

# GUEST SPEAKER

**Peter Akers, CEO, M.F.E.S.B.**

**Subject:** Closing of the Training College,  
Executive Officers responsibility and Titles,  
Future recruiting,  
Changes in wordback procedures.  
Question Time

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**"WATER OFF"**

*NEWSLETTER OF THE  
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS'  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
(VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.*



*February 2003 Vol 7 No1  
Inc/No: A16839F*



**Left:**  
*John Berry babysits his grandchildren Michelle And Courtney. After nursing the RFA he is looking forward to more time with the children.*



**Right:**  
*John Brown relaxes before taking on the responsibilities of the Secretary's job.*

## NEW SECRETARY ELECTED

**The RFA members at the Annual General Meeting vote in a new Secretary/Treasurer.**

**Editorial:**

John Brown, (MFB retired) will be responsible for the administration of the Victorian Branch for the next 12 months. The retiring incumbent, John Berry, had indicated that it was time he stepped down and let some new blood take the reins.

John Berry took on the Assistant Secretary's position after Peter Holton, (the previous Secretary) fell ill and when Peter passed on John assumed the combined role of Secretary/Treasurer. During his tenure as Secretary the RFA enjoyed an upsurge in membership and closer relationships were established with other retired groups both on a state and national level.

John also encouraged strong links with the states fire services and the union which has brought many benefits to our members. If John thought there was a worthwhile cause to fight for he would

doggedly pursue all avenues until a successful outcome was achieved. His last fight for our members before stepping down was the issue of liability insurance which had the potential to close our association down due to the incredibly high cost. John, through sheer perseverance, brought this to a very successful conclusion (see page 4).

We are indebted to John Berry for his leadership that has placed this association in the enviable position we now enjoy.

**John Brown**, now takes the mantle of office with a very hard act to follow but he is very capable in the field of administration. John has the support of wife Jean and a strong committee to ease him into the job. We are individuals and John will put his own stamp on the role of Secretary/Treasurer. We thank John for his willingness to take the job on.

# “GENERAL MEETING”

**Notice is hereby given of our next General Meeting to be held at the North Melbourne Football Club Social Club, Fogarty Street North Melbourne (Melway 43 B4) 1030 Hours, Wednesday February 19, 2003**

**AGENDA ITEMS.**

- Minutes of last General meeting.
- President’s Report.
- Secretary/Treasurer’s Report.
- Election of Office Bearers
- Guest Speaker: Peter Akers, CEO. M.F.E.S.B.
- General Business.

Please come along, bring your partner and have your say in the running of the Association. Join in the fellowship of your old friends and make new ones.

Lunch and beverages will be provided as usual. @ \$4 per head. Drinks at bar prices.

**JOHN BROWN  
SECRETARY/TREASURER  
Ph: 03 9336 2492**

## OFFICE BEARERS

**President,** Don Brennan  
**Vice President,** Ian Fowler  
**Sec./Treasurer,** John Brown

**General Committee;**

John Laverick  
Bob McNeil  
John Schintler  
John Wallace  
**Auditor;** Theo Teklenburg

**RFA 2003 Calendar**

**February 19th:** General Meeting  
**April** Reunion, at MFB Training College  
**May 21st:** General Meeting  
**August 20th:** General Meeting  
**November 19th:** Annual General Meeting  
**November?** Luncheon, St Kilda Town Hall

## VALE

Noel Abrahams	Len Frederickson
Alfred Chissell	Leo McKenzie
John Finkelde	Stan McNamee
Richard Fish	

We offer our condolences to the families of these members who have gone on to a higher duty.

## SICK LIST

Arthur Graham	Jack Sexton
Clarrie Hart	Peter Hornsey
Allan Sanders	Bill Carter
Bill Scriviner	

We wish these members a speedy recovery

**Note:** If you know of any member who may be ill please notify a committee member. We endeavour to keep you informed, but can only do this with your help.

“Water Off” is edited by John Laverick, 40 Brunel Street Essendon 3040. Phone / fax 9337-9820. E Mail rfa@smartchat.net.au  
All articles accepted for publication by the editor are done so in good faith and no responsibility is accepted for any inaccuracies that may occur.  
Signed; J. Laverick.

# REUNION DAY LUNCHEON Sunday 13th April 2003

Our annual reunion day luncheon will be held at the MFB Training College (Engineerom area lower yard) at 1100 Hours.

BYO Drinks.  
Tea and coffee will be supplied.

**Cost: \$13.00 per guest, members free.**

Hope to see you there.  
Acceptance form below.

**Due to the closure of the main building please bring a chair if possible.**

## REUNION DAY AT M.F.B TRAINING COLLEGE

### Acceptance Form

Members Free; Guests = \$13 per head.  
**R.S.V.P. Friday 4th April, 2003**  
Please return this slip to;

Don Brennan  
29 Lilian St.  
Bulleen 3105  
Ph. 9850 6725

Name .....  
(please print)

Your Telephone No. ....

I/We will be attending the Reunion at the M.F.B. Training College  
619 Victoria Street Abbotsford  
at 1100 Hours on

## Sunday 13th April 2003

Guest/ Spouse Name .....  
(please print)

Please find enclosed Cheque / Money order

for the sum of \$.....

## Identity Crisis

The Pope had just finished a tour of the Florida East Coast and was taking a limousine to the airport. Having never driven a limo, he asked the chauffeur if he could drive for a while. Well, the chauffeur didn't have much choice, so he got in the back of the limo and the Pope took the wheel. He turned onto the I-95 freeway and accelerated to about 90 MPH.

