



South Australian Division

President's Report to Council 15th of February 2021.

Meetings and Functions. SADFO Farewell/Welcome 18th of January; 19th funeral for Doug Leak, Bomber Command veteran; 22nd meeting with Ash Wright and others at NMAFClub; 26th Australia Day; 27th attendance at Holdfast Bay Council re Bungey memorial; 1st of February RUSI Luncheon; 2nd dinner with members of 460 Squadron Association; 3rd AF2021 telephone meeting at 9.00 am; then at 12.00 meeting with Mitcham Mayor re Club room use; 5th-12th leave in Darwin etc. ; 5th TPG management committee with DEW (DH and AM); 14th Bangka Day commemoration at GH with WR.

Farewell to AIRCDRE Rogers and Welcome to AIRCDRE Bender. This event, after earlier postponement, and then uncertain attendance numbers, was an enjoyable occasion and in most respects a success. Annette, the CESM and Greg Weller must be thanked particularly for great organisation and superb provision. Both SADFOs expressed thanks; Governor and Premier spoke well as our friends, a relationship that was noted by the incoming SADFO. The Dickie Williams Shiraz and Ross Smith Sauvignon Blanc were appreciated. I regretted not saying enough to publicise other AF2021 matters and Greg's recently completed booklet. But many fliers and banners were seen and noted.

Funerals of our significant members and Air Force veterans are most important. Mitcham member Doug Leak was a WAG in 149 SQN RAF. His funeral was in the Church in which he was married to his second wife. The same Minister officiated. His widow and family, who asked me to recite the Ode, were delighted with the presence of four uniformed RAAF members (thanks Greg), who formed an honour Guard with association members etc, including another Bomber Command veteran. His death may reduce such veterans in SA to 12, though the list is still work in progress.

Ashley Wright, a serving member and NMAF Club committee member will be organising an **Air Force Centenary dinner** at the Club on the 27th of March. It will involve His Excellency, a prominent speaker from interstate, and will show (per favour GW) AF2021 videos on screens in the Garden. Numbers may be COVID restricted.

Will this be our last **Australia Day** on the 26th of January? Two prominent interstate members of the Association were honoured: NSW President Ron Glew OAM and former advocate, ESORT member and ADSO spokesman, Richard Kelloway AM OBE MiD. I was joined by Wal Beale that afternoon to erect a replacement flag onto the RAAFA flagpole at the Mitcham memorial library.

On the evening of Wednesday the 27th I joined Bill Denny and others at a meeting of the Holdfast Bay Council where he presented a deputation supporting the erection of a memorial plaque on the foreshore to Battle of Britain Ace, the late **Robert Bungey DFC**. His story is to be read in "Spitfire Leader", the book presented to AIRCDRE Rogers. I had commented on the plaque project, initiated by Robert's son Richard, in June and have written to Division Councillors since, and to "The Advertiser". Its success was in some jeopardy following a complaint about memorialising perpetrators of domestic violence. But the project was passed 10 to 2. This quest has been a personal one by Richard, with Bill



South Australian Division

Denny's huge help. I do not believe that it is a RSL project, nor an AFA one, though both ESOs have been supportive and that support noted. The wording on the plaque has not been determined. It must be acceptable to Richard. There is some enthusiasm to include reference to PTSD and suicide. But that was not the original intention.

The RUSI lecture with lunch was on Lessons not learnt or not heeded in submarine construction. Speaker was a disenchanted engineer who criticised widely and self-promoted. Some RUSI lectures are informative, relevant and positive. This was not one of them.

460 SQN Families and Friends Association informal dinner, generated by NSW stalwart Richard Munro, was at a noisy venue, and was to get together a group in SA. I was a late invited guest. One WW2 veteran, Ern Milde and one widow, Dawn Gubbins were present. All others were next generation. Two senior RAAF officers associated with 460 SQN were present and expected to lead. All know that Greg is a more appropriate guest than I for the next meeting.

AF 2021 Committee meeting. I shall defer to Greg to comment in detail.

Bangka Day. I have had a personal invitation for several years as one of the victims of the massacre on Radji Beach is connected to me by marriage. Warwick is to represent our association and will lay a wreath. His relationship to POW atrocities is closer. The usual site for this splendid annual event has been the SA Women's Memorial Playing Fields at Panorama. But a major redevelopment is in progress there. Its patron Mrs Le graciously agreed to have this year's ceremony at Government House.

Mitcham Branch report. The branch will have its first meeting of members, since the Yuletide meeting, on February the 19th, Darwin Defenders Day. We usually erect the special Darwin Defenders flag on that day. Speaker will be WGCDR Richard "Rex" Harrison, CO of the Remote Sensing Unit at Edinburgh.

The Committee met on Friday the 29th of January. Two WW2 committee members attended, Wal Beale OAM and Clem McArdle OAM. Clem's attendance, from the War Veterans' Home, was his first for some months. Wal, aged 95, has been a wonderful welfare provider by organising mobility aids for "older" members and families. But he has passed the baton on to Ian Duncan who did well to escape serious damage in the recent Scott Creek fires.

Mitcham has been approached by three organisations keen to use "our" club rooms: a football club an Air Force Cadet squadron and a Gym. A wedding party contractor and a Youth group have also looked interested. But the building belongs to the Mitcham Council, with whom we have usually had good relations (since they contemplated bulldozing it a decade ago to widen the flow of Brownhill creek). It is up to the Council to agree to such use. The RAAF Association cannot be in breach of our lease and sub-lease. But we need to have expenses covered. A liquor licence is a consideration. Have we contemplated similar complicated matters in the State Council? Meetings with Mayor Dr Heather Holmes-Ross and two of the Council staff were held on the 20th of January and the 3rd of February. On the



South Australian Division

second occasion we learnt that the Unley “Jets” football club had been provided temporary accommodation.

Mitcham’s finances are in a sound position with excellent professional management by Don Hawking OAM RFD. But, as is the case with the Division, it is largely the result of investment return rather than membership subscription, that sustains us. We enjoyed a benefactor’s change of heart. Rather than leave us a legacy bundle of Woolworths shares he gave it to us while alive. His photo adorns one wall

Mitcham will hold its AGM in March. It will be asked to consider following the trend and changing from the RAAFA to the AFA. Not many changes in Committee membership are expected. But they might sack me.

Robert Black

SA Division and Mitcham branch President, 15th of February 2012.