

# ELECTION COUNCILLOR BIOGRAPHIES



**Stephen Younane**  
CEO/Co-Founder  
Retail Prodigy Group (Nike Retail)

Steve began his retail career at Myer/Grace Bros on the Management Development Program, where he held various roles from Stores Management to Buying during his twelve years with the company.

He then joined Nike Australia where he took on the role of Retail Director. Shortly after, Steve was offered the opportunity to move to NIKE's world headquarters in the U.S. to head up the retail division for North America, including the iconic NIKETOWN flagship stores.

After seven years with Nike, Steve moved to eyewear giant Luxottica in Sydney to head up the Sunglass Hut brand and lead the entry of the Brand into Asia.

Steve then moved to Melbourne three years later to take on the role of CEO for denim specialist Jeanswest, which was positioned as a key player in the Jeanswear market. He held that position for four years.

Steve is currently the Co-founder and CEO of Retail Prodigy Group, which holds the master retail franchise for NIKE Stores across Australia and New Zealand together with the distribution rights for U.S. Brands TOMS and Timbuk2.



**Beth Knight**  
Human Resources Director  
JB Hi-Fi

Australia has an innovative, and diverse retail industry that creates strong social and economic outcomes. I am seeking election to Council to assist the ARA in continuing to be an effective advocate in promoting our industry and the contribution it makes to the Australian community.

We know our industry is dynamic and offers a range of exciting career opportunities for talented individuals. I am keen to assist the ARA in promoting this, together with supporting the ARA to be a strong advocate for diversity in the workplace, and recognising the important contribution women make to the retail sector.

By way of my background, I have worked in the retail industry for over 10 years in the fields of Human Resources and Employee Relations. While much of this has been with larger retailers such as Coles Myer, Just Group and now JB Hi-Fi, I also worked for the ARA providing human resource advice to our members. This has provided me with first-hand experience and insight into the important role played by the ARA in service delivery for members. From the creation and delivery of industry training and awards, the provision of effective employment relations services, to ongoing advocacy and education, we must ensure the ARA is the pre-eminent voice for our industry.

Thank you for considering my nomination for the ARA Council.



**Drew Meads**  
Franchise Owner ACT and Chairman  
Forty Winks Group

Drew Meads is the Chairman of the Forty Winks group and has operated a Forty Winks franchise for the past 15 years.

Drew has an intimate knowledge of franchising and is a skilled director with extensive experience in governance, strategy and risk mitigation. Coupled with operational and tactical expertise across marketing, product development, IT and finance, Drew is well positioned to add value to the ARA and its members.

Additional experience in the hotel and resort industry, with several multinational brands, has given Drew an in depth understanding and appreciation for customer service. The customer, both internal and external, is a primary focus in any role Drew holds.

Drew has nominated for the council to contribute a range of perspectives, franchisor, franchisee, small business owner/operator to list a few. With a strong passion for retail Drew looks forward to assisting the ARA support our industry and retail partners should he be elected councillor.



**Graham Dear**  
Representative of Lin & Barrett  
Lin & Barrett

The ARA has a long and proud history representing all forms of Retailers, large and small.

I have spent over 35 years in Retail, initially in corporate retail with the last 15 years supporting small and independent retailers particularly in rural and regional Australia and I have also owned my own retail business.

I have had an amazing career in retail, which has seen me and my family living and working in retail in a number of cities in Australia as well as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and New Zealand.

I have been married for over 30 years and have 2 millennial children who give me much inspiration on the ever changing retail landscape. We currently live in Sydney.

I have been on the council for the last 5 years primarily representing the interests of small and independent retailers and am passionate about careers in Retail, Retail being seen as a viable and worthwhile career, the importance of women in retail and assisting/mentoring our future retail leaders.

I am seeking reelection to continue this representation.