"WHAM", the blue lights of the State Highway Patrol flashed in his rear-view mirror. He pulled over and a trooper came to his window. When the trooper saw who it was, he said, "Just a moment, please, I

need to call in." The trooper radioed in and asked for the chief. He said, "I have a REALLY important person pulled over and I need to know what to do." The chief replied, "Who is it, not Ted Kennedy again?" The trooper said, "No, even more important." It isn't Governor Jeb Bush is it?" asked the chief. "No, even more important," replied the trooper. "It isn't President George Bush is it?" "No, replied the trooper, "even more important." "Well, WHO the HECK is it?!" screamed the chief. The trooper responded, "I don't know for sure but I think it might be Jesus, because his chauffeur is the Pope".

*This one's an oldie but a goodie. It's been doing the rounds for many years and I recall it may have appeared in the old "MFB News Review" thirty odd years ago. It's origin is unknown but it's currently doing the rounds in the US under the title —*

## "A Collector's Dilemma"

I had twelve bottles of whiskey in the cellar, and was told by my wife to empty the contents of each and every bottle down the sink—"or else." I said I would and proceeded with the unpleasant task.

I withdrew the cork from the first bottle poured the contents down the sink with the exception of one glass, which I drank. I extracted the cork from the second bottle and did likewise with the exception of one glass which I drank. I then withdrew the cork from the third bottle and poured the whiskey down the sink, with the exception of one glass which I drank.

I pulled the cork from the fourth sink, and poured the bottle down the glass, which I drank. I pulled the bottle from the cork of the next and drank

one sink out of it, and threw the rest down the glass. I pulled the sink out of the next and poured the cork from the bottle. Then I corked the sink with the glass, bottled the drink, and drank the pour.

When I had everything emptied, I steadied the house with one hand, counted the bottles, corks, glasses and sinks with the other which were twenty nine, and as the house came by I counted them again, and finally had all the houses and one bottle which I drank.

I'm not under the affluence of incahol, but some thinkle peep I'm not half as thunk as you might drink. I fool so feelish, I don't know who is me, and the drunker I stand the longer I get.

## Sleep your way to better health

*If you think six hours of sleep are enough, you could be endangering your life - and the lives of others.*

October's CHOICE Health Reader reports on a recent study which found that limiting the sleep of volunteers to six hours a night for about a week had dramatic effects: all subjects were sleepier throughout the day, had decreased vigilance and higher levels of two stress hormones.

The researchers warned that that loss of vigilance arising from modest sleep deprivation appears to be a significant risk in terms of public safety, such as traffic accidents. And the increased levels of stress hormones are of considerable concern

because of their contribution to heart disease and osteoporosis.

Also: A small amount of protein, equivalent to a glass of protein-enriched low fat milk, straight after strength-building exercise helps develop muscle in elderly people.

And: It's been found in some studies that drinking cranberry juice can help prevent urinary tract infections. Recent research has discovered how the colour pigments in it prevent bacteria from getting a hold on the bladder's lining and proliferating. Cranberry juice is a useful alternative to antibiotics, to which some bacteria are resistant.

Source: Choice—November 2002 edition.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It appears we are having trouble with our mail again. No applications for the position of President arrived before the A.G.M. so I was left holding the position once more. I hereby give notice that this will be the last year so sharpen those pencils and get your applications in before the next A.G.M.

Our annual Spit Roast will be held in the engine room area of the MFB Training College on Sunday 13th April. For those who do not know, the main building of the college is closed indefinitely because of asbestos. Due to the lack of furniture it is requested you bring along a chair. If

you travel by public transport we will endeavor to supply you with a chair.

I would like to congratulate John Brown for taking over the position of Secretary/Treasurer and to Ken McGillivray for filling the vacancy on the committee.

In closing I once again thank John Berry for the outstanding work he did during his years of Secretary/Treasurer.

I wish you all good health and a prosperous New Year for 2003.

**Don Brennan**



## SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

What a time to take over as Secretary. With the Training College partially closed and the North Melbourne Social Club unsure of their future, where do we hold our meetings in the future? The venue must be held close to the city for our country and Eastern suburbs members, with ample parking and public transport.

Depending on what the North Melbourne Social Club decides and at the moment the staff are in the dark as to their future, we have to secure a venue that fulfills the above criteria. This will be no easy task. Don Brennan has approached the Collingwood Social Club and they are available, but the cost is \$12 per head for a two course meal and parking may be a problem.

Carlton Social Club would be ideal regarding parking but for all accounts they are not in a good financial position either. In the meantime we will have to wait on the North Melbourne Social Club, but our meeting on the 19th February seems assured.

The hard working Union Social Committee

have once again put on a wonderful day for those attending the function at the St Kilda Town Hall. How they find the money for "this much looked after event" surprises everyone. Well done once again.

We gained six new members on that day thanks to the hot gospelling of Nancy Brennan and my wife Jean. The new members are Kevin Hede, Dave Da Fonte, Jan Lindeboom, Brian Hosie, Dave Riddell and Wes Spencer. Welcome boys.

On a sadder note, six retired firefighters passed on to a higher duty since our last meeting. Several of these men weren't RFA members but they were still our former workmates. One of those men was Stan McNamee. Having served 17 years with him at the old MFB 52 Stn. I knew all the family. I attended Stan's funeral and expressed sympathy to the family.

Bereavement cards have been sent to all families concerned.

We hope to see as many as possible at our February 19th meeting.

**John Brown**

## Murphy's Laws

If there is a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will cause the most damage will be the one to go wrong. — If there is a worse time for something to go wrong, it will happen then.

