



## South Australian Division

### SA Division President's report to Council Monday 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2019.

**Meetings and Functions.** Video-conference with Board of AFA Ltd, and Mess luncheon 20 March; later Radio RSL interview with Greg Weller, David Lyas and Keith Harrison; "emergency" meeting re collapse and resurrection of "Anzac on Torrens" 25 March; rehearsal for week end events with RAAF personnel 27 March; Meeting with Nicolle Flint to hear address by AWM Director, Brendan Nelson AO 29 March at St Marys; RAAF reception at Drill Hall 29 March evening; Ross and Keith Smith Dinner with Lainie Anderson speaker on the EFC NMAF Club 30 March; RAAF "birthday" commemorative service Sunday 31 March; meeting with Bill Denny Tony Piccolo at Parl House 4 April; meeting with Peter Colliver OAM, National Secretary, and Greg Weller 9 April.

Notes re the above etc.

**National Board of AFA Ltd.** Our National Board is in the process of developing a common "brand", purpose, vision, strategy and federal structure with a more serious attempt at producing an advocacy service and in the hope of attracting younger members. Professional advice is being engaged. A communications project is being prepared by Lance Halvorson. In relation to the use of social media I have suggested Greg Weller as a SA contributor. He met Peter Colliver with me more recently to discuss this and other matters, notably his and RAAF EDN success in community engagement. Responses to the two recent Inquiries were discussed: the lack of support for many of the PC recommendations for Veteran compensation and rehabilitation, but the general support for the Cornall report on Advocacy. I envisage that many of the monthly video meetings (this was the first, a success, thanks to Annette) will coincide with monthly mess luncheons.

At the **AGM in May**, the National "Conference" will wish to wind up the now defunct Council of AFC and RAAF Association Inc. to become a Company Limited by guarantee, AFA Ltd. I shall attend as a Board member of the latter. However, I wish to nominate Greg Weller as our Division "members' representative" to attend the national AGM.

**98<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of the formation of the (Royal) Australian Air Force. The two commemorative events both went extremely well, with the planned and co-ordinated efforts of many permanent members of the RAAF, guided by Greg Weller. As the commemorative events have improved, with increased numbers but decreased mobility of the surviving WW2 veterans, the Drill Hall has become the venue of choice. It looked splendid with the addition of banners, uniformed dummies, aircraft models, a gun turret and historical exhibits from History SA. The catering with the mess committee efforts, was excellent. The Lainie Anderson address presages further EFC events as the History Festival commences. One disappointment wrt organisation for the Sunday was that the arranged access cab to return three wheel chair dependant WW2 vets to the War Veterans' Home had not arrived by 40 minutes past the arranged time.

**Our Tenancy Relationship** with the Torrens Training Depot. My request to be informed and educated on this matter has been enhanced with help from Dave Helman, Arthur Jeeves and Bill Chapple. Our lease in 2005 was signed by the Minister for Administrative Services, whose Department was the DAIS, which was succeeded by the DPTI, which in turn handed over ownership to the Department for Environment and Water, Minister the Hon. David Speirs, who hails from Wigtownshire, in a part of Scotland closer to Belfast than to Glasgow. The Management Committee for our tenancies has met infrequently, but its membership when it next meets will have a different Chairman, from the "Real Estate Manager", DEW. I have written by email to Beverley Voigt, of the Heritage Unit and Kirsty Nield, of DEW, requesting a meeting with our co-tenants the RSL, VVA and History Trust SA.



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Tom Parker, on behalf of the Facilities Manager, Spotless, is the seventh member of the committee, along with DEW, Heritage, three ESOs and the History Trust. The original lease agreement stated that the Drill Hall, not leased to any individual group, would be available for ESO use “on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day, and at other times as agreed to between the Lessor and Lessee”. The booking request form is quite a long document, now on DEW paper. It is presented as needed to Mr Parker, who is, I suppose, “between the Lessor and Lessee”.

**Meetings with the Opposition** Spokesman Tony Piccolo and his PA Tom Counce. Bill Denny and I found Mr Piccolo responsive to many veteran concerns. Among matters discussed were: the costs associated with use of the TPG, problems with advocacy and support in the country, the PC report and its attack on the VRB, the relationship between the VAC and Veterans SA, the regeneration of the Repat and the Liberal Party promise to return surgical services, and the shameful neglect of our three veterans by access cabs. (vs.) He said that he would ask a question of the Minister for Transport. Bill and I reflected on the ease at which we had the ear of the opposition spokesman, compared with the distance between us and our Minister, separated by the barriers of access to the VAC filtered through or interpreted by Veterans SA.

**“Anzac on Torrens”.** This previously well organized and patronised event was suddenly abandoned by a RSL decision on the basis of insufficient funds for a loss making service. An emergency meeting was called a few days later, on Monday the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Previous convenor David Lyas and mess committee members were prepared to carry on, with financial help from the Minister/Premier and Veterans SA. The meeting resolved to regenerate it along “traditional lines”, as recounted by David and others, Keith Harrison, “Tex” Ranger et al, so that it might be handed back to ESOs for 2020. However, I understand that Veterans SA has planned a different structure.

**Financial Reports.** I am grateful to John Stapleton for his diligent and painstaking response to our concerns, as expressed at previous Council meetings, as to validity or precision of MYOB accounts. I hope that his document of 17 pages will enable the Finance Committee to avoid any ambiguities in future financial reports. I note, also that he has recommended some restructuring of accounts, and two other actions for the Finance Committee: to obtain professional advice as to whether RAAFSA might legitimately reclaim GST payments; and whether RAAFSA should use the Wrap Solutions accounting services from Macquarie. This latter is perhaps a supplement to its requested task to reassess our share portfolio relationship with Macquarie.

**DCG, VAC and the Minister** for Veterans’ Affairs. I have referred above to our “distance” from the Minister/Premier. The Defence Consultative Group is a committee with many or most ESOs members, but it is not always well attended, and appears to be failing. Its purpose is not clear to me, but the VAC Chairman stated, at its last meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, that it has “an important role in advising the VAC on matters concerning the veteran community”. If it does, and that is the only way that we can influence the VAC, we need to have regular input. We need to have a nominated Deputy should Bob Macintosh be unable to attend. In its recent agenda the issue of Thailand/Siam’s omission from the Memorial walk was raised, but not resolved.

**ESORT.** The Ex-service Organisation’s Round Table is an advisory body to the DVA nationally that meets on a regular basis. The RAAFA is represented by Carl Schiller, who recently sent me a summary of its meeting this month. I shall forward it for interest, as matters discussed included the Productivity Commission report, the Advocacy scoping study, DFRDB, ADF transition and the Gold card for SEATO medical teams for Vietnam.

Robert Black. April 2019.