleasant surprise - who would have thought!? With the weather clearing up a bit the next morning, on day 15, we had a quick look at Bicheno’s blowhole and then carried on northwards past the picturesque Douglas-Ashley National Park to tackle the Elephant Pass up to St. Marys. That pass is quite narrow and tight, so one needs to watch out for oncoming traffic. More clouds were pushing in from the east and we were contemplating taking the Esk Hwy from St. Marys and then continue northwest on the Midland Hwy to Launceston. But the St. Marys Pass down towards the coast to Scamander and St. Helens was just a more attractive option.

St. Helens is the largest town on Tassie’s East Coast, just a few kilometres from beautiful Binalong Bay and the Bay of Fires, the latter peppered with the famous orange-hued boulders - both well worth a visit. Then the Tasman Hwy beckoned, with more tight twisties and ups/downs along a beautiful country road. A few isolated showers along the way with plenty of leaf litter (plus caravans and trucks) kept us on our toes. This looked like untamed forest country in places, especially over the Weldborough Pass (some forest walks looked tempting too, but not over damp muddy ground wearing our bike gear).
A brief stop in Scottsdale and more great roads awaited us on our final stretch to Launceston. This is Tasmania’s second largest city and one of Australia’s oldest, offering heritage streetscapes and well-kept building facades along the waterfront. We spent two nights, days 16 and 17, in Launceston to have a chance to visit the Cataract Gorge Reserve (amazingly within walking distance of the town centre) and explore the Tamar Valley wine region, one of Tasmania’s oldest wine growing areas. We made our turn north into the East Tamar Hwy, then over the Batman Bridge and back south along the West Tamar Hwy. A terrific run with quite a few options to turn onto small roads to the coast or further inland.

Day 18 saw us heading back to Devonport via Deloraine (with more historic buildings) and the Bass Hwy, with a short dash to the main port town on the north coast. Although we had planned to do a detour to the Great Lake via the Roof of Tasmania we had to skip that one due to time constraints. Next time!

On day 19 we boarded our ferry back to the mainland, having an exceptionally smooth journey across the Bass Strait, arriving in Melbourne in the late afternoon.

Although we intended to ride to Lakes Entrance and the Alpine Road to Tallangatta on day 20, the Victorian weather had other ideas. With heavy rain over the Great Dividing Range, we decided to hightail it over the not so inspiring (but dry!) Hume Hwy to Wangaratta, before continuing to Canberra on day 20. Paul and Anne were continuing up north towards Sydney to catch up with family and friends, while we did the same in Canberra for the next four days. Bike and bodies were given a welcome rest.
Day 24 saw us dashing up the M23 to Goulburn and then west of the Great Dividing Range (also called the ‘sandstone curtain’ by the locals) to Oberon, quite a beautiful road and part of the Tablelands Way. Onwards we pushed to Lithgow and then via Ilford to Mudgee for our night stop. On day 25 our destination was Tamworth, Australia’s country music capital (not really our cup of tea though) crossing the Golden Hwy at Uarbry and then veering north via the Black Stump Way to the Oxley Hwy at the little township of Mullailey. From there we headed east on the Oxley through Gunnedah to Tamworth. Nice easy sweeping corners and not too much traffic, so quite enjoyable.

We were tempted to ride on to Manilla, Barraba and Bingara (near the Gwydyr River) on day 26, but a bit of travel fatigue (or saddle soreness?) had set in and we simply followed the New England Hwy to Tamworth. Disappointingly, the Russian Ural motorcycle shop in Uralla (pun intended?) was closed so we pushed on to Armidale and Glen Innes. It is still a picturesque ride across the top of New England. In Tenterfield we caught up with some of the ‘SEQ Riders’ from Brisbane who had come in for an overnighter from up north. As the SEQ guys say “what happens in Tenterfield, stays in Tenterfield” so no comments on who behaved (no one really) and who did not (everyone actually).

The ‘SEQ Riders’ tempted us to join them the next morning, on our day 27, but we (perhaps wisely?) took the easier route again and crossed into Queensland south of Stanthorpe before taking the Cunningham Hwy north of Warwick. We always wanted to try out the Cunningham’s Gap and, being Sunday, everyone else seemed to have had the same idea Plenty of traffic, but still interesting scenery. From there, it was the usual tedious ride into Ipswich and via The Gap to Dayboro. Our preferred route via Fernvale and Mt. Glorious to Samford was closed due to recent weather events.

Our BMW was due for her 30,000 km service in Brisbane and she had performed flawlessly throughout the trip. Cannot fault the good old GSA!
After spending a couple of days with family near Dayboro, it was time to head back to the Fraser Coast on day 30, avoiding the dreadful Bruce Hwy as much as we could. So after a month of great adventures, our memorable trip came to an end, some 6700 km later.

Klaus and Kerry Zillner, DPKO/DFS/UNV

Photographs:
Setting out from Texas, Qld; motorcycles at Sofala; fixing the tyre with the kind assistance of a passing motorist who stopped to help; waiting to board the Spirit of Tasmania; town of Strahan; Hobart waterfront; South Bruny National Park rock formation; this is what Tasmanians call a light lunch; Klaus and Kerry almost safely back in Queensland.

[Editor’s note: well, what can we say Klaus and Kerry? Another of your brilliant travelogues. Thank you so much. And great photographs too – sorry we could not use them all in this Newsletter. You must have kept an extensive diary to be able to recount such a wonderful tale. Well done on completing a massive journey in safety and during the time of COVID. Your evocative words painted a picture for all readers who have not had a chance to visit Tasmania. Looking forward to more stories in the future.]
THE GLOBAL CARERS

The University of the Sunshine Coast’s Centre for International Development and Social Entrepreneurship and Leadership hosts a podcast under the title The Global Carers. AAFICS Queensland State Coordinator, Mike Sackett, stars in their latest episode titled Getting to Better Together. The publicity blurb for the episode reads as follows:

On one day soon within the coming months, there will be 8 billion of us humans on this planet. Clustered across nearly 200 different nations, we will all be hustling and bustling away, to survive in a world that is beset by uncertainties and complex social, economic, cultural, and ecological challenges. Given that most of these challenges have truly global dimensions, how do we rise above our own national concerns? Who will help us think and act beyond our borders? Who are our international guardians and carers? Michael Sackett happens to be one of them and in his conversation with our host, Richard Bawden, he shares his experiences and insights. For more than two decades, Michael worked in increasingly senior positions with the United Nations organisation, particular within the World Food Program and in the latter part of his career, in humanitarian initiatives mostly in Africa and Asia.