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 20/11/02

**Item.1. President's** opening remarks.

**Item.2. Apologies.** F.Churchill, T.Reed, J.Nevins, R.Adams, A.Henning, J.Hancock, A.Hodgkin, R.Barker, J.Howe, D.Edwards, K.Wilson, R.Treverton & J.Casley.

**SICK:** C.Selby, C.Hart, B.Scrivener, R.Cass, J.Holmes, B.Thompson, A.Sanders & L.Rose.

**Item.3. President** called for 1 Minutes silence in remembrance of deceased members and associates who had been called to a higher duty.

**Item.4. Secretary** called for a suspension of standing orders to allow the guest speaker Peter Marshall address the meeting, as he has been called to an emergency meeting. Seconded, E. Tamme Carried.

**Item.5. Peter Marshall** UFU Secretary addresses the meeting on the current position on the EBA negotiations with the MFB. Members present gave the speaker a warm ovation at the end of his presentation.

**Item.6. Secretary** called for a resumption of standing orders. Seconded, F.Kerr Carried.

**Item.7. Minutes,** the minutes of the previous annual general meeting 21/1 1/01 were read and confirmed, Moved J.Berry they were a factual report Seconded B.Jackson, Carried.

**Item.8. Business** arising out of the minutes. Nil

**Item.9.** Secretary/Treasurers Report was read see financial report, B.Jackson moved that the report be accepted, seconded J.Wallace

**11: \$1.125.68,**  
**SI: 5 4.765.16** Carried.

**Item.10. President's** report was read. J.Berry moved that it be accepted, seconded F.Kerr, Carried.

**Item.11. Election of Officers Bearer**

**President:** Don Brennan.  
**Vice President:** Ian Fowler.  
**Secretary/Treasurer:** John Brown  
**Committee members:** Bob McNeil,  
John Laverick,  
John Schintler  
Ken. McGillivray  
**Public Officer:** John Wallace.  
**Auditor:** Theo Teklenburg.

**Meeting Closed 1150 hours.**

## INSURANCE COVER FOR THE R.F.A.

Most members would have seen in the daily tabloids the problem many clubs and/or associations are having obtaining this type of insurance, in fact some no longer exist due to the cost incurred.

The RFA investigation into insurance cover for our group revealed that the cost was so high the association may be required to, either increase the members subscription two fold or seriously consider amalgamation with other retired groups or perhaps disband.

Well we have great news for the members, prior to the Annual General Meeting we met with the Secretary of the Victorian branch of the UFU Peter Marshall to seek his help in this area. Peter, (He never ceases to amaze me in his support of present and retired unionists) who at the time was in the middle of

negotiations on the ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT, arranged a conference with their Insurance Consultants who made a proposition to their company to include us in their cover.

The result is that the proposal has been successful, on behalf of our committee and members of the RFA many thanks to PETER MARSHALL (UFU) and FRANK COSAITIS & ASSOCIATES for a job well done.

**If you are looking for a quote on Life or General Insurance give Frank a call for a quote you may be pleasantly surprised. Phone (03) 9887 3112.**

**JOHN BERRY.**

## GREETINGS???

*Being politically correct seems un-Australian to most of us. Is the following something we can expect to see more of in the future?*

One of my daughters who attended a seminar late last year, which covered many legal risk aspects for her employment, sent me this Christmas greeting with all the claims you read about. One can imagine in the future this may be the norm for greetings we could receive.

From Me to You. Please accept without obligation, implied or implicit, my best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, politically correct, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral, celebration of the summer solstice holiday. Wishing you a financially successful, personally fulfilling and medically uncomplicated recognition of the onset of the generally accepted calendar year 2003.

*This greeting is freely transferable provided that no alteration shall be made to the original greeting and that the proprietary rights of the wisher (me) are acknowledged.*

*This greeting implies no promise by the wisher (me) to actually implement any of the wishes.*

*This greeting may not be enforceable in certain jurisdictions and/or the restrictions herein may not be binding upon certain wishes in certain jurisdictions and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher. This greeting is warranted to perform as reasonably as may be expected within the usual application of good tidings, for a period of one year or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first. The wisher warrants this greeting only for the limited replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher. Any references in this greeting to "Father Christmas", "Santa Claus", "Kris Kringle", or any other festive figures, whether actual or fictitious, dead or alive, shall not imply any endorsement by or from them in respect of this greeting, and all proprietary rights in any referenced third party names and images are hereby acknowledged.*

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year to All. (This proves that I wasn't asleep during my recent legal risk seminar).



## RACING TIPS From My Mate's Cousin

Our lives are full of variables and our man reckons he has more ups and downs than a honeymoon suite's window blind.

Due to a circulation problem he had to have a toe removed (not by a toe truck as some of the smarties might suggest). He now walks with a limp and carries a walking stick.

Of course he uses the stick to his advantage and now Boy Scouts help him across the road and little old ladies give up their seat on the community bus for him. He has even been known to trip pensioners with it and take their place in the queue at the TAB window.

On the down side, his thongs won't stay on his feet and has trouble with balance on the skateboard. So, with the toe removed he has a greater blood supply for the brain cells to pick winners and here they are.

**Academy Dancer:**

Put on your dancing shoes and Rock n' Roll down to the TAB, because, D. J. Hall has taught this one to Tango and will Waltz in the next start.

**Mister Grieg:**

How anyone can name a nedly after an ex English cricket team captain of South African extraction is beyond me. But if the jockey walks out onto the track before the start and sticks his car keys into the turf then smiles — put your shirt on it.

