

Speech delivered by His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson APM at the Government House Reception on 14 May 2026

Kaya, Wanjoo, and welcome to Government House.

Firstly, I would acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation – and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Can I also acknowledge:

Brian Hoult - Western Australia's Representative Director on the Board of Probus South Pacific Limited

Sue Harwood - the President of the Probus Association of Western Australia.

Carol Hoult - Vice President of the Probus Association of Western Australia.

Graeme Brown – a past director of Probus South Pacific Limited

Other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen who have travelled here, thank you for making the journey.

Fifty years ago, in February 1976, sixteen people gathered at a Senior Citizens' Centre in Hunters Hill in Sydney — inspired by a Scottish Rotarian's determination that retirement from work should not mean a withdrawal from community life.

That small gathering gave rise to something remarkable: a movement which has since touched the lives of more than half a million Australians.

Today, I am delighted to welcome you to this reception at Government House in Perth to mark that milestone — fifty years of Probus in Australia.

And as Governor, I am also proud to be able to celebrate Western Australia's part within the Probus story.

Our state is home to 85 Probus clubs, with more than 4,500 members. The oldest club in our State — the Thornlie Probus Club — was founded in 1982 and continues to thrive today with more than 75 members.

That is more than four decades of friendship and fellowship, built meeting by meeting, outing by outing.

All of you who are here today represent your own piece of the Probus legacy — volunteers who give their time and energy to ensure these clubs run well, run smoothly, and remain welcoming.

That voluntary spirit is the engine of Probus, and it deserves the recognition that we are delighted to offer at Government House today.

Because Probus matters — perhaps more than at any time in its fifty-year history.

We live in an age of growing awareness about the profound importance of social connection to health and wellbeing.

Loneliness and isolation are now recognised as serious challenges for older Australians, with real consequences for physical and mental health.

The Probus philosophy is simple — friendship and fellowship in retirement. Every monthly meeting, every guest speaker, every game of bowls, every shared meal — are acts of connection. And acts of care.

What strikes me about Probus is how it reflects the character of Western Australian communities. These clubs reflect local interests, local landscapes, local lives.

And these are not small things. They are the substance of a good life.

Fifty years is a significant achievement for any organisation. For a volunteer-run network built entirely on friendship and goodwill — it is extraordinary.

So, as Governor of Western Australia, on behalf of the people of Western Australia – congratulations to the 1,300 clubs in Australia, and to the 150 clubs across the Tasman in New Zealand — this anniversary belongs to all of you.

And to the West Australian Probus family — you have made retirement richer, made communities stronger, and made loneliness a little less likely for decades.

That is a legacy worth celebrating. Congratulations.