The podcast is available on many on-line platforms, including YouTube at https://youtu.be/bdyhJ2ek_88

[Editor’s note: well done, Mike, on speaking out on matters of such relevance to former UN staffers and, indeed, the broader international community.]

OVERSEAS TRAVEL IN THE TIME OF COVID

Early in the new year, I reached a state of mind that I thought could only be cured by returning to my old pre-COVID habit of going to Italy when the weather starts to get cold in Sydney and coming back when autumn colours come to Europe.

I worked up my courage to face the many problems associated with international travel. At that stage - by then it was February - it still wasn’t very clear how many documents and certificates were required to exit Australia and be accepted at one’s destination. On-line I booked a business class flight for the middle of May on Lufthansa that went from Sydney to Singapore and then on to Munich with a final transfer to a small plane to Turin. And back again. The cost of the ticket was about the same as it had been pre-COVID. I topped up my vaccinations.

When May came around, I got my suitcases out of the storage room and wiped off the mould. I reminded my friends in Europe that I was hoping to see them. I made a pile of clothes to be packed and every now and again tried to lessen the pile. After all, the old recipe of ‘half the clothes and twice the funds’ surely still applied to successful trips abroad and I was really looking forward to seeing what the summer fashions in Italy looked like.
Ten days before my travel date, I received an email from Lufthansa saying I should contact them and attaching a weirdly altered itinerary that in essence made no mention of my booking from Singapore onwards. As you all know, ringing an airline means hours on hold and having a large reserve of patience on hand. I had already had the recent experience of trying to get the price of a domestic air ticket back from Qantas (I failed), so it was not a surprise to hear the same soft Pasifika accents from the call centre in Fiji when I rang the Lufthansa number. By then, it was after 1 am in Sydney and 3 am in Fiji, but the conversation was sweet and amenable while telling me that Lufthansa had cancelled all its flights and would refund the cost of my ticket, within 21 days.

The next day, my dear son used his great skills and travel experience to find me a Singapore Airlines ticket for travel via Singapore to Malpensa (Milano) with just one day’s delay. Malpensa is near enough to Turin to be a two-hour car ride on the very fast motorway. The only drawback was the $5000 increase in the cost of the Singapore Airlines ticket! Lufthansa cancelled a vast number of flights at that time, tens of thousands, and the reasons for this seem varied and accumulative - the war in Ukraine, fuel cost increases, unprofitable routes from Asia and staff absences, have all been mentioned.

On departure day, my son took me to Sydney airport well in advance of flight time. The international part of the terminal was very quiet and under populated, no one wanted to look at my folder full of vaccination certificates and PRC tests. Half the shops were closed, but the business class lounge was very full of people with their masks under their chins or hanging off one ear.

The Singapore Airlines flights were filled to the brim. In business class on the A380 you get put in a comfortable padded pod where you can hardly see anyone around you. The staff on board were impeccable. But it’s a long way to Italy from Sydney. Despite sleeping a little bit, eating my gluten-free meals and watching the entire series of The Gilded Age, which was perfect TV pap for the kind of decrease in brain power that flying induces in me, those long last hours flying towards Milan were very hard. Having to try to sleep with a mask on is very unpleasant. Going to the toilet is not fun.

An extremely crowded and disorganised Singapore airport where there were no seats left to sit on during the wait for the connecting flight to Milan was unexpected. It was such a relief finally to circle over Malpensa, to look out the porthole at the water-filled rice fields gleaming in the early morning sunshine and to land in a quiet airport where border control and customs staff made things very easy and where I was grateful to see my suitcases among the first to pop up on the luggage carousel.

Just one last word about that Lufthansa reimbursement. After a month went by with no sign of a reimbursement on my credit card account, I rang the Italy number for Lufthansa. There was no sign that the reimbursement had been activated and I am now assured that the money will turn up within a further 17 days. All that shopping for the latest thing in summer fashions is still on hold.

Buon viaggio, dear friends.

Mary Johnson, AAFICS President Emeritus, on holiday in Italy

[Editor’s note: great to have your tale, Mary. As always, you are off to exotic climes to refresh and follow your penchant for art and culture. Enjoy. Well done for braving the potential difficulties surrounding the paperwork needed for international flights. I must say that we envy you your Business Class seat on a Singapore Airlines A380.]
Additional wise words from AAFICS president, Jennifer Ashton, regarding travel insurance. (Also see Jennifer’s President’s Report.)

Now that we can venture abroad again, it is time to start thinking about whether it is safe (or at the very least insurable) to do so. A report from the ILO’s ASHI (after service health insurance) regarding COVID coverage indicates that they won’t reimburse any test that is done for travel, nor any hotel cost due to quarantine or isolation but they would, of course, reimburse all medical treatment due (or not) to COVID. They won’t cover any repatriation either.

Members with ASHI should consult with their insurer as to the COVID coverage provided. However, this does leave many of the costs involved with COVID, such as rescheduling flights, additional hotel accommodation while recovering from (mild) COVID, uncovered.

Many canny retirees have previously used the free travel insurance provided through their Mastercard or other credit card. Be warned! This insurance specifically excludes pandemic related expenses.

CHOICE has written advice for the Federal Government website SMART TRAVELLER on insurance for COVID related expenses. Please check that site.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

SPOTLIGHT ON A UN AGENCY:
UNRWA

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

UNRWA, the UN’s Relief and Works Agency, was established by the UN General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection (not security) to a population of more than 5.7m registered Palestinian refugees. Its current mandate expires in May 2023.

The UNRWA mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and Gaza to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA delivers education, health, relief and social services, microfinance, camp improvement, and emergency response. It does so through 709 schools, 9 vocational training centres, 128 primary health-care centres and one hospital. Some 533,000 students receive support, while over 9m medical consultations are handled each year. UNRWA has 32,000 national staff, plus limited numbers of international officials. It handles over 300,000 cases in its social safety-net program and well over US$600m in micro-finance loans.

The entire Palestine issue arose from before the UN mandate when the desire for a Jewish Homeland prompted a number of Jews to migrate to Palestine, a migration that grew dramatically during the second quarter of the 20th century with the increased persecution of Jews worldwide and the subsequent Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany. This vast influx of Jews into the region, however, caused tension with the native Palestinian Arabs, and violence flared between the two groups leading up to the United Nations plan to partition Palestine in 1948 into Jewish and Arab sectors and Israel’s pre-emptive unilateral declaration of Statehood on 14th May 1948.
In Gaza (2020 figures), 1,563 civilians were killed in the last conflict, 11,000 injured and 100,000 Palestine refugee homes damaged or destroyed. Unemployment in Gaza is 45% and more than 80% of the refugee population is reliant on humanitarian aid.