Trained by M. D. Morney

**Paradise Blue:**

When I was kid selling Heralds outside the Paradise Hotel back in the late forties, quite often a fight would start inside. While the patrons were watching the stoush I would sneak in and clean up the change that was left on the bar. The Paradise Blue was always good for me.

Trained by Tommy Hughes.

**Spur Me On:**

Trainer, Gai Waterhouse, has pinned photographs of Selley's Glue Factory on the walls of the stable to remind this elegant equine that winning is every thing. It has suitably impressed.

**May the horse be with you.**

## How to spot what's too good to be true: The Rule of 72

You may have heard the saying 'If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true'. But how do you work out what could be too good to be true?

Start with the rate of return you have been offered. Most investments illustrate their rates of return using percentages. While that's perfectly reasonable, research suggests that many people have trouble working out percentages, especially in their heads.

### Use the Rule of 72

One way to tackle this problem is to work out how long it would take to double the money you originally invested if you reinvested all your returns.

This is simpler than it seems. Before calculators or spreadsheets, investors used the trusty old 'Rule of 72'.

#### How the Rule of 72 works

Suppose you were offered an investment with a return of 10% per year and you reinvested all your returns. How many years would it take to double the value of your original investment?

The Rule of 72 says you:

- divide **72** by the **annual rate of return**
- to get the **number of years** it will take to double your money.

So for **10% per year**:

72 divided by 10 = 7.2 which means at this rate of return, it will take a bit over **7 years** to double the value your original investment.

If you get a **20% per year** return, it will take a shade over **3½ years** to double your money. If you get only **3%** per year you will have to wait **24 years**.

The Rule of 72 is not absolutely precise, but it gives you a practical estimate that you can work out in your head.

#### A real-life example: the 'Wattle' scheme

Let's use the Rule of 72 in a real case from the ASIC files.

The 'Wattle' scheme was one of Australia's worst investment disasters during the late 1990s. More than 3,000 Australians, including police and health care workers, invested about \$160 million dollars in an illegal investment scheme that promised **50% per year** return, paid each month.

Using the Rule of 72:

72 divided by 50 = 1.5 This would mean that, as an investor in the scheme, you would double your money in less than **1½ years**. Sound good? It sounds even more tempting when you realise that you'd double your money again inside another **1½ years**.

Imagine if you started with \$10,000. You'd end up with **\$40,000** in less than **3 years** because you've doubled

your money twice. Within **10 years**, you'd be a **millionaire!** Your original **\$10,000** would have multiplied **100 times**.

#### So, who wouldn't want to be a millionaire?

Before you start dreaming of paying off your mortgage and taking the kids to Disneyland, ask yourself this: Could you safely and seriously expect to make that much money *that quickly*?

Remember, you're probably not the only person investing in the scheme. If you are getting unbelievable returns, so are all the other investors. Just think — if 3,000 people each put in \$10,000 (and many people put in much more), then everyone would be a millionaire after 10 years. The whole scheme would be worth a whopping \$3 billion, a scheme as large as one of the top 50 companies on the Australian sharemarket. Common sense should tell you that something about these numbers doesn't add up!

#### What the Rule of 72 says

The Rule of 72 indicates that this scheme does sound 'too good to be true'.

As it happens, the Wattle scheme turned into a disaster for investors. While it supposedly made profits for investors by lending funds to new businesses, the Wattle scheme was really a PONZI scheme that paid investors out of its own capital, not from the profits it was earning. (link). ASIC got the scheme closed down and the man running it has been sentenced to ten years gaol, subject to appeal.

By using the Rule of 72, you can find out if an investment return really is 'too good to be true', and avoid being taken in by scams.

## MFB Golf Club Fixture for 2003

JANUARY 24TH (C) CHELTENHAM  
 FEBRUARY 14TH (A) CROYDON  
 MARCH 2,3,4,5, (A,D,D,C) MURRAYDOWNS  
 MARCH 24TH (B) ROSSDALE  
 APRIL 28TH (D) FLINDERS  
 MAY 26TH (B) CAPE SCHANCK  
 JUNE 6TH (A) PATTERSON RIVER  
 JULY 28TH (C) EASTWOOD  
 AUGUST 19TH (D) THE DUNES  
 SEPTEMBER 15TH (B) KINGSWOOD  
 OCTOBER 6TH (D) CRANBOURNE --1ST RND  
 CHAMP  
 OCTOBER 26TH-31ST AUSTRALASIANS--  
 BARWON HEADS  
 NOVEMBER 17TH (C) EASTERN --2ND RND  
 CHAMP  
 DECEMBER 15TH (A) AMSTEL

## RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

VICTORIAN BRANCH

Reg.No. A16839F

### Statement of Income and Expenditure for year ended 30 June 2002

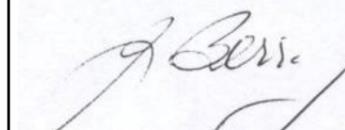
		2001
	\$	\$
<b>Income</b>		
Opening Balance Credit Union 1 July 2001	7,093.29	7,064.00
Members' subscriptions	3,641.00	3,913.00
Badge sales	501.10	15.00
Donations	302.61	-
Socials	1,103.50	750.00
Joining fees	45.00	40.00
Interest received	229.79	275.69
	<u>12,916.29</u>	<u>12,057.69</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Postages and telephone	892.25	865.20
Reunion Day catering	1,262.50	2,327.50
Magazine expenses	75.50	143.85
Computer upgrades	337.50	727.00
Affiliation fees	100.00	-
Promotional material	2,567.00	-
Donation	-	310.00
Stationary	117.50	162.25
AGM and meeting expenses	1,476.45	315.00
Sundries	153.95	72.20
Government charges	42.80	41.40
	<u>7,025.45</u>	<u>4,964.40</u>
Closing Balance Credit Union 30 June 2002	<u>5,890.84</u>	<u>7,093.29</u>
	<u>12,916.29</u>	<u>12,057.69</u>

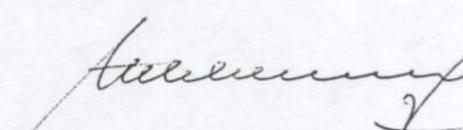
#### Bank Reconciliation

##### Bank balance as at 30 June 2002

Main account	1,125.68
Term deposit	<u>4,765.16</u>
	<u>5,890.84</u>

Statement prepared and figures correct from information supplied.

