

# THE ANCHOR



**Williamstown High School  
Ex-Students & Staff Association  
Inc A0041347A**

**JUNE 2024**

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## ***President's Report***

Welcome to the June 2024 edition of the ANCHOR.

We will have our Annual General Meeting on **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2024**.

As usual all committee positions are declared vacant and new nominations for all positions will be called for.

It would be great to have some new members on the committee. It is not that onerous a job. We meet roughly monthly through the year.

Our committee is currently made up of :-  
Fred Cumming – President  
Iris Whitehurst – Vice President  
Ray Price – Secretary  
Geoff King – Treasurer  
Barbara Muster – Committee

We have been working together for some years now and a few people are looking for

a rest. If you would like to join the committee we always have vacancies.

This is now becoming critical. One of the points of General Business at the AGM will be a discussion of how we might be able to manage the association into the future if we can't muster a viable committee.

Our history book "***Holding Fast - Williamstown High School 1867-2014***" is still available for purchase. We have a couple of boxes left. If you would like to purchase a copy please get in touch with Iris Whitehurst. You can ring her on the phone number below or email [WHSESSA@gmail.com](mailto:WHSESSA@gmail.com). Iris would be very glad to move a few more copies out of her spare room. The price has been reduced to \$20 but must be picked up from Williamstown.

As we at the end of June the subscriptions for the 2024-25 financial year are now due. You will find the subscription notice on page 5. The subscription rate is still only \$15.

Please let us know if you're coming to the AGM so that we can cater for afternoon tea. You can email to [WHSESSA@gmail.com](mailto:WHSESSA@gmail.com) or [sealbook@iinet.net.au](mailto:sealbook@iinet.net.au) or ring Iris Whitehurst on the number below.

I hope to see lots of you at the AGM in July.

Hold Fast  
Fred Cumming

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ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

**The Committee of Management  
WHSESSA  
PO Box 81  
WILLIAMSTOWN VIC 3016**

Articles or comments for the newsletter can be sent to the above address or email to [WHSESSA@gmail.com](mailto:WHSESSA@gmail.com)

**Enquiries  
Fred Cumming 0425 778 131  
Iris Whitehurst (03) 9397-7695**

Williamstown High School web site :-  
<https://www.willihigh.vic.edu.au>

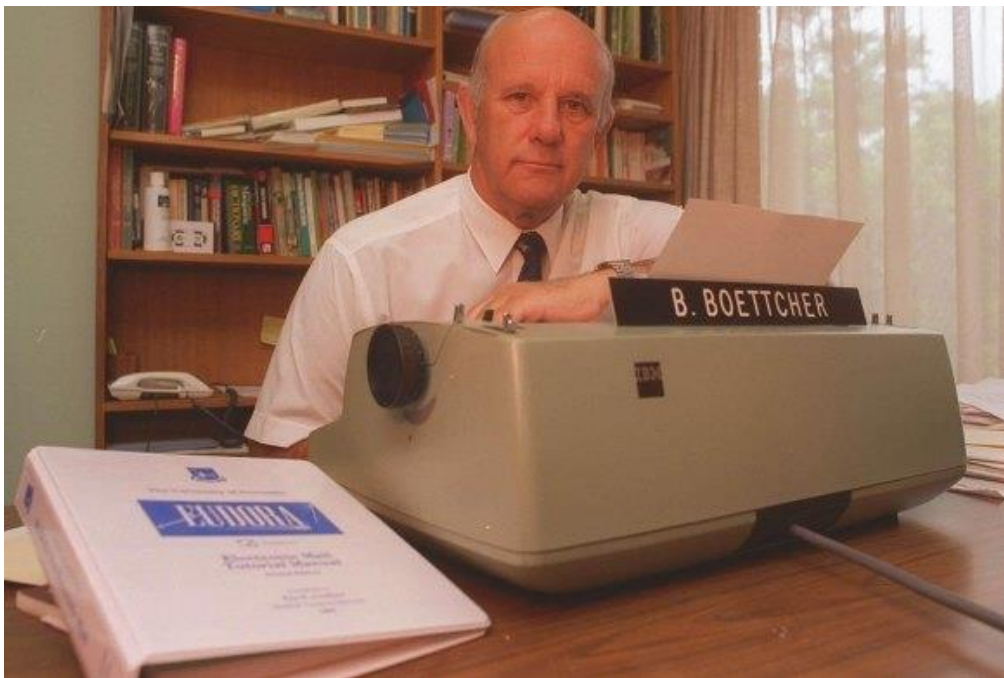
WHSESSA inc. web site :-  
<https://www.willihigh.vic.edu.au/about/ex-students-and-staff-association>

# Main defence witness in trial of Michael and Lindy Chamberlain dies

**BARRY BOETTCHER: 1934 - 2024**

Barry Boettcher made a private visit to Mount Isa in 1984 in the aftermath of the Azaria Chamberlain case. The case had seen Pastor Michael Chamberlain and his wife Lindy convicted over the death of their daughter, Azaria, at Uluru in August 1980.

