

# 2025 – IN REVIEW

## Communicating with Alan –

See my personal website [alanbranford.net](http://alanbranford.net) for my principal email addresses and links to my Instagram, Facebook and YouTube accounts.

I rarely check Facebook, and I no longer post there. The associated messaging application Messenger is appalling, and I detest using it.

You can follow my activities best by following my Instagram account (@alanbranford).

Send me an email if you would like to use any of the messaging applications WhatsApp, Telegram, or Signal.

I have an X account (@AlanBranford) but I rarely use it.

## The Albatross About My Neck –

The idiopathic peripheral neuropathy that saw me declared “Totally and Permanently Disabled” at the end of 2016 continues to loom like a dark cloud over my existence. I was told that it was not only idiopathic, but that it was systemic, incurable, chronic, and degenerative. Alas, though, it is not fatal.

Some of my medical specialists share my gallows sense of humour. One remarked that the only known cause of death from the condition is suicide. I asked one if there was anything else that could be tried; “Euthanasia,” was his answer. And thus, true to the predictions, the peripheral neuropathy continues to decline. Old symptoms get worse, new ones appear. And the palliation of symptoms is about all that can be done.

I am having more frequent and debilitating lapses of cognitive acuity. In these periods, I am prone to frustration, then anger, then poor choices of action. I also am about 25kg overweight, but ...

- ??? → peripheral neuropathy → neuropathic pain → pregabalin → weight gain
- ??? → peripheral neuropathy → mobility problems → lack of exercise → weight gain
- Fill in the blank and there is the solution to my weight gain!

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is wonderful. It pays for “core supports” such as the house cleaning and the garden maintenance, my laundry, and a disability support worker (DSW) to take me to appointments and to social activities and to assist me while I am there. The DSW also calls every weekday morning to assist me to shower, to manage skin care, and to dress. Three times a week, the DSW changes my ileostomy appliance, as I am no longer able to do it myself safely. The NDIS furthermore pays for “capacity building supports” such as physiotherapy, clinical psychology, occupational therapy, and podiatry.

The NDIS will also as required fund Assistive Technology, as recommended by the occupational therapist. A major recent acquisition has been a new-technology, lightweight

powerchair. My DSW just folds it, then lifts it into the back of his SUV. At the destination he just unloads it and unfolds it. In I hop and off I motor!

The seriousness of the neurological damage and the side-effects of my kick-ass medications place a serious limit on my daily activity budget, especially since so often that activity budget is used up with medical appointments. The NDIS support is life changing.

**Poetry** – Member of the Friendly Street Poets. Meetings are monthly on a Friday evening, 6:00 p.m. until ~9:30 p.m., which is not too late, but evenings are always problematic for me. I write a new poem for each meeting and recite it to the group. One of these poems from 2024 was selected for publication. I am now a published poet!

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This year, I have been trying different types of poetic style, such as blank verse and free verse. One of this year's poems was awarded a commendation, and so it will definitely be published next year in the 2025 Anthology.

My poems are on my website at

<https://www.alanbranford.net/Creative/creative.html>



**Photography** – Member of the Airport Over 50s Social Club's Photography Group. Meetings are monthly in the middle of the day. Relaxed viewing and Q&A of the previous month's photographs submitted by the members on a predetermined theme. I am not yet well enough integrated into the group to have casual photographic chat or shoots in-between meetings. My ability is poor, but I am learning from some very good photographers. My submission for each month is posted on my Instagram page (@alanbranford).

**Freemasonry** – I have rejoined Craft Freemasonry and Royal Arch Masonry. Meetings are in the evenings, they are often long, followed by supper. The finish time is usually ~10:30 p.m. and so I rarely participate.

## Church –

I am a Member of Henley Fulham Uniting Church (HFUC). The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is a united church in Australia. The church was founded on 22 June 1977 when most congregations of the [Methodist Church of Australasia](#), about two-thirds of the [Presbyterian Church of Australia](#) and almost all the churches of the [Congregational Union of Australia](#) united under the UCA's [Basis of Union](#).

The Henley Fulham Uniting Church is a typical dying suburban church. The Church was formed 26 years ago by the amalgamation of Temple UC at Henley Beach and Fulham UC, the latter being the Church that I “grew up” in (1965 – 1980). They still have two fully operational church properties, and most members still only attend “their church”. I do not generally attend the Church Services – the 10:00 a.m. start time is a major issue for me. I only write articles for the Church magazine and occasional discussion papers with ideas for Church Council to consider.