  
 J A Berry  
 Treasurer

  
 T A Teklenburg  
 Auditor

## THAT'S LIFE!!!

The specialist learns more and more about less and less until, finally, he knows everything about nothing; whereas the generalist learns less and less about more and more until, finally he knows nothing about everything.

## INVEST or REINVEST? TAKE CARE!

*In the world of money management investments are down, times are tight, but things will improve and with that improvement we will be looking to recover what we have lost. Some of us may look at new strategies to regain those losses and some of the unscrupulous investment advisors will want a share of any gains you may achieve.*

### Checking your financial plan

Your financial planner must give you two important documents:

- a statement of advice that sets out what your adviser is recommending and why it is suitable
- a prospectus or product disclosure statement that describes what you need to know about each recommended investment or product.

Take the documents home and take your time reading them. Jot down all the questions that cross your mind. Check that the plan:

1. [outlines your financial position and needs and sets out your goals](#)
2. [explains the overall strategy to achieve them](#)
3. [recommends investments and other steps to manage your money](#)
4. [shows how the investments will get you to your goals](#)
5. [discusses the risks and how to deal with them](#)
6. [shows all costs to you](#)
7. [tells you about commissions and side benefits that your adviser may receive.](#)

### Final checks you need to make

#### 1 Check your needs and goals are outlined correctly

Are the basic facts about you, your financial position and needs correct? A sound plan needs correct information. Tell your adviser about any errors and check if these errors will affect the plan.

Does the plan focus on the goals you want? Look back at your notes about your financial goals before you started looking for an adviser. If you have changed your ideas since then, make sure you feel the plan truly reflects your current needs and situation.

#### 2 Understand the overall strategy your planner recommends

In a financial plan, the overall strategy recommends how to change the way you manage your income and assets to get a better return. It tells you

- the key changes you should make
- the type of assets you should invest in, such as shares, managed funds, superannuation bonds, cash
- how to pay for your investments, for example saving more, selling poorly performing assets or borrowing.

### 3 Analyse the investments recommended by your planner

Once you have grasped the overall strategy, consider the recommended investments. The plan will probably recommend a number of investments. There are thousands of possibilities that may suit you, and even experts have trouble keeping track of them all. Check:

- How each investment will help achieve the overall strategy
- Whether each investment matches the type of asset you want to invest in
- How the fees and charges compare with similar well known investments
- Who researched these products (you can ask to see this research)
- How independent researchers regard them. Most managed funds and superannuation products get rated. Look in the finance sections of the newspapers.

The plan may recommend owning your investments directly in your own name or through master trusts, family trusts or other means. More complex ownership structures usually cost more, so ask why you need this structure and check that you will really use the extra features.

### 4 Managing money and financing investments

Check that the steps recommended in the plan to manage your money and pay for your investments suit you. Here are some general guidelines:

- Saving money to invest is the safest and soundest step. Make sure your savings targets are realistic so that you can stick to them over the years ahead.
- Selling poorly performing assets also makes sense. If you have a lot of money tied up in such assets, consider getting a second opinion just to make sure your assets really are as bad as your adviser thinks.
- Borrowing money to invest involves more risk, although it can certainly be successful. Could you still afford to meet your interest payments if interest rates shot up to 18% as they did in the early 1990s? Even if you get a tax deduction on the interest payments, interest rates will affect you. What if you lost your job? When and how will you finally pay back the loan?
- Borrowing through a margin loan is even riskier because the lender can force you to sell your investments if they lose value, even if you are still willing to hold on.

## DARWIN AWARDS

*Named in honor of Charles Darwin, the father of evolution. The Darwin Awards commemorate those who improve our gene pool by removing themselves from it.*

### Booby Traps Trap Boob

November 2002, The Netherlands) A retired engineer booby-trapped his home with the intention of killing his estranged family, but died himself after inadvertently triggering one of his own devices.

At first, police assumed that the 79-year-old had committed suicide, as he was found alone with a bullet wound in his neck. Then a detective missed a bullet by inches when he opened a booby-trapped wooden chest. Police beat a hasty retreat from the property and called in military experts.

They deciphered an enigmatic series of scribbled clues to locate 19 death traps in walls, ceilings, and household objects. A pile of booby-trapped dinner plates was revealed by the clue, "Cheaper by the Dozen," a reference to a film in which a child throws a plate at someone's head. Police speculate that the notes were intended to assist his failing memory.

Other traps included numerous concealed shotguns triggered by threads, and an exploding crate of beer set to detonate once a certain number of bottles were removed. It took three weeks to crack 19 of the 20 clues, and experts were forced to admit defeat on the final note: "The 12 Apostles are ready to work on the pebbles." Said one, "We have never come across anything like it before. It was all fiendishly clever."

True to form, the "fiendishly clever" but careless Darwin Award winner was described by neighbors as a taciturn but harmless man who enjoyed puttering in his garage. But relatives say he never forgave his wife for divorcing him twenty years before. Police believe he began installing the traps for four years, after losing a lengthy battle to keep his home.

