



South Australian Division

President's Report to SA Division Council April the 20th 2020.

Postponed Meetings and related Matters. Since our face to face meeting on the 16th of last month most other meetings and gatherings have been postponed, modified or cancelled on the advice of, or enforceable regulations by, our Parliamentary leaders, as advised by their Health Officers.

The commemorative events on **the formation of our Air Force** on the 31st of March were postponed almost as we met. As there is a later date, the 31st of August, when we became "Royal", a subsequent event or two is anticipated. We did receive an email from AIRCDRE Brendan Rogers CSC CSM, who laid a wreath on the day on behalf of both the Air Force, and of the Association. WOFF Pyatt read ex-460 SQN Sgt Brodie's "Airman's Prayer", an evocative poem found after he was KIA. I have written to thank them for this courtesy extended to us.

We now know that services on **Anzac Day** will be for small gatherings only, of official representatives, and that the march will be cancelled, along with any veteran participation at the football. We have not been able to progress, with the RSL etc., our plans for **VE and VP** days. The **Air Force Centenary SA 2021** committee met again, via teleconference, on the 8th. The **Mitcham branch AGM** was postponed on the 18th; later its committee meetings, and that of VHAC etc. But a committee meeting met later via "Zoom", and a Virtual AGM is planned, using the same system.

The sub-committee to consider **amendments to our Constitution** had its second meeting on Wednesday the 16th, before the cancelled mess lunch. (Gatherings of less than 100 were then allowed). Members have since seen tracked changes of two versions of the suggested amendments, prepared by Kevin Gogler. A few typos have been corrected and several queries answered. I wish to look more thoroughly today to deal with any residual contentious issues. I anticipated that these might include: reversion to AFA; the size and composition of the Council and its quorum; filling of vacancies; proxy voting; membership eligibility criteria; the Public Officer appointment; deletion of social members, of an assistant Secretary and of membership transfers. However before putting these amendments to Council for consideration, and ultimately to the wider membership, we submitted the "final" draft to Business and Consumer Services for its perusal. We may get a comment before our meeting on line.

Despite the apparent reduction in activities the work of **our Secretary and Administrative Officer** have not reduced. Indeed, they probably have



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increased. We have needed to consider arrangements for Annette and Dave to work at home as necessary. After researching options Dave has chosen a suitable way to conduct Council meetings, by videoconference. A successful trial of “Cisco”, the third system that I have now experienced, preceded today’s “meeting”.

We have been asked, by Justin Brown of the JLC hub, for a donation to support a veteran group called the **Ex-Military Rehabilitation Centre (XMRC)**. It plans a project to deliver needed items, groceries, hand sanitizer etc. to elderly veterans confined in their homes. It seems a worthy enterprise. We have waited for details as to how many ex-RAAF veterans might need this support, and whether our finances might fund this extra non-budgeted item. We might attempt to identify, within our branches, potential clients of XMRC. Mitcham branch has asked to hear from any living in the northern suburbs who might wish to be included in this service. A second request of financial assistance was also received from an impecunious widow.

This request came via **Lee Bowes**, who rang to ask if I would speak to Justin. I may not have reacted as quickly or as positively as he hoped, to this request. Perhaps I might have asked for a quick executive decision, rather than circulate the matter to Councillors for a decision today. This may have been a factor in Lee’s decision to tender **his resignation from Council**, which I sincerely regret. I have written to thank him for his past service to the Council, wishing him the best for his continuing service with DFWA and with the mess committee.

Lee’s request was just the day before an extra **videoconference with the AFA Ltd Board** on the 26th of March to discuss how much we are doing to reassure our members during this fever crisis. It seems that “Open Arms” had been over stretched dealing with such enquiries. This surprised me. One wonders how much reassurance one might give, when we ourselves are told to stay home and watch the climbing statistics on TV. Whether attempting to reassure might increase levels of anxiety is another good question. The Mitcham branch newsletter has emphasised the need to take the advice of our leaders and experts. It has also asked those in northern suburbs to nominate for aid if needed.

At home I joined a further Videoconference, using “Blue Jeans”, with the **AFA Board** on Tuesday the 31st. This was also an extra. Among matters dealt with on the 31st was a request from Carl Schiller, National President, to have the cover of the latest copy of “**Wings**” on all Division web sites. Many thanks John and Greg. We comply; other Divisions have been slower. Greg Weller has questioned whether the association should be more active in promoting itself in



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“Wings”. Carl has taken to ESORT my letter with the request, from the Consortium of SA ESOs, to address the inequities in BEST funding. President Carl wants a data base that is more relevant for a more closely knit association. Details are awaited. He wishes to communicate with younger, particularly serving, members with **Social media**: Instagram and Twitter as well as Face book. I apologised that I would not be able to keep up with him. There is also discussion about forming **a branch at Tindal RAAF base** in the Northern Territory. A few serving members in 75SQN may be association members of the “Fighter Squadrons” NSW branch. If such a development proves successful perhaps other bases might be considered.

Council Vacancies. Lee Bowes’ resignation led to a casual vacancy as envisaged in Clause 35(4)(b) of our current Constitution. With minimal delay Arthur nominated Craig Keane to fill that vacancy, pursuant to Clause 35(5). Craig was appointed by Council on the 4th of April. I am pleased to welcome him to remain as a Councillor until the next AGM, which may well be a “Virtual” one. That will be the occasion to fill remaining vacancies, if possible.

Robert Black, President.
15 April 2020.