The convictions – Lindy for murder and Michael for being an accessory after the fact – had been upheld on appeal and the matter seemed settled. Except, of course, that it was not.



Barry Boettcher in 1996. *Credit: Fairfax*

Boettcher, retained by the defence, had argued in evidence that foetal haemoglobin could not have been identified in blood samples taken from the Chamberlains' car. The Crown had argued that it could be, and that the blood had come from Azaria, and the jury had apparently sided with her.

Ultimately, that brought in the private trip to Mount Isa, where the Chamberlains had lived prior to their ill-fated trip to Uluru. At Mount Isa, Boettcher applied tests on various items, including his own motel wall, to see whether Ortho-tolidine, the re-agent used to test for the presumptive presence of blood, could provide a positive result.

It did, and then the awful truth started to become apparent: that in all probability the re-agent being used in the Chamberlains' car and on their possessions had indicated not the presence of blood at all, but of copper dust which was everywhere in Mount Isa and had affixed itself to sticky surfaces in the Chamberlains' car. The supposed presence of blood had put the Chamberlains in the frame. The supposed identification of foetal haemoglobin had convicted them.

The horrible truth was that there had never been any blood, and all the fuss and bother over the identification of foetal haemoglobin had been over something that did not exist. Of course, the Crown forensic biologist, Joy Kuhl, had not been able to detect the presence of foetal haemoglobin and Boettcher had said she could not.

But there was a lot more work to be done than merely incidental tests at Mount Isa to overturn the decisions of an eons-old system of justice that was meant to have had substantial safety mechanisms, or to sway the Northern Territory government and Crown who believed they had to make a stand against a mob outcry.

Boettcher and a handful of dedicated Chamberlain supporters nevertheless beavered away, going to the German company that had produced the reagent used by the Crown forensic biologist, Joy Kuhl. Boettcher took his case to his professional colleagues in the Australian Society of Immunologists. The world-renowned immunologist Sir Gustav Nossal was first to sign a letter endorsing Boettcher's disquiet, followed by 30 other leading scientists.

The letter, publicised nationally, had a profound impact and added to the clamour which eventually forced the Northern Territory's government's hand in appointing a royal commission, leading to the exoneration of the Chamberlains. Boettcher, then professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Newcastle, had been unsuccessful in the witness box in the trial because his technical explanation went way over the heads of the jurors. In the aftermath of the conviction, some criticism was directed at him, but as Boettcher displayed throughout his life, you cannot keep a good man down.

Boettcher was born in Tumby Bay, South Australia, on September 7, 1934, the second son of a pastrycook, Albert Boettcher and Ilma (née Haigh). It was Depression times and the family moved frequently so Albert could obtain work. They went to Berri, near the Murray River, Mildura and then Footscray.

Barry spent his first few years of secondary school at Williamstown High School.

Boettcher finished his schooling at Melbourne Boys' High and though not matriculating, went to Melbourne Teachers' College to become a primary school teacher. Adept at swimming and water polo, he started teaching in rural Victoria and at Tanybryn he met a trainee nurse, Moira Henriksen, whom he married in 1955. They set off for their honeymoon with Barry riding a motorbike and his bride in a sidecar.

Boettcher did a correspondence course to matriculate, travelling to Melbourne to do laboratory work in chemistry and physics, and got first class honours in both those subjects. He started a science degree at Adelaide University on an Education Department scholarship. Moira worked to provide extra money and Boettcher worked at weekends on such things as digging a pit for a septic tank and putting up fences.

Initially drawn to physics, he switched to genetics and biochemistry. Graduating, he got a job with the South Australian Department of Education. The first of four sons, Karl, was born in August 1962. In 1963, Boettcher accepted a scholarship to do a PhD degree at the University of Adelaide, selecting as his thesis: *Genetic Control of Blood Group Substances in Body Secretions*. Awarded his doctorate in 1966, he was now building an international reputation in blood groups, body secretions and reproduction.