Although some may argue that 14 children and his advanced age rule out a Darwin Award, the judges feel that the magnitude of his actions overcome these practical concerns.

adequately extinguish the city's fires. (The Tramways, too, had ceased to be profitable; by then fortunately most of its construction had been completed.)

By this time the younger Thomas was well to the fore. He was in charge of the Fire Station job when he was married. On his wedding day (possibly timed for the end of the job) out of compliment to him and his French bride, British and French flags were flown side by side from the tower.

The 150 ft. tower is still the prominent feature of the old building, although it is now out topped by modern upstarts and no longer commands the whole sweep of the horizon as it once did. The motive power for the hoist that hauled the bricks up to the high scaffolds was a horse, walking back and forth to a line whose length extended as the tower rose. The station itself provided stabling for eight horses and a hayloft overhead, as well as flats for married men and dormitories and recreation rooms for single men.

Generations of fascinated children have since watched the firefighters slide down their polished poles, clap on their shiny brass helmets, buckle the harness as it dropped onto the horse's backs, and fling themselves into the seats around the scarlet fire engines as the whole exciting equipage clattered out over the bluestone paving.

In July 1893, despite the city's financial crisis, the architect D.C. Askew called tenders for major extension to Menzies' Hotel, and the Cockrams' price of £17,610 was the lowest. However the work was deferred, and when tenders were called again three years later the contract went to Waring and Rowden for £13,750, the Cockrams being placed only third. Menzies Hotel, for more than a century the focus of Melbourne's most distinguished or wealthy visitors, was demolished in 1970 to make way for the thirty-six storey office block for the BHP Co.

The Cockrams went on tendering. In 1894 they changed their title to "Thomas Cockram & Son", perhaps at a time when young Thomas returned from his European honeymoon, but building had dwindled away to almost nothing and for more than two years after the Fire Station project, they had no more than a few hundred pounds worth of work.

By 1896 the tradesmen's' wages had dropped to 7/- and 8/- a day, and the very low cost of building encouraged those who could afford it, to take advantage of it, and things began to look up a little.

**Barbara McCumisky**

# COCKRAM, Builder of Eastern Hill Fire Station.

Story researched by Barbara McCumisky, adapted from an article in the publication —  
*Builders of Melbourne*

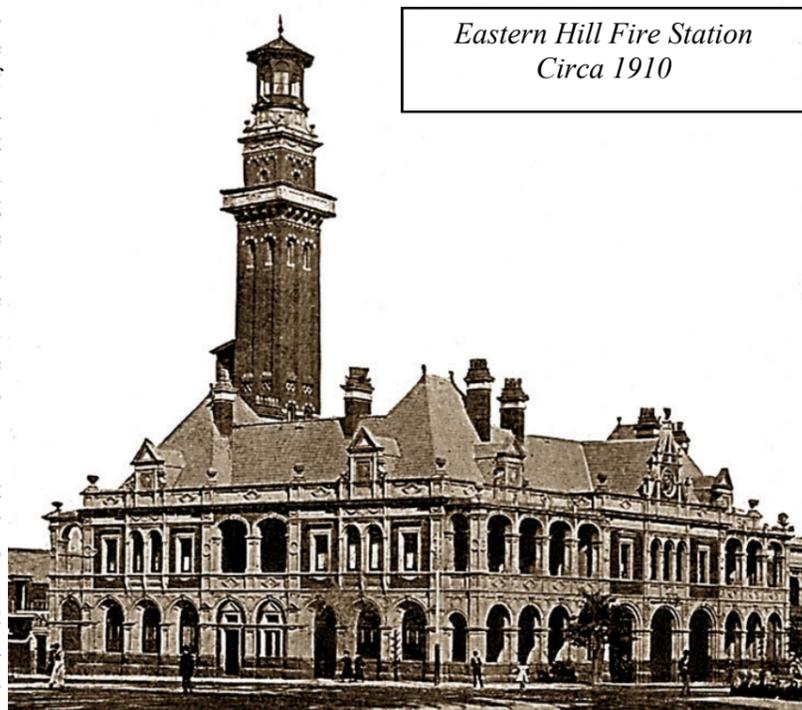
A dock strike in 1890 was the first of a wave which helped upset the economy and herald the Depression of the 1890's of which Victoria, and particularly her building industry, did not recover for many years to come. Soon the strikes had extended into the building trades. At a special meeting of the Builders' and Contractors' Association in September, David Mitchell deplored the support given the strikers by the Trades Hall; later he was among those urging the Government to provide public works to relieve the unemployment.

The MMBW's great sewerage scheme, for which loan money was somehow found, gave work to several thousand men for a year or two. Its end result was a notable improvement in the citizens' health, especially a reduction in the death rate from typhoid fever. Some of the fine street avenues we enjoy today began as relief works set up by suburban councils. Despite "soup kitchens" and similar charitable undertakings, individual suffering was undoubtedly greater than the depression to come in the 1930s.

To those living at the time, the downward slope probably did not appear as steep and as inevitable as it seems in retrospect. Conditioned to prosperity after the "boom period" of the 1880s, they would always expect to find reappearing again just around the next corner. The long grim road followed by the building industry can be traced through the weekly "tenders" columns in the Builders' & Contractors' News.

As early as 1889 there was a general decrease in the number of jobs listed under "Tenders Accepted", accompanied by an increase in the number of tenderers for each job. By July there were thirty-seven tenders for a brick store in West Melbourne (prices ranging from £8,900 to £12,648) and thereafter seldom fewer than thirty tenders for each job.