Currently, the Syrian emergency is causing more problems for UNRWA to help solve. 562,000 Palestinian refugees are registered with UNRWA. An additional 27,700 Palestine refugees from Syria are in Lebanon and 17,434 in Jordan.
An interesting historical aside. In 1942, the Palestine Currency Board was issuing paper currency (pounds) from its headquarters in Jerusalem. This example is a very rare one-hundred-pound note on display in the former Royal Mint Printing House. Note that the wording is in Arabic, English and Hebrew.

**Tim Henry, formerly UNRWA (based in Jordan and East Jerusalem)**

[Editor’s note: many thanks Tim. UNRWA is well-known to those of us who have served in the Middle East, but little known to others. Interestingly, according to its website, the UN system comprises the HQ Secretariat, six ‘Funds and Programs’, fifteen ‘Specialized Agencies’, and at least sixteen ‘Other Entities and Bodies’ or ‘Related Organizations’. Many of the latter categories are relatively unknown or are working in arcane subject areas, often doing vital work with little credit or public acknowledgement. UNRWA is classified on the website in the ‘Other Entities and Bodies’ category. We invited Queensland AAFICS member Tim Henry to brief us on the work of UNRWA and hope that other AAFICS members previously with relatively unpublicized UN bodies might also consider letting us know about what those agencies do. Listed bodies on the website include CTBTO, OPCW, UNFCCC, UNSSC, UNIDIR. Yes, we had to look them up too!]

---

**TAKING PEOPLE WITH YOU: REMEMBERING THE POVERTY OF THE CHARCOAL WOMAN**

There are people who continue to live in your subconscious long after they have passed out of your life; and these are not simply loved ones or those with whom you spend many waking hours. These are sometimes people who are complete strangers but who, for some reason, leave an impact, and frequently after just a brief meeting.

Other people may be more familiar but continue to remain strangers. Sometimes the memory of these people lives with you for years – fading slowly into the past as other more recent people and their impact take precedence.

There may be a sense of wonderment, loss, pleasure, admiration or sadness, or a mixed reaction that first impresses and then stays. And, should you not have an opportunity of returning to the same place or seeing the same person again, there remain the unknowns for what has happened to him or her over the years. Markets and trading provide a potent example.

**Selling charcoal in Harar, Ethiopia**

The woman was one of several small traders met during the market survey that week. Sitting under her make-shift awning made from a small square of black plastic wrapped over a wooden frame and sheltering from the sun, her face was barely visible in the shade. It took a moment or two to focus out of the glare of the bright sunlight and to catch the outline of her head; only the white of her eyes and teeth stood out in the gloom. Dressed largely in black, her clothes and skin took on a mix of colours from road dust and charcoal.
The woman was seated on the ground with her back against the wall of a small shop, her small piles of charcoal laid neatly out in front of her in lines; four, five or six pieces of brittle charcoal balanced in the shape of a pyramid. Strategically placed within reach of a pedestrian route across the square into the main market entrance, people and cars passed without reference to her wares. No-one was buying that morning; and in the 15-20 minutes we spent with her, she sold nothing.

Bobbing down to sit beside her with the interpreter on one side and me on the other, there was a fleeting sense of apprehension on her face before we launched into our routine of local greetings and introductions. We were making a survey of market trading, looking at what was offered for sale, seeking prices and asking people what they thought of business that day. The quick assurances that we were not government agents, and that the information was simply to assist with the development of a local agribusiness project seemed to go down well; and my colleague working with the local office confirmed that we would eventually like to buy some charcoal in exchange for talking with her.
Partway through the discussions she confirmed her original suspicions of the interpreter as a government man, but had been unable to place the *farangi* who was accompanying him. Sure, each week there were a handful of tourists in the marketplace, for Harar is the fourth most holy city in the Islamic world and, further, many people came to see the hyena feeding activities of an evening just outside the city wall, and amongst these there were many *farangi*. The charcoal seller was not on their routine visiting lists, however, and she had never actually spoken to a *farangi* before today - the novelty was entertaining.

*Pleased to have their photo taken, these two men sell from the front of their store; their vegetables displayed on trays.*

**Business is making money where you can**

After we had shared names, families, places and our thoughts on local sales of the narcotic leaf *chatt*, we were able to persuade the woman to talk about her charcoal business. As we spoke, the cars continued to queue across the square lining up with the traders selling packets of fresh leaf from their stalls, and loading them in bulk into the back of their vehicles. Business was brisk and never-ending; and indicative of the dominance of this industry in local agriculture in the area.

Like Yemen, just across the Red Sea, the cultural challenges of the region have distilled into demand for these social narcotics that have shifted out of their original local community of mainly young Muslim men as an end-of-day social activity; they have embraced the whole country, crossed the gender and religion gaps and become acceptable for any time of day – and sometimes all-day use. Society folds in on itself with the poverty of the masses dominated by the national, regional and international traders who dictate the direction of this industry. Fresh leaf is air-shipped daily to centres in the Middle East, Europe and further afield and the country earns millions of dollars as a result; none of which filtered back directly to the woman selling charcoal.

Counting the cars, estimating the amounts of leaf taken per car and, rather more carefully, asking for prices (without asking directly, and without a *farangi* in tow) we were able to determine wholesale earnings of the order US$800/trader/day.

There were similar findings with small-scale retailing. A small bunch of fresh chatt leaves estimated at 1 kg or less sold for 60-80 US cents equivalent, and the typical small trader sold 150 bunches each morning (chatt is best chewed fresh) thus providing an income of the order US$100 or more per day. Like car transport wholesaling, the chatt retail trading was buoyant and there were large numbers of sellers and buyers milling around, with large quantities of really grubby bank notes changing hands.

**Education helps people to escape poverty**

The charcoal woman had originally shared the work as a child with her mother, but the mother had eventually become too old to trade and had died many years back, and the woman had continued the business into her own middle age. She said that she had been selling charcoal in the same market for more than 40 years and had occupied her present site for 17 years.
Watching the interpreter, we exchanged glances, and you could see the sadness in his face that was later confirmed as we reflected on the woman and her life, after we had left her. Working for the project the interpreter (whose main duty was driving one of our two project vehicles) earned in the order of US$1,000 each month and was investing it largely on the education of his children. Two daughters were at university in the capital city. In a country listed at position #173 (out of 189) on the HDI scale and with a GDP per capita of the order US$950/year the interpreter was fortunate and well-placed with his languages, driving skills and personal networks within the international agencies. The charcoal women and her family, by contrast, would never escape their poverty.

A modern community requires access to fuel oils – kerosine, petrol, diesel, etc. (See photo.)

