



South Australian Division

President's Report to Council 19th of April 2021.

Meetings and Functions. RSL Peacekeepers AGM:17th of March ; Mitcham Branch AGM 19th; SAAM visit and AGM 20th; Meeting with Bill Denny and Ian Smith 22nd; Consortium meeting 23rd; Mitcham Committee 26th, missed meeting Assistant Defence Minister with Nicolle Flint; AF 2021 Dinner at NMAF Club; Air Force Week 29th to 1st of April with teleconference with Blair Boyer and RUSI lunch 29th, three event commemoration of Centenary on 31st and two lectures on 1st of April; AFA Board videoconference 6th, after Easter and farewell to Dean of Adelaide; 460 SQN Assn dinner 7th; ex-RAAF funeral (6th and) 10th; AF2021 committee teleconference 14th postponed to 5th of May; Mitcham branch 16th; visit to SAAM 17th.

Three AGMs. The **Peacekeepers' RSL** sub-branch is a small but well organised group with President Steve Larkins OAM and Secretary Annette Summers AO. I did not nominate for any further post or task. John Spencer OAM is a member and CESM Public Officer etc. He has undergone coronary Artery bypass surgery and was an apology. BRIG Graham Goodwin, Commander 9 Bde is another member.

At Mitcham branch AGM the committee membership was unchanged with two exceptions: Jim Richardson, a volunteer at the War Veterans' Home and younger veteran of the RAAF and RAN, joined the committee; the Rev'd Brenton Daulby OAM retired but will continue as editor and as Honorary Chaplain. I remain President, Kevin Gogler remains Secretary and Don Hawking Treasurer.

The South Australian Aviation Museum invited Greg and me to its AGM, heard an excellent presentation from Greg of AF 2021 and elected Nigel Daw President to succeed David Byrne. Gary Petts of the History Group (Chair Peter Ingman) presented us, AFA SA, with a framed picture for AF2021. It is of a WW1 DH9 and a F35 Lightning by Russian/Canadian artist and architect Elena Vasileva. We will need to request hanging space for it from the CESM Committee! I have arranged a visit to SAAM again on Saturday the 17th to discuss future membership or involvement with the History group. It should do well to enlist Greg Weller and Kevin Gogler to the latter when each has time. Could we eventually enlist SAAM as a branch or accept it as a Corporate member? If the latter we will need to consider the membership fee!

Consortium Submissions. Leading up to our meeting on the 23rd Bill Denny and Ian Smith met me the previous day to discuss wording of two letters (of four) sent as a result of the meeting on the 23rd. Both had been very enthusiastic to support our quest to have **Thailand** added to the pavement names on the **Anzac Centenary Walkway**, Kintore Avenue. The letter has been directed to the Premier, but with a copy to Catherine Walsh, Director, Veterans SA. It was felt that a decision in our favour by her may have been hampered by inertia within the department and reluctance to reverse its earlier decision. I have spoken to her to explain our apparent bypass. Another letter was to request that the **Advertiser** consider reducing its fees for **death notices** of veterans. A third matter was to respond to the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal with respect to recognising and/or awarding medals for **wounds or injuries in service**, and for recognising widows or families following a service-related death. A fourth letter continues our pressure from SA to expose the misleading work of the **Queensland RSL** in its **aggressive Art Union lottery** sales at shopping centres etc. ESOs were fully supportive of all four submissions, most of which have been forwarded to Council members and to AFA National President, except for the wound recognition. The RSL is in agreement but had made its own submission. The Malaysia and Borneo Assn had also made its own submission. It differed from others in recommending an unofficial medal, the Graywood medal.



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The Air Force Centenary was recognised by the formal dinner on the 27th and by three splendid events on its Birthday March the 31st. The Governor and Mrs Le graced us, and our hosts, the RAAF, at all except the evening Reception at the Drill Hall. Premier and Veteran's Affairs Minister Steven Marshall attended the last of these. The work of RAAF members with Greg Weller's guidance and leadership was wonderful. The initiative of laying two extra wreaths at the NWM from WW2 and post-WW2 conflicts was a great idea. The Governor's invitation to the gardens of Government House was very much appreciated. He splendidly launched the two books, "South Australian Eagles", by Greg and "The RAAF in South Australia in WW2", by Peter Ingman. Mrs Le was last to leave as she waited for transport for members of the War Widows' Guild. The Combined Ex-Service Mess Committee did a great job at the evening reception which was a spectacular success. Orders were taken both for book sales and for the Commemorative wines, when we obtain the appropriate licence. I have written to thank ADSO AIR CDRE Ross Bender and Annette, as CESM President. The Moonta Committee and its sculpture project got good publicity and support at all functions and with Robyn Knight's presentation on April the 1st. I got the impression that Premier Marshall was absolutely committed to the Sir Richard Williams Sculpture. I acknowledged as much in my call to Catherine Walsh. Sculptor Tim Thomson attended during the commemoration. Another person at the events was Dr Anne Olsson, great niece of the "Father of the RAAF", who told stories of "Uncle Dick" at the dinner.

