



South Australian Division

President's Report #1 2019

21 January 2019

Meetings and Functions. Royal Aeronautical Society Dinner 11 December re the Epic Flight Centenary, with patrons Sir Angus Houston AC and Dr Andy Thomas AO, and speeches by Sir Angus and Lainie Anderson; DC DVA reception 12 December; Mitcham Yuletide meeting 14 December; Official opening by the Governor of the new VVF Headquarters at Marion, 14 December; meeting with ESO representatives (RSL, VVA, VVF, National Servicemen, Malaya/Borneo) to plan a consensus submission to the Productivity Commission (PC) interim report on Veteran Rehabilitation and Compensation.

Notes re the above:

The Epic Flight Centenary this year has had an energetic committee, including Greg Weller, working on commemorative events this year. The meal was good but the event excellent. ACF Houston's address was remarkable for highlighting the risks accepted by the 1919 aviators: flying across uncharted countries in air not flown in before, landing on unreliable surfaces, freezing in open cockpits, and in the most primitive aircraft, without radios or navigational aids. He noted that deaths from flying accidents were accepted until the last few decades. This year, with luck will mark 20 years without a RAAF aircraft accident death. Lainie is an unabashed enthusiast with a wealth of knowledge. I may have enlisted a few new RAAFA members while attending.

The PC Report of 700 pp and overview (70 pp) has been available for perusal and comment. I have sent an early draft of my personal assessment to National President, to Council members, and to the meeting on 7 January. I have now submitted it to the PC, in an amended form, and hope to meet the PC at the Grand Chancellor Hotel on 4 February. The ESO meeting has produced a written consensus submission, which I wish this Council to endorse. It does not contain my personal wish for a Canadian like "Bureau of Veterans' Advocates", which, however, may be considered by the Cornall inquiry into Veteran Advocacy. That report is due next month.

Other Matters.

The Australian Veterans Covenant. I hope that you have all had a chance to think what veterans or ex-serving members would wish to have from the federal government apart from a lapel pin and a card whose purpose and utility remains enigmatic to me. I do not think that priority access to Virgin flights is another on our wish list. The PC report has discussed "veteran support" and "wellness", and I wonder too about those concepts. What veterans want certainly is respect, tolerance, employability, medical and allied services, and a reasonably comfortable standard of living commensurate with their service. Some of these cannot be guaranteed by any Government, though the covenant is asking employers and industries to supply them. WW1 and WW2 got most of the above list from a beneficent Government and a grateful nation. Drunkenness and absenteeism was accepted, returned men got their jobs back, and some received parcels of land with which to make a living.

Finances. This meeting anticipates the re-appointment of a **Finance Committee**. We have heard of uncertainties and questions about our finances in recent months. I am optimistic that our finances



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are sound, but at present we lack certainty. One matter which should be an early agenda item is the way in which we manage, or have managed for us, our significant share portfolio. We learnt late last month that our advisor at **MacQuarie** had left that firm and was setting up independently. Whether we stick to MacQ or to our advisor, previously with another firm, is a question for us now, and an ongoing one for the Finance Committee.

Strategic Planning for the next three years of RAAFSA. Greg Weller has drafted an excellent agenda which you will have seen. Perhaps we can do justice in 3-4 hours. But perhaps we might anticipate a little more time and meet before and after a light lunch. We need to think over the issues before we meet, and suggested reading should include our Constitution, and any constitutions of our branches. Greg has given a link to read about governance issues.