

**RNZN COMMUNICATORS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026
PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

I have pleasure in presenting my President's Report on the Association for the last year.

2027 Reunion

The organisation of the 2027 Reunion has gone through several iterations for a variety of reasons. As has been advertised on the blog, the reunion will now be held in Rotorua in July next year and be based out of the Novotel Rotorua.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Rod Berry and Frank Rands and thank them for undertaking investigations into possible venues and entering negotiations with the venues. Their efforts on our behalf in getting the best possible deal are very much appreciated.

Additionally, thanks also to Peter Robb for agreeing to be our man on the ground for the reunion, finding suitable activities for attendees and getting discounts on prices from the businesses.

The final program of events for the reunion is almost finalised and will be released by the end of this month.

HMNZS Irirangi Memorial

Progress has been made in getting the memorial at the old Irirangi camp site established. An application has been made to the RNZN Central Fund for a grant to cover the cost of the plaque for the memorial. This application has been supported by CO Philomel and submitted to the Trustees of the Fund for approval.

An appropriate rock to mount the plaque on and form the base for the memorial has been obtained and is currently being held on site. A working bee may be required to prepare the ground site for fixing the rock and mounting the plaque. More details will be provided once details become clearer.

Should our application for a grant not be successful, it will be necessary to look at alternative sources of funding. Possibly a levy of so much per posting on those who have served in the station or a fund-raising raffle may be held.

COTY Award

A letter has been submitted to CN requesting that Navy take over the administration and management of the COTY Award, the Blackburn Trophy. The primary aim of the

letter is to get the COTY Award recognised as an official Navy award. No decision on this request has yet been received.

As well as giving the background and history of the award, the letter included a description of the problems that have been experienced by the Association for some years in getting details of the winner of the award each year and the presentation ceremony for the award. Examples of these problems are the winner of the COTY Award for 2025 not being notified to the Association until April 2026, and the award not being presented, along with the Jim Dell Trophy, until early May 2026. The comments in the letter regarding the delays were seen by some as a personal criticism, which was not the intention.

Should the request not be agreed by Navy, the Association will need to decide on the future of the award. Continuation of the award under current arrangements may be suitable while the Association remains in existence, but what happens to the award after the Association eventually winds down and ceases to exist needs to be determined and agreed. The last thing that should happen to the award is for it to finish up in some back cupboard.

End of an Era

While expected and inevitable, the passing of CPORSI James 'Jim' Blackburn marked the end of an era. One of the founding fathers of the Association and long-time stalwart; mentor of the committee; and Association Patron, Jim was a true legend. A special chapter in the history of the RNZN Communications Branch has been closed and will never be repeated. Vale, Jim.

Investigations into the remaining members of the Branch have revealed that there is a considerable gap between the year of Jim's birth (1926) and that of the next oldest Association members: late 1930s. As far as can be determined, the (dubious) honour of holding the mantle of the 'Elder Statesman' of the Branch now lies with CPOYS Rex 'Buck' Rogers, with the oldest Sparker being CPORS John Paull.

Members Crossing the Bar

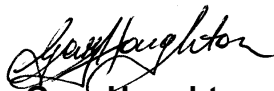
It has been a busy year for sending out sympathy cards for families of Association members who have crossed the bar. They have been more frequent this year, and it is difficult to remember who they have been sent for.

New Member

An event worthy of note this year has been a new member joining the Association. ARO Robert Corkill is our newest member and first ex-Communicator for many, many years. Bob was in the Commissioning Crew for HMNZS Waikato back in 1966. He is now living near Levin. Welcome to the Association, Bob.

Thanks for Support

Finally, I would like to thank those who have served on the Committee for the past 12 months, especially those who are standing down for personal reasons: Alan Padgett as Treasurer, Frank Lewis as Secretary, and Murray Nash. Thank you to Brian Chambers, Dale Leggett and Jeff Brown for agreeing to remain on the committee, and to Peter Robb for accepting secondment onto the committee.



Gary Houghton
President

11 September 2026