**Making money from charcoal**

You do not make much money from charcoal production, notwithstanding the traditional nature of this local industry, its role and importance as a source of energy for cooking (and particularly for coffee making in traditional society) and the many people involved with production and trade. Across the country, charcoal production remains well-entrenched, and the remnants of indigenous tree cover continue to be removed as impoverished people everywhere exploit the last of their natural forests, and the environment degrades further. Paradoxically, the country remains a major exporter of charcoal in international markets.

Notwithstanding the exposed display of the charcoal on sale, most people bought their charcoal in a small plastic bag. Estimated at 1 kg content, a bag of charcoal sold for 12 US cents equivalent. People generally preferred the convenience of the plastic bag, with the charcoal wrapped tightly and less susceptible to damage when carried. The woman trader purchased a large plastic or hessian sack of charcoal from local traders and paid US$5 for estimated 50 kg content. From this it was easy to work out the margins. Purchased at 10 US cents/kg and sold at 12 US cents/kg; profit was 2 US cents/kg or US$1/bag. She sold her original sack of charcoal over a period of three days, providing an income of 30-40 US cents/day. The empty sack was returned to the trader.

**Making money from everything else**

A life spent earning up to 40 US cents/day or US$15/year raises issues of human dignity, but the choices in poor communities may be few. Of the many traders in the market, nothing compared to the margins made by the chatt wholesalers and retailers.

By comparison, traders selling eggs made 50 cents/day, garlic sellers 4 cents/day, onion sellers 2-2.5 cents/day, potato sellers 3 cents/day, shelled groundnut sellers 60 cents/day and, the lowest income, from the fuel wood seller, was just 1-1.5 cents/day.

It was not easy to shift to more profitable lines either – the market was fairly rigid with licensing/location/stalls, but the orange seller made US$2/day and the woman selling her regular five live eating birds made US$3/day. Hire out your donkey for the day, however, and you could earn up to US$5, but you had to watch how she was treated by the hirer (and not beaten or over-loaded).
Pavement sellers are everywhere on market day. Note the uniform piles of potatoes & garlic, and the cleanliness of the pavement. Also, the two Peugeot 404s in the background: >50 years old and numerous rebuilds.

Kitchen stoves. And not just food but hardware too. The boy fronts for a workshop specializing in making portable cooking stoves.

As for the woman charcoal seller – the main feature of the story and a reflection on her poverty in a dusty market in an isolated town in one of the poorest countries in Africa – well, she did rather well that day; for we bought her a bag of charcoal which meant every kg sold and every cent equivalent earned was clear profit. She had to promise, however, not to tell anyone until we had long gone. There was no way we could do the same with everyone in the market we had spoken to that day. The driver, of course, was the ultimate beneficiary of all the small quantities of vegetables, fruits and eggs that we did buy, however, and the US$20 or so spent would make a reasonable impact on the many small traders met that day.

Peter Steele, formerly FAO

[Editor’s note: sincere thanks, Peter, for another incisive article.]
Just as we were looking forward to the new year with hope in our hearts, things have already grown dicey. The chaotic images of the Biden administration’s withdrawal from Afghanistan still reverberate around the world, continuing to raise big questions about where Washington is heading. Covid came back — or never went away. Now António Guterres is talking about a global “inferno.” As the United Nations secretary-general, can’t he find a fire extinguisher?

Happy new year?

Only one month in, 2022 is not turning out as hoped. Improvements in last year’s dismal diplomatic developments? Not really. Where are the signposts toward greater peace and security? Where do we find the tools we need to tame a global pandemic, strengthen financial safeguards, reinforce human rights, beat back climate change and create social equity?
In a January 2021 speech to the 193-nation UN General Assembly, Guterres, who has his finger on the world’s pulse, warned that a terrifying five-alarm fire was threatening to blaze out of control, with devastating global results.

“Each of the alarms is feeding off the others. They are accelerants to an inferno: inequity and injustice in tackling the pandemic, a global economic system rigged against the poor, insufficient action on the existential climate threat, a Wild West digital frontier that profits from division,” he told a news conference after the speech.

“And those social and economic fires are creating unrest and conflict we see around the world: not just in places plagued with daily bombs and bullets but everywhere. And all of them are fueling mistrust in our world. And when people start losing trust in institutions, they also lose faith in the values that underlie them. In every corner of the world, we see this erosion of core values: equality, justice, oppression, dialogue, mutual respect.”

He continued: “Let me be blunt: I fear the emergence of what I would call the twilight of shared values. Injustice, inequality, mistrust, racism and discrimination are casting dark shadows across every society. Wherever you are, just look out the window.”

It is also a part of Guterres’s job to come up with ideas to get the world back on track and translate these ideas into action. But in this department, his speech was heavy on rhetoric and light on specifics.

After five years as secretary-general, Guterres has cemented a reputation as a docile leader who shies from making waves, particularly when it comes to irritating the Security Council’s powerful “P5” — the veto-wielding members Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

At one point in the news conference, a reporter suggested it was Guterres’s habit to work behind the scenes and asked him whether he planned to be bolder after winning re-election to a second five-year term, during which he presumably would no longer have to fear P5 payback.

Despite the dire outlook he had just presented, Guterres dismissed the idea that he needed to up his game.

“I never said that I only do private diplomacy, and I sometimes say some very tough things,” he said. “Now, that doesn’t mean that I always say the things you would like me to say, but that’s life. I will intend to go on doing discreet diplomacy, doing active public diplomacy, and speaking out when I believe this is the best way to solve the problems we face.”

Given all the dangers he described, another reporter asked, was the world on the verge of a new cold war? Guterres responded that the current climate was riskier than a cold war.

While the world’s two rival blocs had structured relationships and clear ways for dealing with conflicts during the Cold War, “to a certain extent, the truces never became hot because there was a certain level of predictability,” Guterres said.
“What we have now is much more chaotic, much less predictable,” he went on. “We have no instruments to deal with crisis. And so . . . we live in a dangerous situation.”

Given his grim view of the state of the world and his modest performance as a world leader, it is disappointing that Guterres failed to lay out his plans for enhancing his own diplomatic act.

He may look strong next to his predecessor, Ban Ki-moon, who, to put it politely, kept a very low profile during his 10 years on the Secretariat building’s 38th floor.

But Guterres’s courage pales compared with that of Kofi Annan, who rarely shied from speaking truth to power, even after daring to denounce as “illegal” the 2003 US-British invasion of Iraq. Annan, the UN leader from 1997 to 2006, who died in 2018, tirelessly campaigned for a stronger and better UN. But he also paid a price, enduring heavy retribution from Washington during his final years in office.