Boettcher, who retired in December 1993, was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1998 for services to biological science and education and to reproductive immunology. The governor in presenting the award only commented on Boettcher's contribution in the Chamberlain case.

Barry Boettcher died in Newcastle on April 23. He is survived by his wife, Moira, sons Karl, Todd and Craig, daughter Kristine, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

**This is an abridged version of the obituary published by the Sydney Morning Herald. The full article can be found here :-**

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/main-defence-witness-in-trial-of-michael-and-lindy-chamberlain-dies-20240507-p5fpgk.html>

## Annual reunion

Our annual reunion will be held this year on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December** at the Pasco St Library from 10:00 am. All ex-students and teachers from all eras are invited to attend.

## Class of 1974

The class of 1974 are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. They are organising a function for themselves. If you are from this cohort or know some-one who is could you pass on the following information :

Facebook group – **Williamstown High School Victoria Australia Class of '69 to '74**

This is a private group so you will need to join the group to participate in discussions and get the finer details about this reunion.



## Notice of Annual General Meeting 2023 - WHSESSA inc. A 0041347A

The 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 2pm** at the WHS Pasco St Library.

Nomination forms and Proxy voting forms are attached.

### *PROXY Voting*

We have attached a PROXY form for those people who would like to have a vote but cannot or don't want to attend. You can give your proxy to any financial member of the association who is attending in person. You can also give your proxy to the President (Fred Cumming), the Vice President (Iris Whitehurst), the Secretary (Ray Price), Treasurer (Geoff King) or committee member (Barbara Muster).

Proxy votes count for the purposes of a quorum so it would be appreciated if you could return your Proxy forms if you cannot be in attendance.

Ray Price, Secretary & Public Officer. WHSESSA Inc. A0041347A.

**Committee Nomination Form - WHSESSA inc. A 0041347A**

Nomination for Election at AGM 2024 for WHSESSA Committee. All positions are vacant.  
(Forms will be available at the AGM on Saturday 27th July 2024.)

Please print & sign name in all areas.

I,....., wish to nominate .....  
for the position of .....on the WHSESSA Inc, Committee for July 2024-June 2025.  
I,.....seconded this nomination.  
I, as Nominee, accept this nomination.....

Post to:-WHSESSA Inc. PO Box 81 Williamstown, Vic 3016 or hand to Secretary Ray Price, by 2pm,  
Saturday 27th July 2024

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**Proxy Vote - AGM 27th July 2024 - WHSESSA inc.A0041347A**

Any financial Member, who is unable to attend the AGM on the 27th July 2024, may complete this Proxy  
vote. (Print & sign name in all areas required.)

I,....., delegate my proxy vote to (enter name) .....  
on any matters (if required) at the AGM on Sat 27th July 2023

Post to:- WHSESSA,. PO Box 81.Williamstown, Vic, 3016. Email:- Ray Price, [sealbook@iinet.net.au](mailto:sealbook@iinet.net.au)

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**Acceptances only - WHSESSA Inc. AGM Sat 27th July 2024 @ 2pm- Pasco St W'town**

I, .....will be attending the AGM.

Post to:- WHSESSA Inc., PO Box 81 .Williamstown, Vic.3016 or  
Email to: [sealbook@iinet.net.au](mailto:sealbook@iinet.net.au) or text only, no calls, to 0405692217 (include your name please)

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**Annual Subscriptions 2024-25 - WHSESSA inc. A0041347A**

Subscriptions are due on the **1<sup>st</sup> July 2024**. Subscription rate for 2024-25 is **\$15**

Name:.....

Postal:.....Postcode.....

Email:.....

(Tick if your details have changed) (    )

Donation (optional but always appreciated & acknowledged.) \$...... + (subs) \$15 = Total \$......

Payments can be made by :-

cheque mailed to WHSESSA Inc. PO Box 81 Williamstown, Victoria, 3016, or

direct deposit to **BSB 633 000** Account No. **119563336** (include your name!)

NB: If you wish to pay for more than one year, you can pay pro rata at the current subscription rate of - \$15 per year

Ray Price, Secretary & Public Officer, WHSESSA inc A0041347A

If undelivered return to  
Williamstown High School  
Ex Students and Staff Association inc.  
PO Box 81  
Williamstown VIC 3016

Anchor – Newsletter

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