The AFA Board meeting. Agenda items included the President's report on Defence Honours and awards Tribunal; Wings, Foundation, alumni, CAF support, the Canberra commemorations, O'Connor and Michael awards, community Engagement and JBSG; the National Consultation framework, DC Forums, which we are encouraged to use more effectively for veteran and family support. Councillors will have seen the letter from SA Consortium regarding the WIA/KIA awards. The President's response has been along very similar lines. The criteria for the O'Connor and Michael awards from AFA are to be tidied and redefined. We in SA have received the award a few times. Copies of explanatory material are available. Peter Ring was appointed as NSW Director vice Ron Glew. The cost of death notices interstate was raised: \$50 in Victoria, \$190 in NSW The Advertiser has subsequently exceeded the Consortium request for a 50% reduction and has suggested \$50 only. That leads us to discuss how we submit notices and by whom. The May meeting of the AFA National Board will be in Canberra on 11th and 12th of May.

The 460 Squadron Association is in the process of reactivation. At a second informal dinner on the 7th of April Greg Weller delivered his splendid presentation for SA in AF 2021. Ern Milde, the only veteran present, gave a delightful talk about his life and experiences, with gentle guidance from his son, Bronte. Howard Hendrick, whose biography "Full Circle", was launched a month ago in Loxton, is another ex-460 SQN Veteran. The book was written by his daughter, who sent her apologies for this second meeting. Since then the "Australian" has produced a magazine for the Air Force centenary with war artist Stella Bowen's oil painting "Bomber Crew" on the front. It is of a 460 SQN crew that failed to return after a mission to Friedrichshafen on 27th of April 1944. Bowen was born in South Australia, painted crews of other Australian squadrons possibly 461 (Sunderlands), and 462 (Halifaxes). They may be seen at the AWM.

St Peter's Cathedral. Councillors will be aware that Greg, I and others have been discussing a Cathedral service for the 13th of August, the Centenary birthday of the Royal AAF. Dean of Adelaide, the Very Reverend Frank Nelson, has been most encouraging and helpful in these negotiations, but he had warned us of his retirement to New Zealand. Bishop Denise Ferguson, another Kiwi, has



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continued our dialogue with enthusiasm. The successor as Dean will be Father Anthony Stephens, whom I have met at Christ Church North Adelaide.

I attended Dean Nelson's farewell Evensong on Easter Day. It was a very enthusiastic congregation that packed the Church for the occasion. I thanked him for his support and have written subsequently.

Following the death of HRH The Prince Phillip, **Duke of Edinburgh**, on the 9th of April, I signed the Government House condolences book next day on behalf of the Association.

Funerals. The above followed my attendance at Bruce Dinham's funeral. Bruce, a Mitcham member, was a pilot in 55 RAF Squadron in Southern Europe, flying Bostons. He graduated in Engineering post war, tried to re-enlist for flying, failed, and took a job in ETSA while hoping for a better one. He retired as General Manager 40 years later and meanwhile brought the Grand Prix to SA. Regrettably I could not attend the funeral of Gordon Schwartz OAM on the 6th at PAC. He was not a member, but a well-known sportsman and journalist, and Coastal Command 10 Squadron veteran. We try to attend funerals when able and to be involved when asked. But family wishes must be respected.

Anzac Day. Councillors will have received information about this day. As an Association we will be represented at Dawn services: North Terrace NWM (Dave Helman); Playford (Warwick Raymont); Salisbury (Doug Waters and Bill Chappell); Mitcham (Wally Beale and Geoff Hastwell) and Repat Hospital (RBB). I shall also attend a Vigil at RSL Macclesfield on the 18th. Annette has prepared appropriate tributes.

For the March the AFA President is privileged to march in Group 1, ahead of the RAAF Centenary Guard from Edinburgh. Up to 15 others are encouraged to join me, if preferred to one's usual place. Bill Denny, a Mitcham member, will be a TV commentator and has requested information about those marching who might be acknowledged. He is particularly keen to recognise WW2 and other past war veterans. But there is limited time to comment as groups get smaller. I shall pass on to him any relevant information. In this centenary year of the Air Force it has been accepted that "Air Force will lead the Anzac Day March". It might have been expected that all Air Force groups, serving or ex-serving, might march ahead of all Naval and Army groups. That is not the case in SA and a few members have expressed their disenchantment. The Anzac Day Committee has, however, listed in Group 1 the "RAAF Centenary Guard" which will be a large group of serving members from Edinburgh. It should be very impressive. And "AFA President and party" will precede it!

Robert Black, President AFA SA, 19th of April 2021.