When Donald Trump entered the White House, in January 2017, Guterres also suffered at Washington’s hand.

But Guterres shrank from confrontation, thereby achieving little to counter Trump’s all-out assault on multilateralism and on the role of the UN itself.

Trump was both a UN skeptic and a horribly incompetent policymaker. He ceaselessly boasted that he was restoring Washington’s standing as the world’s dominant superpower. Yet in the end, many of Washington’s closest allies concluded that they could no longer count on the US as a reliable partner and no longer required its leadership. Other world leaders, miming Trump’s autocratic edge, strived to become outlaws or dictators. Global rivals like China and Russia quickly learned they could just ignore Trump’s wishes as long as they first flattered his enormous ego.

During this era, the UN’s relevance and influence were disastrously diminished, particularly after the pandemic came to dominate the world, undermining the relevance of pretty much everything besides fear and isolation.

So by the time Joe Biden, posing as the anti-Trump, entered the White House in January 2021, most diplomats probably began thinking things would soon be looking up for their profession.

But 2022 is looking more like a replay of last year.

Americans in particular might have been hoping that Biden would be making great progress by now in restoring Washington’s international credibility. But his efforts have suffered from his sleepy image and the continuing attacks from the Trump camp.

While the Biden administration has gamely tried to reverse Trump’s most wrongheaded policy moves, such as pulling out of the Iran nuclear agreement, the task has proved difficult. Trump had predicted he would ultimately win stronger restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program, for example, but instead Tehran has improved its bargaining position. Elsewhere, too, world
leaders quickly grasped that change could have unpredictable effects. For one thing, if Biden could so easily unravel Trump’s initiatives, the next president could easily unravel Biden’s.

Is it any wonder that crises have been multiplying? Even keeping track of them is challenging. In his Jan. 21 General Assembly speech, it took time for Guterres to reel off some of the most troubled places: Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Israel-Palestine, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, the Sahel, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, the Central African Republic, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, the Korean peninsula, Lebanon, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Venezuela and Western Sahara.

“This world is too small for so many hot spots,” he observed.

Even more troubling, however, is the reality that to lower the temperature, to put out even a few fires, we so deeply lack the will, not to mention the remedies and resources.

As a character played by Bette Davis put it: “Fasten your seat belts, it’s going to be a bumpy night.”

The essay is an analysis reflecting the author’s views.

This article first appeared on PassBlue.

[Editor’s note: Thank you to Margaret O’Callaghan for contributing this interesting piece]

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY:
ONE WOMAN AND HER ELEPHANT HUNT!

This piece is written light-heartedly. It has made no lasting effect on me and is purely one of endless memories. The hunt itself was a different matter.

The ‘long ago’ is probably 50 years (amazing what one remembers) and the ‘far away’ was in the French Cameroons, West Africa.

My husband (then FAO Wildlife Officer for Africa and who thought that title up - they forgot the scope!) was on an official visit to a French-run wildlife school in Garua. It so happened that the school needed a new teaching elephant. Yes, exactly that. But they wanted a dead specimen.
As we were in Garua during this decision, my husband was invited along, but not me, and I, of course, wanted to go. Something of a dispute arose between us as he knew the protocols and I didn’t. Not a woman’s realm. This, when you are in your late twenties, does not hinder you. It is very interesting to look back on this episode from here, now in the midst of the ‘Me Too’ age where outrage would know no bounds.

When we arrived for our ten-day visit to the school, which had many scientists, women and children, we were warmly welcomed. Breakfast, lunch, dinners and parties every night. The French are very hospitable and very polite. ‘Charmante madame de Vos’ here, something else there. All wonderful until it became known I was going to join the male team on the elephant hunt. Disapproval was evident. (Remember, this was 50 years ago).

The day we departed in a big German Unimog vehicle capable of holding us, the team of African guides and hunters, I ceased to exist! No-one, but no-one, spoke one charming word to me in French, or indeed in any other language.

Tents were erected, a long trestle table under the stars was assembled and, eventually, we all sat down to dinner. If I had any expectation of this ‘frozen’ atmosphere melting or relenting, I was woefully wrong. Great care was taken to omit me from any conversation.

This for a western-raised and educated female was totally new. If this were to happen now I think I would laugh though, as I said, I know others certainly wouldn’t. Back then, I was not so controlled. The only person I could vent my anger on was my husband. As it was, I nearly demolished our own tent in the night, claiming he should defend me.

The actual hunting of a suitable elephant was not so easy. In fact, a bit fraught, as they do not offer themselves up easily to be shot. The finding took hours and when found, the grasses were too tall and the positioning of all the other members of the tribe did not make things easy. Danger comes to mind.

The team of African hunters and French wildlife scientists scrambled to find a good shooting position. Numerous shots were fired but nothing that killed, only wounded. We all know a wounded elephant is a dangerous elephant. My husband did not have a rifle, so I would not let him out despite his protestations! For quite some weeks he bore deep scars from my restraining efforts.
I am sad to say the specimen was eventually acquired. All one could hear (but not see) was the loud obsessive chanting in rhythm of the workers as they hacked into the poor animal. I can repeat that chant today! Eventually all was portioned out - the school had the animal’s head and the African workers took their spoils (the body parts the School didn’t need) and home we all went.

To repeat, I remember still that no-one spoke to me and the smell of all of us contained in the Unimog vehicle after hours of movement under the African sun was overwhelmingly terrible.

So ended the experience of being the isolated and unwelcomed. So be it, I suppose!

Vanessa de Vos, formerly FAO
(Photos courtesy Wikipedia)

[Editor’s note: thank you for this very evocative article, Vanessa. The thought of eating parts of an elephant set us thinking about some of the other ‘exotic’ foodstuffs consumed by UN staff while on assignment or in situ at interesting postings. Your Editor almost grew hooves from consuming horse meat during a long Central Asia sojourn. And, in Lao PDR, we were served rat, but were assured that these were not city sewer rats, but rather nice, clean and healthy rats brought up in the countryside on rice and other nourishing foods. Hmmm…we’re still wondering. Readers: tell us your story.]
One of my responsibilities as Marine Programme Manager for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) was to provide Secretariat support for the globally focussed Data Buoy Cooperation Panel. This Panel was established in 1985 as a mechanism to cooperate in the global deployment of freely drifting ocean surface buoys measuring air and sea temperatures and air pressure, as well as in the
real-time distribution and management of these observations. It met annually after that, usually in exotic places on the sea.

