

Apex SA/NT 2007 State Convention

**Imperial Football Club
Murray Bridge
9.00 am Sunday 11 March 2007**

**Hon Iain Evans, MP
South Australian Liberal Leader
Leader of the Opposition**

State President Mark, it's great to be back in Murray Bridge for another Apex Convention.

It brings back fond memories of the State Convention that was held here the year I was State President in 1986.

They were good times and I will refer to them later.

This is the 75th year of Apex and the celebrations remind me of 1981.

I remember it well. April 4th 1981 – the Zone 8 Golden Jubilee Dinner – held to celebrate the 50th year of Apex.

Adelaide's Mitsubishi canteen was packed with 1200 people in attendance. The guest speaker – one of the Apex founders – Sir John Buchan.

I was just 21 and President of the Stirling Club. At the time, the youngest club President ever in the history of the Association.

Sir John Buchan, as always, spoke with passion for Apex to take up the cause of citizenship – for Apex to be the van of social progress – for Apex to stand up publicly to right social wrongs.

It was this meeting – my first with Sir John Buchan – that was to have a big impact on my life. Sir John took a special interest in Iain Evans from that time on.

It was not just that I was a novelty as a club President at 21, but I also happened to be the son of a serving Liberal state MP – himself a past Apexian.

For Sir John, a former State President, and heavyweight of the Liberal Party in Victoria for many years, and founder of Apex, this combination was just irresistible.

For over 20 years until his death, Sir John would phone, write, and meet with me to promote his latest reforms of Apex and Australia.

He actively promoted and followed my entry into state politics.

Sir John Buchan had a strong belief it was the role of Apex to train Apexians to go on and serve at the Local Government, State Government, or Federal Government level.

At one stage in the Association's history, there were 60 MP's in state and federal politics across all parties that had been, or were, Apexians.

As I sat in my office preparing this speech, I looked at my Apex files to refresh my memory.

It again hit me how fortunate I was to have been an Apexian, what a privilege it was to wear the badge, and to have been a member.

How lucky I was that Sir John Buchan, and many Club, State, National Presidents, and

office bearers had encouraged me, and given me the opportunity, to progress through the organisation:

- Club President at 21.
- District Governor at 23.
- State President at 26.
- National Secretary at 27.
- National Vice President at 28.
- National President at 29.
- National Apexian Editor at 30.
- Politician at 34.

So, State President Mark and Incoming President Neil, it is an honour and a privilege for Iain Evans – Apex life member, Past National President, and now Leader of the State Opposition to be here to open this convention.

It is personal to me. I owe Apex.

To a large extent, my achievements in life are due to Apex and its training.

State President Mark, Apex has achieved great things over the past 75 years.

Many thousands of Apexians, having been trained by Apex, have served as community leaders in roles such as, School Council Chairman, Presidents of Sports Clubs, youth groups, Local Government or State and Federal Parliaments.

This training, and its ongoing contribution to communities across Australia, is one of Apex's proudest achievements.

Over the past 75 years, a much underestimated achievement of Apex is this training the organisation has given to hundreds of thousands of members.

I, like all other members, have personally benefited from training in public speaking, running meetings, debating, fundraising, budgeting, and the like.

History

State President Mark, I am proud to be an Apexian - as was my father and two uncles. My father in law, my brother in law, my wife, my two brothers - and now my sons - one of who has beaten my record, as he was club President of Stirling last year and became President at 19. My four nephews are members.

I am proud to be an Apexian – and why not?
What a great history!

You should all be proud to be Apexians.

Born in the Depression of the 1930's Apex has survived 75 years, made a better Australia and, better Australians.

Over the past 75 years it has lived up to its ideals.

- The ideal of service.
- The ideal of citizenship.
- The ideal of fellowship.
- The ideal of international understanding.

To truly recognise the impact of Apex on Australia over the past 75 years consider this.

The Royal Flying Doctors Service, the Spastic Centres, the Guide Dogs for the Blind, Foundation 41, Cranio Facial Surgery, Civilian Widows, Multiple Sclerosis, Microsurgery and Leukaemia Research.

All of these organisations or causes owe their establishment and expansion throughout Australia to Apex.

To better understand the enormous impact of Apex over 75 years – consider it this way.

- The Apex Royal Flying Doctors Service of Australia.
- The Apex Spastic Centres of Australia.
- The Apex Civilian Widows Association of Australia.
- The Apex Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Australia.
- The Apex Foundation 41 Australian Research Facility.
- The Apex Cranio Facial Surgery Australian Trust.

- The Apex Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia.
- The Apex Microsurgery Australian Trust.
- The Apex Leukaemia Australian Research Trust.

These are just some of the causes Apex has provided with a national profile.

By badging its achievements with the word Apex you can see the impact the organisation has had over the past 75 years – not just through its Clubs, but through all of these organisations and their contributions as well.

Over 75 years, Apex has been at the forefront of developing community responses for these, and other causes.

Of course we should be proud.

But of course these are examples of just some of the service Apex has provided.

There are thousands of state, district, and local schemes to add to this proud record.

There are millions of hours done as club service.

There is international service, like the expansion of Apex overseas, like work teams, and bursary schemes.

Then there is the response to national and international tragedies such as tsunami, earthquake, flood, fire and famine – Apex was, and is always positive in response.

Let's not forget while we celebrate 75 years of Apex in Australia, this Australian concept of service and fellowship, based on citizenship has expanded overseas.

The Apex beliefs spread from Geelong, throughout Australia to many other countries such as India, Singapore, Bangladesh, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, to name a few.

Imagine the impact Apex has had in these countries. The organisation has served Australia and the world well.

Citizenship

Apex has served Australia well through its service ideal.

But what about its role in citizenship? What about its citizenship ideal?

It is this ideal to which Sir John Buchan was most focused and committed.

When speaking at Apex Conventions Sir John would always challenge the organisation - daring it to tackle a new frontier.

State President Mark, I intend to do the same today, in honour of Sir John Buchan, and its other founders. Ewen Laird and Langham Proud.

State President Mark, Apex is a service organisation but that is not its only role.

When founder Ewen Laird designed the badge he based the badge on citizenship – why?

Why base a service organisation on citizenship?

When the Association of Apex clubs was formed out of the Geelong Young Men's Club in 1932, the club delegates chose, as their first objective,

“To develop by precept and example a more intelligent and aggressive serviceable citizenship.”

Why?

Why base a service organisation on citizenship and put as its first objective citizenship?

They did this, because it was the view of the early members, and the founders in particular, that the role of Apex and Apexians was, to act as a catalyst – a community conscience to right social wrongs.

As Sir John Buchan said:

“I sought to convey in my earliest addresses to fellow members that we should get to the root of the problems in the community and seek to cure, rather than to apply ‘band aid’ techniques.

“As important as cutting hedges, lawns and firewood for pensioners may be, I have always believed that it would be of far more reaching benefit to the community at large if Apex functioned as a catalyst.”

I stand here today to challenge Apex to again take up the cause of citizenship.

Within Apex it has been my experience that the organisational membership is made up of average families. Look around you at this convention – the membership very much represents middle Australia.

Who better then, to speak up and bring to the attention of Australia, the problems and concerns of middle Australia, than Apex?

Why are there just two items on the agenda?
Does this convey the message of “intelligent aggressive citizenship?”

There are hundreds of issues that Apex could, and should have a view on.

- Youth homelessness.
- Suicide.
- Men’s health.
- Diabetes.
- Disability support.
- Community crime.
- The rural/city population drift.
- Child care.
- Drugs.
- Obesity.

Apex has a role in speaking up in the interest of improving society. That is, Apex has a role in speaking up to improve communities.

As Apexians, you have a role to speak up to improve your community.

I agree that Apex should never be party political.

However, there is a difference between being party political and publicly expressing a view.

For too long, too many Apexians have confused the two, and not stood up for fear of being seen to be engaging in party politics.

As a practising politician let me explain the difference.

Party politics is when you say support a particular party because of a particular reason.

For example, “Apex supports the Greens because of their environment policy.”

That is partisan politics, and not the role of Apex.

