



South Australian Division

President's Report to Council Monday 25th of October 2021.

Meetings and Functions. 21st of September Zoom meeting with Bev Voigt and Peter Callow, 22nd Greg W input re presentation to TPG Steering Committee; 23rd. Legacy AGM and dinner farewell to Governor; 24th meeting at Salisbury RSL to plan events on 5th and 19th of November, pm Mitcham committee; 26th Loxton visit with Warwick R for anniversary of monument to WW2 Anson crash; Submission to TPG SC; 28th Funeral for David Leicester DFC and Bar, OAM Ld'H; 30th Battle of Britain Dining In night, RAAF EDN; 5th of October meeting with Premier; Zoom meeting with opposition spokesman Blair Boyer; pm meeting with Ian Smith and Bill Hignett at the Repat Wellbeing Centre; 9th AGM; 13th focus group on TPG SC, (funeral for Tony Semler) ; 14th day visit to Moonta with Greg W et al. re 7th of November; 15th Mitcham meeting; 16th SAAM history group; 20th Mess lunch and two meetings with Premier: Round Table at 3.00pm, Town Hall 4.00pm; 21st AFA Board videoconference; pm Australian War Widows 75th Anniversary.

Link Trainer A13-123. Council has discussed this matter for several months. We have established that it is one of perhaps four in SA, the property of the Heritage unit within RAAF (WGCDR Ryan) but formerly of RAAF Cadets (WGCDR Callow) and that all such trainers have been banned for use by cadets as the instrument dials are painted with radium luminous paint. We now understand that all trainers are likely to become display items in various museums etc.as they have been deemed suitable for display but not for use. Our understanding comes only from word of mouth; despite several requests we have received nothing in writing. We sympathise with the impassioned and detailed pleas from Bob Foremen OAM to keep it in AFA safekeeping. But it is not our decision. Bev Voigt, DEW, expressed her view that displaying it or other "physical" objects was not acceptable. However, this may not be DEW policy; and it may become policy to display such items if the TPGSC recommends it. (v.i.)

Torrens Training Depot, Parade Ground and Memorials Precinct Steering Committee, TPGPSC. Councillors will have received correspondence and material associated with our submission. I feel that we have made an important contribution to the debate about the future of the precinct. It is probable that the Consortium will follow up with input that will almost certainly augment our view.



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AGM. I was pleased with the attendance and conduct at our AGM. I was particularly pleased to have a nomination for a new Councillor, Andrew Figtree, whom I thank and congratulate. We shall formally reiterate our declaration about suitability to serve, in lieu of an Induction protocol, which remains “preparation in progress”.

Funerals. Two stalwarts in our Association were farewelled in the last month. David Leicester’s outstanding war record has been superbly described on Greg’s AFA Facebook post. It may also be seen on the VWMA web site. His funeral at Centennial Park, splendidly conducted by RAAFA Mitcham Chaplain Brenton Daulby OAM, was well attended. His family was not sure why he was awarded his OAM. But while serving on the Mitcham Council he had joined a committee establishing and developing the Chapel. And we saw a bronze plaque confirming such at the funeral.

I had sent to Councillors previously what I knew about Tony Semler, Port Pirie’s Life Member, who was instrumental in the creation of the RAAF Memorial in Port Pirie. Two members from Mitcham, Suzette Vidura and Geoff Hastwell attended the lovely Lutheran Church at Hahndorf on behalf of the Association.

SAAM. Greg Weller has been a major contributor to the Museum’s History Group and newsletter “Props and Mags”. I have recently joined it. Its secretary Gary Pett is one of our newest members. Forging closer links with our two organisations seems like good idea. Gary would be suitable to assist with the newsletter production.

Salisbury. Two events are planned: a 92 Wing Freedom of Entry march and Civic reception on the 5th of November and a recognition service at the St John’s Church Cemetery of FLGOFF Maxwell Pearce (?Pierce), who was killed in WW2 in a flying accident, on the 19th. Limited invitations have been sent for the former only. Please respond if invited as there have been difficulties with receiving acceptances for various AF 2021 events.

Moonta. I was delighted and impressed with the community enthusiasm, industry and cooperation in organization of this very special event on the 7th of November. Greg’s coordination was very much appreciated at our visit. Although invitations from the Copper Coast Council CCC were sent to members of our Council and branch committees many have been unable to attend, I hope that the CCC member responsible for invitations, Lynn Spurling, will allow deputies. I need to know from nominated deputies that they will be available. I



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also would hope that others might join us as “general admission” visitors. Greg’s Facebook has a link for registration to attend all events except the Town Hall official lunch. Joining an AFA group in the parade and attending the Church service is strongly recommended.

Premier and Opposition meetings. My message to the Premier has been summarised and circulated to you. It is essentially that some of the advice he has received from official veteran sources is not concordant with wider veteran views. On the other hand Blair Boyer, and before him Tony Piccolo, receive regular “Zoomed” advice from a committee representing all or almost all ex-service organisations.

Thailand Pavers and Anzac Highway plaques. These two matters exemplify the above. Although the Premier agreed that the Thailand pavers would go ahead there appears still to be an obstruction, or procrastination, within Veterans SA. He gave his word on the 24th of April to Cheryl Cates, Bill Denny and Ian Smith that this omission would be rectified; a wrong righted. Costs are not great and there is plenty of room. Any difference between Burma (recorded on the Anzac Centenary walk) and Thailand is obscure in the extreme. There are two survivors still alive in SA: Jack Thomas and “Chook” Fowler. And there are scores of SA sons in Thai cemeteries. I put a question on Wednesday afternoon in the form of “thanks for agreeing, but...”, including subsequent enquiries re cost. He dismissed the question by saying that nothing had changed!

The mystery surrounding the decision to move the approximately 50 plaques from the highway central strip to the TTD liftwell walls remains. Some plaques are missing; donor groups were not consulted; many people are angry and want them returned to the Anzac highway vicinity. Councillors attending today will be forgiven for not noticing them as they entered. They are no more visible to the public now than they were on the highway.

Help for **Secretary and Administration Officer.** We wish Warwick a speedy and full recovery. We do not have an assistant. Perhaps we should. Annette has stepped in as she always does. She is also busy clearing up some of the cluttered rooms that accommodate the AFA records and memorabilia. In doing so she has moved and lifted dozens of heavy boxes of wine bottles. