

Vale Mair Margretta Jones OAM

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Written by Brian Julien – Team Leader Membership and Marketing; SuiteTalk Editor

The NSW OTA is delighted to report to our members that Past-President and Life Member **Mair Jones** was awarded the **Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)**, in the Queen's Birthday 2012 Honours List on 11 June 2012. **Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO** invested her on Thursday, June 28 at Kogarah, in front of proud family, friends and NSW OTA members.



The central insignia is inscribed with the word 'Australia'. The circle also contains two gold sprigs of mimosa. The insignia is ensigned with the Crown of St Edward.

We are deeply saddened to announce that Mair passed away peacefully on Monday, 23 July after a long illness. The Order of Australia is our national society of honour, to confer the highest recognition for outstanding achievement or meritorious service. The Council for the Order of Australia is an independent body that considers all nominations for appointments and awards, in the *General Division* of the Order. The Council makes appointment recommendations direct to the Governor-General; appointments in the Order of Australia are publicly announced on Australia Day and The Queen's Birthday public holiday.

Mair received the award in recognition of her service to the community, particularly through the preservation of medical artefacts.

Born on 1 July 1926 in Glanamman, Carmarthenshire, in southwest Wales, Mair undertook her Nursing training after World War II.



(L-R) Mair and siblings, Tud, Nan and Meurig, before they set sail for Australia.

Arriving in Australia in 1962, she took up her position at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH) in the same year, transitioning from Theatre sister, to Theatre Supervisor from 1964-67. Mair worked as part of the RPAH surgical team that travelled to Vung Tau, Vietnam in 1967, during the height of the Vietnam War as the Nursing Team Leader.



Mair with family and Her Excellency Marie Bashir AC CVO

On returning home, she once again took up the position of Theatre Supervisor from 1968, and then Nurse Administrator (ADON) from 1971-88. In 1964 she established one of the earliest inservice theatre courses, which continued until well after the transfer of nurse education in 1985.

Known as a strong, enthusiastic and hard worker, and a steadfast advocate for Perioperative Nurses, Mair spent many hours of her own time travelling around NSW, providing advice and support to Perioperative Nurses; she was always sought for her advice to health management, administrators and Government authorities.

A proud member of the NSW OTA since 1962, Mair held many representative positions within the association, including Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Education Officer, Vice President and President (1975-76).

She was also a founding member of the committee that established the Australian Confederation of Operating Room Nurses (ACORN) in 1977 (becoming a college in 2000).

Mair still found time to mentor countless Perioperative Nurses through the years, and remained in touch with many of them until her passing. This was a special kinship with the colleagues that she encountered, and their respect and admiration for her is reflected by their personal insights of this marvellous role model.

Connie Cullen recalled: "I was fortunate enough to work at RPAH, during Mair Jones' time. It was during the time I had come from Blue Mountains Anzac Memorial Hospital to do my Post basic Theatre Course. I felt very welcomed by her; she was always interested in my progress, and I probably would have thrown it all in without her help."



Mair with (L-R) – Karin Croghan, Judith Cornell AM, Jenny Cubit, Valerie Corcoran, Menna Davies, Her Excellency Marie Bashir AC CVO, and Phyllis Davis

NSW OTA Past Presidents Robyn McEachran, Joan Englert, and Narelle Hines also shared their thoughts.

"I have many fond memories of Mair," Robyn recollected. "One in particular is very close to me. When I was NSW OTA president, we had moved to Randwick Racecourse for the conference. Being a first-time president, I was excited and of course nervous prior to the President's opening address. I was thrilled and relieved to see Mair Jones and Narelle Hines sitting in the second row from the front, calmly smiling at me and knowingly nodding their heads, giving me encouragement and support. Mair was such a wonderful support person; she will be sadly missed."

"She was truly dedicated to making theatres an established profession," said Joan, who was an original member of the 1957 "Theatre Supervisors' Group of New South Wales" which would later become our very own NSW OTA. "She had a wonderful way of sharing, recommending and inspiring other nurses to take up theatres as their chosen nursing path; her ongoing commitment to the development of NSW nurses never failed."

Fellow Life Member Narelle, who also served as ACORN president from 1995-98 reminisced. "I worked with Mair the whole time I was at RPAH. She was the Deputy Director of Nursing, in charge of operating theatres from the time I

started at RPAH until her retirement. She was my boss, mentor and friend, and encouraged me to be the best I could be. "Mair was the same to many of the managers of the individual theatre suites. She was a mentor and encouraged all of them. She was also part of the RPAH team that went to the Vietnam War and told many stories to groups of OR nurses who were in training. Mair will be remembered by all the OR nurses who were at RPAH when she was there."

Following her retirement from the workforce, Mair was made a Life Member of the NSW OTA in 1988 for her outstanding contribution to Perioperative Nursing. Between 1987 and 2011 she was the honorary archivist of the RPAH Museum and Heritage Centre, and is a founding member the Society for the Preservation of Artefacts of Surgery & Medicine (SPASM), as well as a life member and honorary curator.

Until 2011, she attended every OTA conference with the SPASM display.

With her investiture, Mair joined past NSW OTA Presidents listed below in the distinction of NSW Perioperative Nurses in the Order of Australia,

- **Enid Maskey OAM** (1959-60),
- **Joan Englert AM** (1966-68; 69-71; 72-73; 76-79),
- **Judith Cornell AM** (1979- 80; 86-87),
- **Brigid Tracey AM** (1988- 89)

and for National Honours.

- **Freda Hunt BEM** (1965-66),
- **Evelyn Cowell MBE** (1968-69) and
- **Judith Meppem PSM** (1980-81)

While we are saddened with this loss, we can honour Mair by incorporating her qualities for professional skills and knowledge development into our every day practices, ensuring that we as Perioperative Nurses set a standard that is admired and respected by all health professionals, and achieving excellence in patient care.



Her Excellency Marie Bashir AC CVO invests Mair as a Member of the Order of Australia



Placing the Medal on Mair

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