**Anthony Wilson**  
Owner, Managing Director  
Wilson Retail Co Stormriders/Saltwater

I'm an independent retailer, surfer, husband and father of three daughters. Our family owned business, based out of Port Macquarie NSW, operates 17 retail surf, skate lifestyle stores across 3 unique retail banners (Stormriders, Red Herring Surf Co and Saltwater Wine Surf Centres) in regional NSW and Tasmania.

Starting out with a single store in 1989 we now employ over 150 talented people across our stores and head office. I'm passionate about retail as a career, as a father of three ambitious daughters I'm particularly passionate about management opportunities and pathways for women in retail.

I've been on the ARA Council for 2 years and Vice President for the past 12 months. As a lifelong independent retailer, I want to ensure SME's have a voice and seat at the table of Australian Retail's peak industry body. I'm equally passionate about the Surf Industry and am the founder and current President of the Surf & Boardsports Industry Association.



**Greg Leslie**  
Franchise Owner QLD  
Battery World

The former auto electrician took the Townsville business from a lagging store, when he took control in 2005, to the consistent No.1-ranked store in Australia. His secret is looking after customers and mostly, letting sales take care of themselves.

Tenacity and innovation coupled with sheer determinedness have been critical to his success. With an extraordinary year on year growth, it was a different landscape in 2005. Joining the group, his purchased store had been closed for four months: the previous franchisee placed into administration.

Greg put his faith in the franchise model along with a new team. "Customer exhilaration" became his only KPI as he embarked on winning back customer confidence. To engage with customers and the community,

Greg became an industry disrupter, initiating a never-before-seen recycling program, embracing responsible stewardship (which would later become an environmental catch cry) that would drive the network winning it a National Franchise Innovation Award.

Greg gave people a reason to visit: "if you build it, they will come" tapping into the very early ideology of recycling. "You don't have to buy but let us help you save the planet." It more than touched a nerve: it created a wave of change the network quickly adopted to assist struggling stores.

Within two years he took the store from a bankrupt failure to the highest grossing franchise, staying there ever since. Sales topping \$3 million in 2017.

Greg is the first to admit he is stubborn. Success hasn't come easy to this thriving businessman – he took pretty much every hard road there was: putting that journey in to a manual for small business, his successful book Postcards from the Coalface.

Greg is of the real world of small business: he started his first company at 24 with not much more than a van he borrowed from his best mate.

Greg says there is no magic bullet to success, but hard work and ensuring customers are treated royally will help you hit the target.



**Mark Daynes**  
CEO  
Jeanswest

Over 40 years in retail, 30 in the UK with blue chip retailers, such Topshop and Walmart and the last 10 in Australia, 3 at Target and 8 with Jeanswest.

Starting my career as a planner within The Burton Group, now known as Arcadia, I quickly learnt the trade and moved up to become the Trading Director of Topman, before taking on C Level roles at Walmart/ASDA and Littlewoods/Shop Direct. Then being asked to join Target Australia as Group General Manger of Merchandise in 2008, leaving to become CEO of Jeanswest in 2011.

As a career retailer who intended to become an art teacher, I now look to give back to the retail and education communities in two important ways.

Firstly, as a strong believer that retail should be promoted as an exciting and rewarding career; I have been heavily engaged both in the UK and more recently in Melbourne with universities and design schools in helping guide educationalists in promoting all aspects of retail to a new generation. As such I am currently the Chair of the Industry Advisory Group to the School of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT one of the World's Leading Universities.

Secondly, I have been an active ARA councillor for several years with a passion for customer engagement and promoting retail as a rewarding career.



**Steve Plarre**  
Owner, Managing Director  
Ferguson Plarre

Steve Plarre is the CEO of the century old Ferguson Plarre Bakehouses retail bakery chain. He also a proud member of the ARA and has been on the council for 5 years.

Steve is a 4th generation Aussie retailer in a business that has navigated two World Wars, The Great Depression and his own multi-generational family challenges. His forefathers count the Queen of England and the President of the USA as past customers.

Ferguson Plarre is still very much family owned & operated with 75 stores and a large bakery that crafts over 100,000 cakes & savories daily. Steve has been a member of the ARA council for the past 6 years, is very passionate about the retail industry, and has a strong record of attendance of his previous terms.

Steve is married with 2 beautiful young girls Felicity and Elizabeth.



**Rowan Hodge**  
Managing Director  
Andersens Floor Coverings

Rowan Hodge is a retail leader with 25 years of leadership experience in the franchise sector.

He has at different times held various roles:

- Multi-site franchisee in North Queensland
- Retail Manager for Westfield
- Market Manager for New Zealand
- Area Leader for Asia-Australia - New Zealand
- CEO for Domino's Pizza Belgium
- GM Franchise Operations Quest Serviced Apartments

Until 2018 Rowan was the CEO at Battery World Australia when they were awarded the Eftpos Most Innovative Retailers award, and the Franchise Chain of the Year. He has great passion for trends in retailing and franchise governance.

Rowan currently holds the elected office of President in the ARA council, and is the CEO of Andersens Floor Coverings, a franchise network with 50 stores in QLD and NSW



**Charles Davey**  
Head of Category Management  
Leading Edge Group

Charlie Davey is the Head of Category Management at the Leading Edge Group. Leading Edge is an Buying and Marketing Group supporting over 900 Independent Retailers across Australia, operating in Technology, Entertainment, Books and Jewellery.

Charlie has enjoyed a career in retail, having started as a Graduate with Sainsburys Supermarkets in the UK and then with Dixons Store Group, WH Smith, Woolworths/BIGW, Optus and Camerahouse.

Charlie has gained skills in Strategic and Business Development, Team Management and Multi-channel Retail.

Charlie moved to Australia with his family in 2006 and enjoys, in his spare time, Swimming, Running and spending time with his wife Katrina and three children Bella, Gemma and Oliver.

Charlie is also on the Board of the Balmoral Beach Club Events, who support local community events such as the Swim for Children's Cancer and an extensive Nippers programme.



**Ralph Edwards**  
Owner, Managing Director  
Bright Eyes Sunglasses

I'm sincerely proud to be a serving ARA Council Member since 2014, and of my current role as Treasurer. My background is one of extensive experience over a 30 year period as an owner / operator of varied and successful small to medium-sized businesses centred around retail, franchising, property leasing, wholesale, marketing, distribution, design and import. Across this time I've established a number of industry connections and attained both nominated and invited positions at elevated levels, and thereby developed a broad platform from which I can effectively represent the best interests of ARA members.

In addition to my ARA history and present role, during a timeframe spanning 16 years I've occupied long-term positions with the Franchise Council of Australia including QLD Chapter President and Vice-President, and on its National Board. This latter for which I currently remain serving as National Finance Director. Over a similar period, I've also held an invited position with the Queensland Government Small Business Advisory Council (which is presently ongoing).

By way of general summary, my current and past business interests and experience includes:

- CEO - BrightEyes Sunglasses (1999 -2008). Expanding the Group from 80 to 140 stores.
- Managing Director - BrightEyes Sunglasses (2013 to present). After re-acquiring the business in 2013.
- Director / Co-owner - Liaise International (2013 to present). A product import, wholesale and distribution business reaching into over 2,500 retail doors nationally.
- Director - Zarraffa's Coffee (6 years) and past Chair
- Director – Activ Brands (3 years). Bucking Bull Roast, Skewerz Kebabz, Seven Seas Seafood Café and Primal Pantry.
- Partner - Lease1 (2009 – present). A leading National Retail Shop Lease Services and Information provider to Retailers, Retail Chains, Retailer Groups/ Associations and Retail Franchise Systems and Franchises.

As a proactive advocate for retailers and the retail industry I'm extremely pleased to offer my ongoing service to the ARA and its valued members.



**Andrew Ng**  
Chief Merchandising and Marketing Officer  
Lagardere Australia

With more than 12 years' experience in retail in Australia and the UAE, I am passionate about delivering retail experiences that are new and innovative to address changing customer trends.

