

CRONULLA PROBUS - A BRIEF HISTORY

THE CLUB

The Probus Club of Cronulla Inc. ('Cronulla Probus' or 'the club') was established in July 1980.

Handwritten minutes record that on 28 July 1980 the first Management Committee meeting was held of "Probus Club of Cronulla No.29". The meeting was held at Cronulla Golf Club. At that meeting it was proposed that members meetings be held at Cronulla Golf Club on the third Monday in the month at 9.00 a.m.

The first Probus club in Australia was started in 1976 at Hunters Hill. Cronulla Probus, 'club no. 29', was therefore one of the first in Australia and was also one of the first two clubs founded in the Sutherland Shire. (At 30 June 2017 there were over 130,000 Probus members in Australia and New Zealand, being members of approximately 1,650 clubs.)

Cronulla Probus was established by 28 'inaugural' members, with another 38 'founding members' joining by the end of September 1980. By June 1981, Cronulla Probus had quickly grown to 98 members.

By May 1987, the club's membership had reached an unwieldy 181 members. The Committee resolved to limit the membership to 150, the reduction to be achieved by way of natural attrition. That attrition was partly facilitated in 1988/9 with 16 members transferring to help establish the Port Hacking Probus club.

At August 2018, Cronulla Probus has approximately 90 members.

The Club, like other NSW Probus clubs, is now legally established as an incorporated association in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (NSW).

The Club members continue to meet at Cronulla Golf Club on the third Monday in the month, but now at 10.15 a.m., to provide time for a management committee meeting at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS

- **First Officers**

The first President of Cronulla Probus was Dick Kahn.

The first Treasurer was Ron Evans.

The first Secretary was John Foster.

The first Committee included positions no longer part of the club's management structure: "Probus Extension" and "Community Development". Interestingly, the first "Publicity and Newsletters" officer was Eric Pidgeon, the mail was slower in those days.

- **Outstanding Club Servants**

Members who have through the club's history delivered outstanding contributions to the club have been recognised by way of Life Membership. Life members who are no longer with us include:

Noel Hall (dec.) (joined Oct 1982);

Bob Davies (dec.) (j. February 1986); President 1994/5 and 2001/2

Athol Pratt (dec.) (j. August 1993); President 1999/2000

Bill Stephen (dec.) (j. June 1997); President 2003/4

Denis Walker (dec) j. (April 1998); President 2011/2

Ted Chambers (dec) (j. September 2004); President 2010/1

Each of these individuals served the club in multiple roles over many years and were frequent participants in club activities along with their partners.

- **Notable Members**

The club's past membership has been populated with many other notable members.

Some of the notable past members were:

Sir Frank McDowell – Chairman and Managing Director McDowell's Retail Stores

Frank Holden - President NSW Tennis Association

Sir Ivan Dougherty – Major-General Australian Army WWII, first Director of NSW State Emergency Services

John Treloar AM – Olympian 1948, 1952 (Athletics); Empire Games 1950 - Triple Gold medallist; Australian Sports Medal.

Dr Ian Edwards – GP, Obstetrician and Humanist

Ken Robson - NSW Auditor-General

Dr Keith Reeve – Nuclear Science

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- **Member Votes**

The history of the Club is notable for its lack of controversy. Only two significant votes (or expressions of position) by members in General Meeting are recalled:

1. A proposal in 1995/6 by the then Tours Director that any profits from tours be quarantined within the Tours portfolio. The members voted strongly against the proposal.
2. A proposal in 2014/5 for the Club to consider converting into a 'combined' (mixed gender) club, which was overwhelmingly defeated

- **Overseas Tours**

The Club's membership has enjoyed many great functions, shows, dinners, lunches and tours around regional Australia. The Club has also ventured overseas on two occasions: to New Zealand (2004) and to Hawaii (2015) with good participation on both trips.

SOME RECOLLECTIONS

"While the Club has always had a variety of impressive individuals from all sorts of backgrounds, I recall one of our members fancied himself as a great horse race tipster. A few of the Cronulla Probus members put money on all his tips at a race meeting, and we all lost. He, however, finished in front, because he did not follow his tips for everyone else! We never followed his tips again.

One of the flamboyant characters in the past was member Dick Roach. Dick and his wife had a property up in the Gulf country, and would often disappear up there for months at a time. Dick was good mates with Bob (Pick a Box) Dyer, a Shire neighbour. Dick would often regale us with tales of entertaining Bob and Dolly.

Over the years we have enjoyed many great tour holidays, often to destinations that seemed to offer little. One such example was a trip to Oberon. Nothing to see, we thought, but went anyway. During our stay at the Oberon Motel, we were treated like royalty by the owner, Kevin. Nothing was too hard for Kevin. And then on one of our excursions around Oberon we were given a personal guided tour by the owner of the fabulous Mayfield Gardens, one of the largest cool climate gardens in the world; no-one knew anything about it. Still the Central West's greatest secret. Interestingly, the Gardens owner had built a chapel on the property, for the sole purpose of his daughter's marriage. What one does for the kids!

On another early trip, by coach to Victoria and the Melbourne Cup, we were stopped from proceeding on the remote Omeo Highway (north east Victoria) by a huge fallen timber log on the highway. There was no way around it. We all had to get out and help, everyone offering at least two suggestions to solve the crisis, ultimately enabling the coach to pull the log off the highway. We were only a little late for dinner.

The Club has not significantly changed in its operations or culture in all my time as a member. We just have fewer members than in the 1990's, making it harder to fill coaches.

While *Probus* was originally started for retired professionals and business people, our Club has always been open to men of any vocation or personal background. The Club has been all the better for this diversity of membership."

If you can contribute to the historical records of Cronulla Probus, by way of information or old photos, please contact the Secretary.

August 2018, updated August 2020, updated April 2021, updated June 2021, updated 15 September 2022, June 2025.