*Alan and Reverend Christa Megaw*



*Don Paull and John Squire*

*Don was my Sunday School teacher in 1969 & 1970*

*John's son Andrew and I, as well as others, started a Church Youth Group in the 1970s*

The Minister, Reverend Christa Megaw, left the Church during the year. HFUC will sorely miss her. Christa was intending to take a break for a time to consider her future directions, but that seems a luxury never afforded to ministers. Within weeks, Christa was filling a vacancy in Pilgrim UC, the principal Uniting Church in the CBD, due to a sudden serious

illness to one of the two resident ministers. I have been along to some of the Sunday morning Choral Services, and to a Saturday late afternoon Evensong. Pilgrim UC has a quality choir and a magnificent pipe organ, things that suburban churches would find hard to match.



*The Pilgrim Choir in recession*



*Pilgrim UC*

I am also a Member-in-Association of Adelaide West Uniting Church (AWUC), primarily through my involvement with the Progressive Christianity Group which holds monthly Services there. Our last meeting of the year was a special event organised principally by Meredith Dowdy, with Sue Beard and the Adelaide West Men's Choir. The theme was "Music in Worship" and the meeting was held on a Sunday afternoon. A presentation of the history of church music was interspersed with performed examples.



*Behind me are Gilda née Damarell and her brother Brian Damarell, friends from local Church activities from the 1970s, Reverend Esmond Dowdy, Meredith Dowdy, and my mother Joan, at the “Music in Worship” function*

I am writing a thesis on my view of Christian Theology and Christology. This is a long-term project with no deadline. It is just a private pet project.



*Humanist or Heretic? – An Iconoclast’s Christian Theology and Christology*

**Bear Men of Adelaide (BMofA)** – I have joined the Bear Men of Adelaide, a social group for gay “bears”. I know many members, but events are typically in the evening at a pub, or in the daytime but involving activities that my disability does not allow. An off-shoot of the BMofA is a life-drawing group. I volunteered to get my kit off in the name of art. The result was ... well let’s just show an example



*Words fail me ...*

**Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (ASO)** – Nam and I subscribe to the Symphony Series of the ASO and select other performances. Most are at the Adelaide Town Hall in the early evening, which suits us. These are very enjoyable. There are occasional other daytime musical concerts that either we, or just I, attend.



*Ready for the Symphony Concert*



I am often rather excitable when the program and performance are both good, and I particularly enjoyed the concert on Saturday October 11<sup>th</sup>. Martyn Brabbins was the guest conductor for a program of a poem nocturne by the Ukrainian composer Feodor Akimenko, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1, and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. Soloists are presented with bouquets of flowers after their performances, and the Conductor is presented with a bouquet of flowers at the conclusion. Most often, the flowers are then given to a member of the Orchestra, but on some occasions to a member of the audience. I was clapping and cheering so enthusiastically, that with a shrug, Maestro Brabbins pointed and me and then lobbed his bouquet straight into my eager grasp!



**Richard Wagner Society of SA (RWS)** – I have been a member of the RWS for over 25 years; many spent on the Committee. Events are only occasional these days but at least are usually daytime. Many of my friends from the RWS have died! I managed a few events this year, and I enjoyed them immensely. On two occasions, I entered the Society fund-raising raffle, buying \$50 worth of tickets each time. No great surprise then that I scored two wins!



### **Melrose and the Southern Flinders Ranges –**

In April, Nam and I managed to get away for about a week, staying mainly in the small Southern Flinders Ranges town of Melrose. These days, Melrose has quite a high profile among the mountain-biking community, with many exciting trails. Melrose is overlooked by Mount Remarkable. Nam hiked to the summit of Mount Remarkable, and he hiked the rim of Alligator Gorge just to the north. I did not.



*Melrose from Mount Remarkable*

We drove around many of the places of interest, getting as far north as Warren Gorge, north of Quorn. As a child, I went on many picnics in Warren Gorge when my family visited Mum's considerable network of cousins on the land in that area.



*Warren Gorge*

**Vietnamese Family Visit** – In June, Nam’s sister, Huong, her husband, Tâm, and their daughter, Vy, visited Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland and Adelaide to inspect potential educational opportunities for Vy.



