



South Australian Division

President's report to Division Council 17th of June 2019.

Meetings and Functions. DCG meeting as deputy for RAM, 10.00 am, and launch of Lainie Anderson's book "Long Flight Home" 5.30 pm 22 May; National Association AGM and AFA Board meeting, Melbourne 27th and 28th of May; book gift from North Road Cemetery 29th May; Aboriginal Veterans Commemoration TPG 31st of May, Bomber Command Commemoration 1st of June; RAH Research Foundation presentation 6.30 pm 5th of June; Government House reception 12th of June; Sir Ross Smith funeral Commemoration 11.00 am and Vietnamese Veterans Association Dinner 6.30 pm 15th of June.

National AGM 27/28 May. Greg Weller and I attended the AGM of the AFC and RAAF Association, and the Board of Directors' meeting of AFA Ltd. The business of the former was short: to wind it up so that it might be succeeded by the Air Force Association. This change has been in progress since January 2018, with former Directors encouraged to "socialize" the need for change at the Division/branch level. It followed similar initiatives in the transitioning from the RAAF to "Air Force" for the name of the third armed service, and of its newspaper. Furthermore, there was significant acknowledgement that if the Association is to remain relevant, and to be able to attract current and next generation Air Force members, the name should reflect the current organisation. Only one change of office occurred. The Queensland President, Lindsay Bennett will retire.

Several matters were dealt with. The centenary of the genesis of our association, the 26th of February 1920, will be celebrated in Melbourne next year. President Carl Schiller will enquire about the absence of Siam/Thailand among the "Theatres of War" recognised at the AWM. The Division will continue to receive 25-50 extra copies of "Wings". No State has a regular commemoration of VP Day, though Melbourne has a large event to recognise the "Battle of Australia". However, the main business of the two-day meeting was to plan for the future of the Association. Without change, and relevance to younger members, "contemporary Veterans", the Association will not survive, we were told. Two major papers and themes were presented and discussed. We have some work to do on these matters.

"Project High Eagle" The national body is embarking on this initiative to harmonise it with the State Divisions, noting that there is great disparity between names, structures, roles and functions, leading to confusion in the community, both internally and externally. The aim is, inter alia, to align the same brand, to improve advocacy services and governance, and to protect individuals and organizations, leading towards a more effective relationship with current and emerging veterans. A key recommendation to improve governance is a transition toward Divisions becoming Companies Limited by Guarantee, CLGs, eliminating the disparity caused by differing State Incorporations Acts. After attention to benevolent purposes in constituent documents, achieving Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status will be possible, and of some benefit. Greg Weller will be asked to join a Steering Group.

A National Veteran Support Service: **"Veterans' Services Australia"**. We were briefed on an initiative in which the Air Force Association is working proactively with several other ESOs to develop a more effective and collegiate veterans support system. The NSW Division has engaged the services of a company, pro bono, to develop an innovative and more sustainable veteran advocacy service at the transactional level. It is in parallel with recommendations by the scoping study (Cornall) and presented to it by ADSO and the RAAFA. The name of the benefactor agency is confidential. This initiative will rely on finding that workforce from younger veterans. But at least the AFA will not be on its own in funding the service.



South Australian Division

A print-out of two power point presentations, detailing each of the above matters, is available for Council members to examine, for future discussion.

I was not invited to the launch at the Advertiser office, of Lainey Anderson's book "**Long Flight Home**". But I attended in any case and bought the book. I also bought a copy of "Flight to Fame", a reprint of Ross Smith's account, with excellent historical commentary by Peter Monteath. Both are worth reading. Sir Ross was an able wordsmith. His description of the storm clouds during the first leg, Hounslow to Lyons, is almost poetic.

While at the launch function I ran into Andrew Boucaut from North Road (Anglican) Cemetery, and David Byrne SAAM CEO. The latter asked about a date to launch our **Vickers Vimy mural**. It is now set for Wednesday the 3rd of July. Please mark it in your diaries. Andrew's assistant Helen Stein, a retired nurse, has published a superb record of known service personnel buried or commemorated at North Road. It is called "**For King and Country**". Although predominantly Army it includes T C R Baker and other aviators such as Harry Butler and of course the Smith brothers, all three. Another is Frederic Custance, who flew a Bleriot in 1910, the first ever flight in Australia. Several prominent Doctors (eg Beard, Beare, Corbin) and sons of the Church (three Joses) are also listed. The book is another that is highly recommended for perusal. There is a separate pamphlet on airmen of the Great Wars. A donation from the RAAFA is acknowledged.

While attending the **RAH presentation** I was helped in my parking by Ketrach Parsonage, wife of a RAAF Pilot and daughter of an ex-RAAF serviceman, whose grandmother knew **Ross and Keith Smith** as childhood friends. They have a book with **autographs** and drawings by the aviators that has sparked the interest of the State library, the EFC and History SA.