The Brazilian Meteorological Service, in cooperation with their Navy, offered to host the session in 2003 in a resort town around 4 hours' drive south of Rio de Janeiro. Thus, participants and Secretariat all flew into Rio and were bussed south to the venue. I opted to go a day earlier to have some discussions with the Navy – and also spend a night in a hotel on Copacabana Beach. In the event, this was somewhat deflating, a cool grey day, with no delectations on the beach, just a few people playing very desultory beach volleyball.

The meeting itself went off smoothly, and the delegates spent a lot of time enjoying themselves with caipirinhas and either in or on the water, including some boat excursions. The only glitch for me came when I got home to France and discovered that my credit card details had been copied by someone, probably in the hotel, and used to buy quantities of mainly clothes and cosmetics! Fortunately, my French bank was obliging, cancelling the card of course, but eventually refunding all my losses.

Robyn joined me near the end of the meeting, as we had planned a big Amazonian adventure to take place then. So, it was back to Rio for the tortuous flight to Manaus via Sao Paulo and Brasilia. Manaus has been in the news over the past year as a hotspot for COVID-19 in Brazil, but all we knew about it then was its role in the crazy European exploration of the Amazon, its opera house and other ornate buildings and as a stepping off point for Amazonia. It is actually a medium size city of some 2 million population, and the major trading and administrative hub for the Amazon region. All this we got to experience in time, but for us the most stunning first impression was the river(s).

Manaus lies at the junction of the black water River Negro and the brown muddy water River Solimoes. The confluence extends downstream from Manaus for several kilometres, and the water there is obviously full of nutrients and thus a feeding ground for marine life. In particular, it's where you get the best views of the beautiful, iconic, pink Amazon dolphins.

Remembering that we were there in October, the "dry" season, the joined river was some 7 km wide. Apparently in the wet season the river level can be over 15 m higher at Manaus, which you can see from the structures of the wharves, jetties, and riverside buildings. It is very hard to even imagine the volume of water flowing downstream at that time. Manaus also happens to be 1500 km upstream from the ocean and a major shipping port for ocean-going cargo vessels. Presumably they navigate upstream primarily in the dry season, when the river flow is not so strong.

For the city itself, we wandered about a bit, absorbing the sights, sounds and smells of a tropical metropolis. As expected, the Opera House is grand, ornate and rather beautiful. It also served a more prosaic purpose for us, as we took shelter there during a giant thunderstorm, which lasted an hour or so – so much for the dry season! Otherwise, nothing remarkable, including with the food, which must
have been neither great nor disgusting, as we have no real recollection of it.

However, the primary reason for us being there was to get out into the jungle. We had booked four days in an ‘eco-lodge’, so set out early one morning in a small river boat to head downstream for around 4 hours. The lodge itself comprised small sleeping huts grouped around a central communal area for dining, and not much else. Something we were not warned of until we were actually on site was the almost complete lack of electricity. There was one small generator for the kitchen and evening dining, but outside that you were on your own. Being the tropics, the nights lasted from 6 pm to 6 am, and as reading books with a small flashlight gripped between the teeth is tricky, you got lots of sleep!

On the other hand, the days were magic. We were guided through the jungle by experienced guides, which was absolutely necessary, as moving even 2 metres off the track you become totally disoriented, for both sight and sound. Obviously, we stuck in close tow. We were introduced to the various inhabitants of the jungle, both flora and fauna. The sloth and snakes I especially remember – perhaps because the former is much like me, the latter I steer well clear of. The guide induced an enormous tarantula to come out to greet us – perhaps it was well trained up for visitors. It glowered at us for a bit, then retreated back into its burrow. The guide then persuaded it to come out a second time so Robyn could get a better photo – it was not pleased!

We were also taught something of the life of the indigenous people and got to sample some freshly grilled ants – not so bad. We spent an interesting whole day out on the river fishing, mainly for piranha – eat them before they eat you! Robyn was somewhat more successful than me, despite my years of practice on the Queensland coastal rivers with my Dad. The fish actually didn’t taste too bad – though perhaps this depends on what they’ve eaten themselves. Overall, it was a great experience, though we were still happy to get back to Manaus for a warm shower, some cocktails and a glass or 3 of nice wine – the necessities of our decadent “civilisation”.

The tortuous return trip was largely uneventful, though we did use the transit in Rio to take a taxi down to Copacabana, for Robyn to also have the experience. And of course, yet again it was cool and grey, and largely devoid of life. The suburbs around Copacabana are full of luxury housing, but to get there you pass through very depressed favelas, yet another example of the extreme contrasts in our society in most countries of the world.

**Peter Dexter, formerly WMO**

[Editor’s note: Thanks again Peter and Robyn for your contribution. Such regular correspondents. Yes, Rio is, sadly, like many others….a city of social contradictions.]
MAMA UN: SNIPPETS FROM A PERSONAL MEMOIR

Margaret O’Callaghan (centre) shares her new publication (Mama UN) with Canberra visitors Eileen and Mike Sackett (Queensland State Coordinator). Margaret served with the UNFPA in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.


In Port Moresby one year, a funny thing happened, at least it was funny in hindsight. I had what I thought was the bright idea of giving all the early morning newspaper boys a WPD T-shirt to wear as they sold their papers at major intersections. This would provide an opportunity to publicise the message about the importance of family planning to the passing motorists. So, my temporary driver, Jacob, and I went down to a major intersection at 7am. Unfortunately, as we opened up the boot we were mobbed by the boys and passers-by who suddenly realized that there were freebies to be had. It was a bit of a mini-riot for ten minutes or so which took a bit of quelling. Finally, the boys (and a few others) had donned their T-shirts and went back to selling papers to passing cars with the ‘Plan Your Families’ message clearly visible. My driver and I went off happily back to the office. But then I had another bright idea - we should do the same thing at another intersection and I sent Jacob the driver off with more T-shirts. However, by this time it was around 8am, and peak-hour traffic. In his wisdom Jacob didn’t pull completely off the road and so blocked one lane. Then the next lane was held up by an electricity authority truck whose workers thought that free T-shirts were a good thing. Of course, this all led to a great argument (Jacob being a stroppy little Highlander) which then attracted the
attention of a policeman who was appalled at the pile-up of traffic. So, there were more furious words, with the driver insisting that ‘his boss’ had told him to do this and he continued distributing T-shirts. Of course, the policeman was ropable by this stage and arrested my driver and the truck driver and hauled them both off to jail!

I was startled to receive a phone call about 10am asking me to come and bail him out and off I went to Boroko Police Station with our Security Officer in tow. I thought that perhaps I could swing the ‘White Missus’ bit and have him excused. But when I got there, I was ushered into the boss’s office and seated on a bench with the driver and a couple of other people. Before I could get in an appeal, the officer went into a tirade about how stupid the driver was and how come he worked for the UN and wasn’t the UN the most wonderful organization here in PNG to help people. I nearly fell off my perch. It was amazing that a local community policeman felt that the UN was valuable to his country.