I am currently the Chief Merchandising and Marketing Officer for Lagardere, leading the category management, buying, and marketing teams across all of Lagardere's business functions. Prior to my time at Lagardere, I worked in the United Arab Emirates with Jashanmal Group as a General Manager in their books and press retail and distribution channel.

A career highlight is engaging New Zealand Rugby Union and convincing them to allow Lagardere to develop and manage the first All Blacks retail concept on their behalf.



## Jack Gance

Owner, Chairman of the Board  
Chemist Warehouse

Jack Gance is the Chairman of the Chemist Warehouse group and a co founder of this 5Billion dollar retail group.

Jack has a wealth of experience in retail having been involved in the growth of the business since the first store opened in 1972. Additionally, Jack has had extensive business experience in creating the largest distribution business in Pharmacy, Australis having created the iconic brands Le Specs, Le Tan, Australis and Colours of Australis.

Jack has a great deal of experience in working with family businesses, and in 1993 he was chairman of the steering committee that created the Family Business Council. With experience in small retailers, family businesses and a large corporate chain, Jack is well qualified to provide support and strategic direction to the ARA as it expands its support of the retail sector.

Jack pledges to work for the betterment of retail in Australia and support the unique needs of the retail industry, if elected as an ARA councillor.



## Clayton Ford

General Manager, Corporate Affairs  
7-Eleven

Having worked in, and served on the boards of varying industry associations, I am a staunch believer in the importance and influence of strong and cohesive industry associations in shaping the environment we all conduct our business within. As an ARA Councillor, I particularly want to use my experience to help modernise and support the communication and policy/public affairs work of the association.

I joined 7-Eleven Australia in October 2016 as General Manager Corporate Affairs, brought in as part of a new executive team responsible for reforming the organisation and rebuilding the community's trust after the mid-2015 revelations of wage underpayments, tasked with building a new Corporate Affairs function for the business. Reporting to the CEO and a member of the Senior Leadership Team, I lead a team responsible for corporate, retail and employee communications, government relations and public policy, media and PR, trade media and associations, community partnerships and corporate responsibility.

7-Eleven Australia is made up of more than 400 small family businesses / franchisees, together with the corporate entity operating nearly 700 stores across Australia's eastern seaboard and Perth in Western Australia. A private and family owned business, 7-Eleven is Australia's first choice in convenience retail, and Australia's largest independent fuel retailer – a business built through helping many hundreds of new Australians build their own businesses in their new country.

Prior to 7-Eleven, I headed up Corporate Affairs for an ASX100 manufacturer operating across 7 countries - and held senior Corporate Affairs roles with FMCG companies in Australia, the UK and Eastern Europe, and in the pharmaceutical sector in Australia. I have also headed up public affairs for a national industry association, and served as an Adviser to a Cabinet Minister in the Howard Government. With a Bachelor of Arts (Social Sciences) and Master of Business Management from Monash University, and having previously served on the Boards of the International Association of Business Communicators (Vic), BISI Network, and the Liquor Merchants Association, I have the passion and experience to help positively shape the future of the retail sector in Australia through the ARA, and thank you for your support.



## Toby Darvall

Owner, CEO  
Ishka

- Mass market and specialist small format retailer – conceived and built Anaconda from concept to 19 store chain turning over \$120m, grew Ishka from 11 store Melbourne chain to 54 store Australia-wide chain turning over \$60m+
- Passionate and dynamic team builder and leader
- Brand builder – established Anaconda and 8 exclusive outdoor brands with mass market awareness and Australia wide distribution, built 5 exclusive house brands at Ishka from concept to market dominance
- Publisher – developed and launched Outer Edge Magazine (Adventure Sports Magazine), former Business Journalist on The Age newspaper
- Specialties: Retail & Wholesale distribution, omni-channel retail, loyalty & digital marketing
- Very passionate about retailers, as Australia's largest private employer, having a strong voice
- Very concerned to see all retailers maximise the opportunity of new digital retail