The Bomber Command commemoration went very well with superb help from RAAF personnel, and splendid arrangements for "refreshments". The Governor and Mrs Le delighted all that they met. The service went "off script" when "streaker" Dudley Mitchell gophered to the microphone and reminded us of the horrors also of the Pacific War. No one seemed offended-indeed it seemed to add to the service. MC FLGOFF Fleur Alexander handled the additional speech with grace. Greg Weller later observed from this "demonstration" that a VP Commemoration is a must for 2021 even if not organised for this August the 15th.

Defence Consultative Group. I attended in May as Bob's deputy. There was a presentation and appeal for funding of Trojan's Trek. The DCG allegedly includes almost 30 different groups. The RSL seldom attends. I suspect that there was a better attendance than usual last month. Future roles are to be considered, for example around transition from ADF, suicide and employment of veteran spouses. Greg Weller was asked to join a sub-group to consider roles and purposes. Greg and Bob may report on the June meeting last week.

Government House Reception. I was honoured to represent the Association with Tania at last week's reception. It was a crowded event in honour of the Queen's birthday. Invitees were oriented towards governments, Judiciary and "Royal" group patronage. We have subsequently been invited, with up to 12 nominated RAAF Association guests, to an afternoon tea at Mrs Le's invitation. It will be at 2.30 pm on Wednesday the 10th of July. If we become AFA and lose the "Royal" will we be dropped from the invitation list for the QB next year?

Transfer of Veterans SA to Defence SA. Council members will have received copies of correspondence about this initiative, first drawn to our attention by the Advertiser, next by the Labor opposition, then, in defence of the Government, by the Minister/Premier. It may not affect



South Australian Division

our relationship with the Minister, or lack thereof, nor the projected moves of Veterans SA et al to the TPG. CEO Rob Manton has reassured us. Time will tell.

Aboriginal Veterans Commemoration. This was an enjoyable experience for me, apart from the fact that seats were not allocated, and “Ex service organisations” were asked as a block to lay tributes. Speaker Dr Jackie Huggins AM, academic from Queensland gave an impressive address. Daughter and grand daughter of SA Aboriginal veterans, she was fatherless from a young age, and acknowledged the great help that her mother received from Legacy.

With the concurrence of AIRCDRE Gordon we have identified SQNLDR Craig Keane as the **RAAF member to be an observer** at our Council meetings. He is a member of 92 Wing. Developing a relationship with the flying Squadrons, in particular, does seem to be a worthy aim. I shall invite him to join us in July.

The Cathedral service anniversary commemoration of **Sir Ross Smith’s funeral** on Saturday the 15th of June and the Cricket ground luncheon following it were a great success. The Dean, the Very Reverend Frank Nelson, and His Grace, The Most Reverend Geoffrey Smith, Archbishop of Adelaide, conducted the service with RAAF Chaplain Mark Butler. The Army band was superb and the bugler spectacular, playing from the gallery. Army also supplied Reader and MC, appropriately recognising that Ross Smith was never Air Force. SADFO AIRCDRE Gordon gave a wonderful account of Ross Smith’s military and aviation accomplishments. He and the Governor laid wreaths. The only hymn was sung to the tune of Eric Coats’ “Dambusters March”. Both History SA and RAAF EDN are to be profoundly thanked. It was flattering that our Association was described as a host. We have much for which to be grateful to Greg Weller and the EFC committee.

Tania and I attended the **Vietnamese Veterans’** Association of SA Dinner on the same evening, the 15th of June. It was a cultural awakening. Most of the speeches were in Vietnamese. Musical performers were of astonishing ability. Food was plentiful. Most invited guests were Vietnam Veterans. The event commemorated the 54th Anniversary of “**Vietnam Armed Force Day**”. Events in 1965 in South Vietnam were complicated. Diem had been assassinated in a military coup supported by the US, and in that year US Marines waded ashore at Danang.

Next month’s invitation is for the 64th Anniversary Commemoration of the **Republic of Vietnam Air Force**. By 1955 The French had been defeated, SVN President Diem was an autocrat and Ho, victor in the North, wanted a united country. The RVNAF lasted just 20 years. Supported and trained initially by the French, but predominantly and substantially by US, at its peak in 1973 it had 65 squadrons and over 200 aircraft of 25 types.

It was particularly pleasing to see that three members of the RAAF Association in South Australia had been honoured on the 10th of June, Queen’s Birthday, by being awarded a **Medal in the Order of Australia (OAM)**. They were: Mrs Lynette Leahey of the Elizabeth/Salisbury branch; Mr Clem McArdle from Mitcham branch; and the late Mr Guy Bowering, also from Mitcham. We congratulate them and their families for their service to veterans and veterans’ families.

Robert Black

State President, 16 June 2019