The jobs themselves began to fall in value; the five figure contracts became rarer, the four figure ones dropped lower and soon there was a predominance of small jobs at less than £1,000. By 1892 there were fifty-eight tenders for a store to cost £1,795. In 1890 a weekly paragraph headed



Eastern Hill Fire Station  
Circa 1910

"Insolvencies" had listed one or two builders; as the months went by it lengthened and began to include the names of suppliers and manufacturers, but after awhile it was dropped entirely. Bad times needed no emphasis.

Thomas Cockram was more fortunate than many of his contemporaries. By 1890 he was in his middle fifties with prosperous years behind him and some substance to fall back on. In the first half of 1890, T. Cockram & Co. tendered for nearly a dozen jobs, mostly quoting far too high; in the latter part of the year they built only a warehouse in Flinders Lane for William Pitt (£4,050). In the next two years they hardly bothered to quote at all, perhaps confident that times must soon improve. In August 1892 they were half-way down the list of fifty-six who quoted for a shop and offices in Lt. Collins Street.

In November, however, they had a notable success. They were the lowest of twenty-five who tendered for the £15,989 contract for the Head Fire Station on Eastern Hill. Earlier in the year a competition for the design of the building had been won by architects Smith & Johnson. This was the plum of a batch of smaller fire stations around the city and suburbs which must have been welcome straws for the floundering building industry to grasp. Possibly the industry's obvious need for help had coincided with the recognition that private enterprise alone could not

**5 Check that risks have been fully explained to you**  
A good plan explains the major risks of the recommended investments, such as loss of capital or lower earnings. Properly managed, risks can increase returns. But if the risk is going to keep you awake at night, don't sign the plan.

Different types of investments get different rates of return, reflecting the level of risk involved. Check that your plan recommends how to keep risks under control.

### Higher returns signal higher risks

Take extreme care with high rates of return. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true. A high rate of return means more than 1.5-2% per year above the average return for the type of asset in which you invest.

The following table shows returns over the past 50 years. Beware that many experts believe that returns over the next few years could stay below 10% per year, even for the best types of investments.

Type of investment	Average total yearly
Australian shares	12-13%
Australian bonds	8%
Australian cash	7%

\* Assuming all income reinvested.

If your plan depends on high returns, you could be heading for trouble. Get your adviser to explain in writing why you can expect a high return.

Over the past 20 years, during an excellent investing climate, the average return from Australian or international shares, property, bonds or cash has never beaten 20% per year.

If you are offered more than 15% per year, insist on a detailed explanation, and consider getting an independent second opinion. Exceptional rates of return signal exceptional risks.

[Investing for high returns? Watch out!](#)

### 6 What are your total costs?

Get the total costs in dollars. You have a legal right to know, and costs usually come out of the money you invest.

If you have \$10,000 to invest but the commissions and fees total \$500, you'll invest only \$9,500 and have to catch up before you start making money.

Also get a written breakdown in dollars of commissions, fees and charges for each investment

product.

Typical charges can include:

- entry fees
- ongoing fees and annual management fees
- exit fees
- other fees include performance bonus fees, auditor fees and trustee fees.

All these fees reduce your return. For example, 2% in fees reduces a 9% return to around 7%.

### 7 Look at commissions and side benefits

You have a legal right to know about commissions and important side benefits for the adviser, such as cheap loans or free holidays. These could sway a poor adviser's judgement.

Good advisers want to make sure that an investment is the right product at the right price for you. A bad adviser may try to get you to invest in products just to get a higher commission, even if there is no benefit to you.

[How commissions affect you](#)

### Final checks you need to make

#### Check for links your adviser might have with products he recommends

Ask your adviser if they, or the company they work for, own or have an association with any of the products they recommend. For example, they might own or have a stake in the products.

You have a legal right to know, because these links can influence recommendations in favour of those products. The product may suit you even if such links exist, but double check to be sure.

#### Make an appointment to discuss any questions you have

If you feel happy about the plan, make an appointment to discuss any questions that have crossed your mind. Good advisers never pressure their clients. They would rather you ask questions now than be an unhappy customer later.

When you are ready to go ahead, your adviser will show you what to do.

#### Cooling off

If you purchase managed funds, life insurance, superannuation or general insurance, you generally get 14 days cooling off in case you change your mind and want to get your money back. (There are some exceptions, including buying shares.)



## TRAVELLING WITH SILVER

Hey, So you're worried about going to Bali!

Well, a six hour flight from home will take you a little further, sure it's more expensive than Bali but what isn't, you're only here once, there are no comebacks. I've been asking around and no person I've spoken to has been here before. So we're off to Micronesia.

As a W.W.2 battleground Micronesia was one of the bloodiest and most spectacular. Guam is an American territory after they took control from the Japanese in 1944.

The islands of Micronesia have been a tourist destination for 30 years. They lay to the north of Oz about 3/4 of the way between Melbourne and Tokyo with about 6 hours flying time to Guam, and although Guam is the tourist centre, you have to go out and visit the outer islands for real beauty. There are 2000 of them spread over an area the size of Australia.

The main ones are Palau, Saipan, Truk and Pohnpei, but all are surrounded by warm aqua blue waters, brilliant white beaches, palm trees and hot sun. Mrs. Silver is not so keen on the hot sun, she ain't no beach babe.

Palau has over 200 rock islands, limestone rock with jungle vegetation flourishing in the conditions, they are really coral reefs lifted out of the sea millions of years ago. The smaller islands are heavily undercut giving them a mushroom appearance, but the southern islands are fringed by white sandy beaches.