It was such an unexpected and beautiful moment and I didn’t have to say a word. I then took our crest-fallen driver back to the office and when he came up in Court he did what our Security Officer advised - plead guilty and pay the fine (OK, I contributed a little to that).

The American Bigot at the Zambia/Zimbabwe Border

Because UNFPA’s mandate was about population and sexual health matters, there were some controversies to be dealt with, especially in regard to condoms, but one day I experienced something more common in the US than overseas. I was driving back over the border to Zambia from Zimbabwe early one Sunday morning in the UNFPA marked vehicle, having just dropped the New York based Deputy Executive Director off there. (I was driving because our driver did not have a passport which was needed to cross the border).

I had parked and was just about to walk across the car park into the immigration office when a man who had pulled up next to me asked, in an American accent, if I worked for “the UN Family Planning Agency”. I immediately turned on my PR charm and was about to give him the spiel (including correcting him about the name, that we were not just family planning) when he launched into a loud tirade about working for an organization which “murdered babies”!

I was astounded and really taken aback at his vehemence, which continued as we walked into the packed border control office, his loud voice attracting everybody’s attention. Finally, I managed to get a word in edgeways and said, very firmly, that I felt sorry for him, that he had it all wrong. But he didn’t listen to a word I said, a real bigot, and just kept haranguing me in a loud voice.
The crowd just stared and the young people accompanying him looked sort of abashed, while the Zambians present looked like they were feeling sorry for me. It gave me an idea about the sort of frightening threats that our headquarters in the US had to face and why Reagan and Bush had refused to fund UNFPA. Finally, the immigration paperwork was completed and I was able to leave the building and drive off. I was actually shaking, feeling like I had been physically attacked. It had been such an unexpected experience. That evening, I was having dinner at the American residence and told him about what had happened. He was very upset and wanted to know the man's name, but of course I didn't get that during the altercation. We both guessed that he was a southerner associated with some conservative church group. The thought of such people being free to evangelize in Zambia really shocked me.

I should add here that UNFPA does not support or promote abortion, but it does recognize that abortion undertaken in a non-medical situation can have very serious consequences, resulting in the deaths of some half a million women a year world-wide. Consequently, the subject is regarded to be a major public health issue, and this is what the Cairo Conference had finally recognized, after a long, tortuous debate. Our position was that family planning education and services, effective communication and respect between men and women and safe sex practices were essential for preventing the need for abortions. It was therefore our role to support governments in providing such services which enable women to plan their pregnancies and control their fertility. But many countries are far from being able to do so. Consequently, desperate women seek abortion regardless of their legality and standard. We also recognize that where they were still occurring, for all sorts of reasons, post abortion care services require support.

However, some righteous Americans (and others) refused to recognize these subtleties (and common sense) and played a very outspoken role in condemning our work, to the extent that the American government under Reagan and Bush refused to provide funding to UNFPA – even though they had no evidence of us promoting the practice. Under later governments, such as Clinton's, we had received approximately $32 million a year from the US, so the influence of these bigoted conservatives was quite strong.

**The AusAID Forum Article**

My other personal brush with a representative of one of these groups had been eleven years before I was first appointed to UNFPA. I had been working for AusAID in Canberra and we had had to deal many times over the years with questions in Parliament from a certain Senator Harradine who was well-known for his bigoted conservative, right-wing Catholic views. When it was publicised in the AusAID magazine *Forum* that I had joined UNFPA, he actually had the gall to ask a question in
Parliament about my salary. The question was dutifully sent to headquarters in New York which eventually replied in rather obscure terms – but no one told me about it until I was next in New York.

This question was part of a long-term strategy of trying to associate the Australian aid programme with the promotion of abortion – which of course it was not doing. It was support for the prevention and protection of women’s health which in turn, enables children’s well-being.

What he didn’t know (thank heavens) was that I had marched for abortion rights to Parliament House many years before, including when being nine-months pregnant with my second son. The sign on my belly said that “This child is wanted and provided for” - unlike the babies of the poor women who desperately seek abortions. In fact, I wasn’t for abortion, I was for preventing un-wanted pregnancies.

I just wished that the Senator had put his energies into helping to educate men about their responsibilities and ensuring that women were able to manage their fertility and plan their families, for the benefit of both their families and themselves.

**The Story of the Goose that Laid the Golden Egg**

I was intimately involved in another Women’s Centre. One of my most tangible achievements was the setting up in Zambia of Bumi (meaning well-being) House in Solwezi, the capital of North Western Province, ten hours’ drive from Lusaka.

Bumi had a curious beginning. In 2002 I had invited a number of UN and bilateral colleagues over for Sunday lunch out in my garden just before Christmas. The guests included the Danish Ambassador who noticed my flock of birds pottering around the garden and particularly commented on the geese - which Danes like to have as their traditional Christmas main course. He asked if he could have one and I agreed. When speaking to him closer to the time to arrange delivery I was just about to hang up when he suddenly said, “Margaret, do you need any funds for your work?” I was very surprised, partly because I happened to have a proposal for a decentralized office block sitting in front of me right then, and which would require funding!

I sent it over to his office next day and shortly thereafter we received the money to build a large purpose-built office block (totalling US$200,000!) This was an enormous bonus as existing office facilities in the town were very run-down and in short supply and UN agencies cannot own land or buildings. NGOCC needed an office for their three provincially based staff and for serving as a women’s information centre. We needed office space for our dozen or so project staff and finance officers, so this worked out well, meeting both needs. NGOCC were the official owners while we provided the support to set it all up, including managing the money and the building contractor. Complementing the Danish contribution, the Provincial Minister provided a block of land, thereby enabling it all to happen.
Some months later, we received a second cheque and this enabled us to add a conference hall wing, a small dormitory and an ablution block. My plan for these facilities was to stop having to hire commercial lodges and hotels when people came in for workshops and conferences. Unfortunately, that didn’t quite turn out to work the way I had planned – but that is another story.

I suspect that the Danish funds were suddenly available because they were savings from other project activities and that the end of the financial year was coming up. This was a situation which sometimes occurred in my AusAID days when I would check out the bilateral programmes to see if they had any ‘left-overs’ for ‘my’ multilateral programs for which I was then responsible. Whatever the reason was, we were very lucky!

[Editor’s note: Margaret has written two volumes (spiral-bound documents) of some of her UN experiences. In all, some 300 pages of fascinating stories to pass on to family and friends. These snippets are extracts. Well done, Margaret. We should all be so diligent!]