**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of School Graduation** – This year was the FIFTIETH Anniversary of my Graduating Year at Prince Alfred College. A reunion lunch was organised by three of the Class of 1975, and with a touch of trepidation I went along. One of the hosts was Nick Gray from my class, and he seemed as healthy as ever. (Nick and I both went on to the University of Adelaide into Mathematics.) Others (like me) looked a little “lived in”. The current Headmaster gave a short speech, in which his main point was that he had been born in 1975!



*Nick Gray hosting the PAC Class of '75 Reunion*

Back at the 1975 “Red & White Ball”, a compilation of sketches filmed on Super-8 celluloid film made by the Prefects was shown. There had been a novelty song popular that year about guys cruising the main street in their cars, with girls putting on the glam to attract their attentions. About five of us, plus a “film crew”, went to the top of Norwood Parade and filmed a parody of the song. One of the guys dressed in gaudy drag, complete with wig and bright red lipstick, and showed some leg to the traffic on the Parade. Along came Andrew Olsson (another of the Reunion organisers) hanging out of the passenger window of an old Ford Zephyr. No guesses as to who the “lady” on the footpath was. Andrew gets out of the car, and after some banter they head off arm in arm. Out of a shop runs Nick Gray, upset that his “sheila” has been stolen. The “lady” realises her mistake and turns to Andrew and whacks him with her handbag. “She” returns with Nick, “her” true love. In the shoot, the “actress” employed method acting: Andrew was hit so hard with the handbag that his reaction was not put on!

Several cars on the Parade slowed right down or stopped to watch the shenanigans. Shop keepers and their customers watched on. A barber turned his chair to face the window so that he and a customer could see the action. A painter up a ladder just put his brush into the can and stayed on the ladder to watch. The sketch was a huge success.

But what had happened to the old Super-8 video after the Ball? For 50 years, no-one knew. No-one except David Blanch, the 1975 Captain of the School. He had hid it away for 50 years, and having converted it to a digital form it was shown in 2025 at the Reunion Lunch!

**Another 50<sup>th</sup> Celebration and a New Piano Sonata** – In July, Nam turned fifty years old. I had planned his present about a year before: I commissioned Connor Fogarty, a young composer and doctoral graduate from the University of Adelaide’s Elder Conservatorium, to write a concert-grade piano sonata dedicated to Nam on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. The sonata was to

be called "Devotion" to acknowledge Nam's devotion to me in our 16 years together, especially now that I am in such poor health.



*A dozen birthday roses, a hand-made card from Heather Sherlock, and the first page of the score of the Sonata*

*Commissioned by Alan Branford on the occasion of the 50th birthday of his husband, Nam Duong*

### Piano Sonata "Devotion"

Connor Fogarty

#### I. Fantasia

Largo  $\text{♩} = 48$

pp  
depress  
silently

8va con pedale

4

p cresc.

(Sost.) 8va

6

*Part of the first page of the score of Fogarty's Piano Sonata No. 1 "Devotion"*

It is one thing to have a piano score, it is another to hear it played in concert. As well as finding and funding a venue, advertising the concert, ticketing, etc., there is the little matter of finding a concert pianist willing to learn an entirely new major work. Josh van Konkelenberg is an accomplished concert pianist, a well-known organist, a qualified conductor, and like Connor is a doctoral graduate in Composition. Connor had found a

dream performer. The two of them worked for months to put together a World Premiere Concert of Connor Fogarty's piano works, with his Piano Sonata No. 1 "Devotion" being the major piece. With the backing of the marvellous people at 'Recitals Australia', the musical event of 2025 happened on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November at the North Adelaide Baptist Church Hall. Bravo!



*The composer, Connor Fogarty (right), introduces the performer, Josh van Konkelenberg*





To add to the delight of this special event, Connor's entire family flew down from his home city of Toowoomba in Queensland, unbeknownst to him, just to hear the World Premiere!

### **Cat Capers –**



*Alice and Margaret*



*Juliana*



*"Who's the fat fella in my chair?"*



*Alice soaks up the morning sun*



*Margaret – doesn't she look so cute?  
Looks can deceive! "Naughty torty"*



*Watering Time*



*Let's have a game of 'Cats and Ladders'*



*A lady can't have too many bags*



*Look where the back legs are!*



*"Well, what is it? Can't a lady get some sleep?"*



*"Go away!"*