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Nat, Rob receive life membership

Nat Russell and Rob Bennett were today made life members at the annual general meeting of Pipe Bands Victoria and the Victorian Highland Pipe Band Association. VHPBA chieftain Hon. Ted Baillieu and PBA president Chris Earl made the respective presentations.

The life membership citations are:

PIPE MAJOR INSPECTOR NAT RUSSELL GC OAM

Nat began his dynamic piping career as a 10-year-old with the 8th Belfast Company of the Boys Brigade. He entered into and successfully competed at all the Major Solo Piping events of the day, the highlight being named "Piper of the Year" in 1969. He competed with the world famous Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band until enlistment with 19th Battalion Irish Guards in 1970.

Nat was a foundation member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Pipe Band and was appointed Pipe major in 1979. Under his leadership and direction, by 1986 the Band was universally regarded as one of the top 3 Pipe Bands in the World.

As one of the most Senior members of the RSPBA Adjudication Panel, his service to that Panel was recognized in August 2011 with the presentation of the Adjudicators "long service award." He has Adjudicated Pipe Band competitions and solo events at the highest level all around the World, including the World Championships on numerous occasions.

At present Nat is one of only two Pipe Majors (Unattached) on the existing RSPBA Panel, who have won the ultimate award of World Champion at the highest level and holds the distinction of being the only Pipe Major in the World to have attained the World Championship title from both 'hemispheres.' In short, proven practical application of the 'knowledge.'

In September 1987 Nat was recruited as Pipe Major of the Victoria Police Pipe Band. Under his direction, the competition success of the Band remains unprecedented in the Southern Hemisphere, culminating in winning the Grade I World Pipe Band Championship in 1998.

Nat's expertise in organising and running of lectures and seminars, in all aspects of Pipe Band work, throughout the world is renowned and as such, his services are in constant demand. His service to Piping, Pipe Bands and Adjudication was recognised with the award of the Order of Australia Medal in 2007.

He set up the Victoria Police Piping and Drumming School in Melbourne in 1988 in

conjunction with the Council of Adult Education and served as Vice Principal of Piping in Victoria for 15 years, teaching and examining candidates for Certification and Adjudication training in Piping and Ensemble.

He set up the Victorian Youth Band project under the auspices of the APBA Victorian Branch and ran a successful programme for 3 years.

He was the prime mover in introducing Ensemble in Australia in 1992 in Victoria, with Alec McCormick. Since 1985 he has been involved with all aspects of Ensemble, conducting workshops /seminars and Adjudicating Ensemble at International Championships all around the World, including, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, USA, Indonesia and Singapore. Nat has been a proud member of the Singapore Pipe Band Association, Music Board for 10 years.

It is not unreasonable to state that Nat is the pre-eminent Adjudicator, lecturer and conductor of workshops I seminars in the Southern Hemisphere and in particular delivering these services.

ROBERT BENNETT

Rob Bennett was unable to attend the presentation of life membership. He and his wife Liz were already committed to being in Western Australia for the baptism of their latest grandchild when the date of this meeting was set.

Rob's father served at Tobruk during the Second World War, and later at Mime Bay. While Rob was still at school he joined the then fairly new Rats of Tobruk Memorial Highland Band, which is still active and impressive today. He pursued the skills and interests of drumming with vigour and determination from the start. Even as a youth he found time to help other bands struggling for numbers for local events.

He has been involved with the Rats of Tobruk since that early start, also playing with the magnificent Hawthorn City for some dozen years. He has served as a judge on the Victorian and national lists, and as Vice-Principal of Drumming for Victoria of the Australian Pipe Band College. During his time as Vice-Principal he was instrumental in preparing the teaching materials for the proposed VCE subject "Highland Drumming" and securing its recognition and acceptance into the educational system of the state. He has since taken a leading part in teaching and examining the subject, in Victoria and overseas, notably in Hong Kong.

His life of service to pipe bands, their members, the Victorian and Australian pipe band associations, his enthusiasm and friendliness deserve our appreciation.