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

A FEW WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

This month, the volume number on our AAFICS Newsletter masthead moved another year forward to XXXIV, reminding us that our biannual communication publication has well-served our UN retirees community over the decades. The longevity of the Newsletter is due to all the editors and correspondents who have contributed articles or have carried out editing functions. This month’s edition sees some really tremendous articles from our regular correspondents (thank you!) and newcomers (welcome!) The Editor wishes to make corrections/additions to just a couple of items published in our December 2021 Newsletter. First, the correction of an error. In an article in which we mentioned some major events of 2021, the Glasgow Conference of Parties (COP) was said to be COP-29. This was incorrect. In fact, it was COP-26. The December Newsletter also included a review of the excellent book Reflections on a United Nations Career: An Insider’s Account by AAFICS member Dr. Ian Howie. We have received a note from a reader saying that the review was certainly fair and enjoyable, but that it would have been nice if the Newsletter Editor had also acknowledged the fact that Ian had not only written a book of this nature, but had also had it professionally published. Indeed, we are very happy to add these words. It was remiss of us not to have done so. Well done, Ian. We all know the commitment required to write a book of 262 pages and to have it published by such a reputable firm as Springer. Congratulations…and good luck with your next book which, we understand, is already in progress. Just an early reminder that our next Newsletter is due in December 2022. Let us have your contributions for that edition. We’ll send you a reminder closer to the date. All articles welcome! In the meantime, stay safe and healthy.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Our ever-capable AAFICS President, Jennifer Ashton OAM, recently indicated her interest in again standing for a Vice-President role in FAFICS. (See President’s Report in this Newsletter.) Before putting forward her candidacy, Jennifer contacted the AAFICS Executive (State Coordinators, President Emeritus etc.) and all energetically supported Jennifer’s application. The election for positions takes place during the annual FAFICS conference in Vienna this month (18th-21st July).

The Editor of the AAFICS Newsletter asked Jennifer if we could publish her ‘profile and personal motivation statement’ as we felt this would be of interest to members. Jennifer is very modest but, after much arm-twisting, she reluctantly and kindly agreed to our request. (See her statement below.) Thank you, Jennifer, and good luck in the elections!

******

Profile and Motivation Statement

Many years ago, I was awarded a Bachelor of Arts (English literature), followed by a graduate degree in Social Work from the University of Tasmania, the oldest tertiary institution in Australia. (Imagine the vision of establishing a university college in what was then a penal colony). That was followed, years later, by a master’s degree in International Development.

After the usual career in social work, in sectors from health care to immigrants, I became an academic in a social work faculty that was still recruiting students with life experience, rather than academic qualifications. Now, that was interesting. This led, obviously, to working in overseas development with Australian NGOs, then with the Australian Government aid agency in Canberra, where I was, what was called then, the Women in Development Advisor.

In 1992, I joined UNHCR. I started as a Community Services Officer (the UN version of social work) in Cambodia, where the first major repatriation was underway following a UN led peace process that ended 20 years of conflict. Like all UN newcomers, I was on a series of unreliable short-term contracts and really thought this was, as my contract stated: “limited to the Cambodia operation”. 23 years later, retirement, after a career that has spanned the continents from Switzerland to Zambia to Kazakhstan and many points beyond. I have worked in community services, resettlement, inspection oversight, human resources and representation. I was seconded to UNAIDS as the Country Advisor in Myanmar in 2000.

Although I retired in 2014, I still consult with UNHCR in HR, helping develop staff skills and capacity. I also volunteer with several Australian NGOs involved with refugees and civil liberties. I joined AAFICS in 2014 and became President of our association in 2017. Because of the huge distances in Australia, AAFICS has a convenor in each state, who, with our former president and the editor of our newsletter, form the AAFICS executive.

Personal statement

I would like to nominate for a second term as Vice President. I have served for 1 year. The new Rules of Procedure allow for two-year terms, but cannot be applied retrospectively.
After participating in Council in Rome in 2018, then Vienna in 2019, and subsequent virtual meetings, I gained an appreciation of the scope of work, the commitment of member associations and the potential of FAFICS.

I have had the privilege of serving on the FAFICS Bureau for the last year. During that time, I have also participated in the Working Group for review of the rules of procedure, and after Council endorsement of the new rules, the Implementation Group for introducing said rules. Jerry Barton has been a terrific convenor. I see the new rules as a very positive step in building a reformed FAFICS, which is more transparent and open to changed ways of working. I would like the opportunity to ensure these new procedures are implemented through serving a second term as a Vice President.

The world of Zoom has offered new opportunities for member associations to participate fully in Council activities, especially those associations that are far-flung or unable to travel regularly. Apart from all those horrible time zone problems that we as a worldwide body face, this is a valuable tool, that I would hope we can use further, as well as continue to enhance the FAFICS website (which has been progressing this year) such that our information-sharing and constructive dialogue can continue in an inclusive manner.

Our work with UNJSPF for the benefit of our members will continue. Much of this work is to ensure the smooth functioning of the Pension Fund and we have very experienced colleagues who have the skills in management needed to pursue this objective. However, I would also like to stress the needs of our beneficiaries, who, especially as they get older and more frail, are in need of our assistance. I believe it is important to identify issues of concern to our members and address these as best we can.

Jennifer Ashton
Canberra. July 2022
ABOUT US

The AAFICS Newsletter is an informal communication tool designed to keep former UN staff members residing in Australia in touch with each other and their Association’s activities. Editorial responsibility for articles is held by the individual contributor. The Editor appreciates any stories or articles of interest and thanks all who have contributed to this edition. Photographs are either supplied or taken from public Internet sources for non-commercial, private use.

Please send any articles to the office of the President, to the Editor, or through your local State/Territory Coordinator.

The next Newsletter will be released in December 2022.

AAFICS OFFICE HOLDERS

President: Jennifer Ashton OAM. jenniferlashton@gmail.com
Treasurer: Tom Joel. tomjoyjoel171@gmail.com

ACT Coordinators: Lorraine Corner. lorraine@helkorn.com; and Margaret O’Callaghan. Margaret@ocallaghan.id.au
NSW Coordinator: Maurice Critchley. mauricecritchley@yahoo.com
QLD Coordinator: Mike Sackett. msktt@yahoo.com
SA Coordinator: Christine Elstob. christineelstob@hotmail.com
TAS Coordinator: Jane Wilson. wilsojane@gmail.com
VIC Coordinator: Mike Patto. mpatto30@gmail.com
WA Coordinator: Monina Magallanes. msmag19@bigpond.com
Newsletter Editor: Martin Hadlow. mhtravelling@yahoo.com