On the other hand, you can speak up about an issue and not support a political party. By speaking up, you cause the media and politicians to debate your issue – the issue you want fixed in your community. You bring your issue to the attention of decision makers and the media.

Importantly - you make Apex even more relevant to your community, and the more relevant, the more members will be attracted.

There is no better example of this occurring than the 1958 National Convention where the following motion was passed:

“That the Association recommend to the Federal Government, an alteration to its policy to allow the immigration of Asians into Australia as a quota system, together with the right to full citizenship, as accorded to the Europeans.”

Nothing party political in that. The recommendation is not supporting one party or another, it simply debates one issue of the day.

Think about this.

Apex, in the mid 50's had publicly recommended the abolition of the White Australia Policy – something that took another 20 years to occur politically.

Would Apex have the courage to debate a similar motion today? Would Apex debate immigration law today?

Apex leaders - as community leaders – should be expressing the view of the organisation as a whole on a range of ways to right social wrongs.

I ask you this question:

If you are not prepared to speak up on behalf of your community, then who do you think will?

State President Mark, it was not in the spirit of the founders, for Apexians not to act.

Just look at the Apex ideals.

They are a call to action – they demand that members act.

Look at the first two words of each ideal.

- To make.
- To develop.
- To provide.
- To promote.

These are action words.

These words are not a call to do nothing and be silent.

They call the membership to act, and, in particular, with the citizenship ideal – to lead.

“To develop, by example, a more intelligent and aggressive citizenship.”

To develop, by example – in short, to act, by leading, to provide a better citizenship.

It is the Association’s call to arms.

Stand up and speak out.

I urge this.

In my 13 years in politics not once have I been approached by Apex about its view on a social issue.

The Apex history is filled with examples of great achievements in citizenship:

- In 1946 the organisation decided to eradicate Tuberculosis from Australia through lobbying the government to make TB x-rays compulsory.
- 1947 - Apex manned every polling booth at the Federal Election to pressure the new government to act – they did – TB is no longer in Australia.

Other examples of issues supported by National Apex Conventions include:

- The Aboriginal welfare policy, to be changed to fully integrate our indigenous people into society.
- The abolition of the White Australia policy
- Better War Veterans Payments
- The establishment of a Chair in Race Relations – in Rhodesia!
- The banning of alcohol advertising in 1980
- Tax concessions for self education costs

These are just some of the issues debated and passed by a club, debated and passed by a district convention, debated and passed by a state convention, debated and passed by a national convention, and then publicly argued on behalf of Apex by the National President of the time.

Nothing party political in any of them.

The year I was State President, the state convention was held at Murray Bridge. The state government of the time were considering decriminalising both marijuana and prostitution.

As part of our state convention we invited the public to attend the convention to hear two debates.

One on decriminalising prostitution, and the other decriminalising marijuana.

The debates were conducted by three leading public figures on both sides of the debate – including the state’s Police Commissioner and Attorney General – even a representative from the Prostitutes spoke.

400 members of the public attended and witnessed Apex citizenship in action.

State President Mark, citizenship is about leadership - community leadership, and that is why this organisation is based on citizenship.

The founders want Apexians to stand up and lead.

That is why the founders based the Apex badge on citizenship – it's about leadership.

That is why the founders put as their first objective – citizenship – its leadership.

Understand where they came from. The founders were there in the depression; all around them, they saw misery, hopelessness, and despair. They showed leadership.

They formed a club to help others, we call that service.

They formed a club to have fun, we call that fellowship.

And they formed a club to speak out to right social wrongs, we call that citizenship.

My challenge today is for Apex to again take up the cause of citizenship.

You are community leaders.

Now is the time for you as individual Apexians to stand up and be counted.

When you go back to your clubs following this convention, look around your community. Stand up, be counted, and show leadership.

Above all wear the badge with pride and develop, by example, a more intelligent and aggressive citizenship.

State President Mark, Apex has been an outstanding success story.

It is one of Australia's great achievements.

In 25 years time I look forward to celebrating its 100 years.

It is an honour and a privilege to declare the State Convention open.