Saipan is part of the Marianas Group of 14 islands stretching 500 Klm to the north. The islands are the tip of a huge mountain range rising 10 Kkms from the ocean floor—that's pretty deep.

Pohnpei is the garden island, a beautiful place. One of the main features being the ruins of Nan Madol, a rock fortress built around 1200AD.

Truk is a scuba diver's paradise. The Japanese Navy used Truk as it's base and during the later stages of the war nearly 60 ships were sunk in shallow waters. The resulting wrecks have created an easily accessible and spectacular grave yard.

All the islands feature world class resorts, air conditioned rooms, bars and restaurants.

Guam is much more Americanised than the outlying islands, mainly due to the giant Airforce and Naval bases. On the streets you have McDonalds, Taco Bill, KFC and Pizza Hut with carparks full of Chevys, Pontiacs and Caddys.

Tumon Bay, the major tourist area, is scenic and not yet over developed like Hawaii and Surfers Paradise. The native Guamanians, called Chamorros are a typical South Sea gentle and friendly race.

Guam is not as spectacular as some of it's neighbors but is interesting especially if you are into Military History. There are about 90 separate wartime sites on the island including the South Pacific Memorial Park, built to preserve the command post of Japanese General Otoba who died there with thousands of his troops in August 1944. God knows why you would want to remember them, but then maybe it's good not to forget.

### Happy Travelling Silver

PS. Don't be irreplaceable, if you can't be replaced you can't be promoted.



**Above:**  
*Mr. and Mrs. Silver having a glass of water after a day diving in the lagoon on Truk Island.*

## Comeback of the Year

A couple drove several kilometres down a country road, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to a argument, and neither wanted to concede their position. As they passed a barnyard of mules and pigs, the wife sarcastically asked, "Relatives of yours?" "Yep" the husband replied, "In laws."

## Shot Himself? Nah, \$#! Himself, or, What Colour Are Brown Snakes?

"What about we go shootin', and fishin' on the weekend?"

This remark by Mal Simmons at Windsor Fire Station on a Thursday night shift (11.00pm-7.00am) 1956 was greeted with enthusiasm and three of us, Morrie (Killer) Kane, Brian Wilson and myself decided to accept the invitation. We had another 11 - 7 to do so we would leave at 7.00am Saturday morning.

Mal, a single man, was the only one on shift (5 only in those days) who owned a car so with 4 bods, all of our camping and cooking gear somehow crammed into the boot of the Austin and with a heavy arse and light steering we set off to Eildon. After a few too many pub stops we arrived at Thornton, just short of our destination.

The blokes at the local watering hole were most friendly and after a few hours encouraged us to set up camp across the road in a reserve with a creek nearby.

We decided to cook tea, a big mistake. The afternoon shower had dampened our chances of lighting a fire and after a box of Bryant & Mays we retreated to the pub for a counter tea.

We had planned to go spotlighting after 8.00pm but the grog inside and the rain outside decided our fate.

All was going swimmingly, an apt term, because an earlier inspection had discovered that our 6-man tent leaked like a sieve and our bedding and clothes were soaked. This upset one of our members who proceeded to engage in a violent conversation with a rather large timber cutter. A cry for help brought us together in the centre of the ladies lounge back to back fighting off six burly bushies.

After what seemed like hours but in reality was about five minutes we were quickly dispatched and thrown out. The anaesthetic we had consumed ensured we had a reasonable nights sleep.

### 4am Sunday

The bells are ringing! What gear am I driving or catching, where's the call, where am I? Settle down Fred, some fool has brought an alarm clock and wants to go shooting.

### 7am Sunday

Three of us had been shooting and we had bagged a dozen bunnies, a decrepit old fox and a near miss with a Jersey milker. As we headed our way back the smell of bacon & eggs wafted down the creek bed.

"Snake" someone shouted and we sighted a big brown one disappearing into a bush - we pointed, we aimed, we fired, 12-gauge and 4/10 shotguns and a .22 automatic rifle and let fly, "bloody tough snake

mate, did we miss it"? No way, not us dead eye dicks.

As we continued towards our campsite the rush of adrenalin caused me to want to go to the toilet.

I selected a large dead tree, dropped the strides and the undies, did what I hadn't done for 3 days. As I leant back against the tree I pulled out the makins and rolled a smoke, a spare cigarette paper would take the place of the date roll and I contemplated life.

Geez its good to be alive, fresh air, beautiful country and soon a big breakfast. As I dreamt away I felt a slight nudge in my strides, I casually looked down and shock-horror a snake had coiled up in my jocks, right under my John Thomas.

I croaked to my mates "There's a bloody snake in my strides'. Be careful, be very quiet, if I get bitten you know you have to lance the bite and suck out the poison. I think one of the guys said "We'll send a card", strange reply I thought.

As they came around the tree and advanced towards me, guns cocked and at the shoulder, I screamed at them, "Shit! Don't shoot it, its too close, hit it with a stick or club it to death". I shut my eyes, thinking the worst, these blokes couldn't hit the "back of a barn". Oh well, such is life. They came closer, I waited. For God's sake do something, I yelled. Nothing. Then they both started to laugh, I was panic-stricken, angry and could not understand their humour.

"You drongo" Mal shouted at me, it's not a snake, you've shit in your underpants. Whilst they collapsed with laughter I tried to free myself of my situation and regain some composure.

As we were having breakfast I shuddered to think how this little yarn would be exaggerated on our return. It started to rain again so we returned to the pub for an hour or so and then drove back to Melbourne, thus ending an enjoyable but embarrassing weekend.

"It's the way we have in the Fire Brigade."

F. C. KERR

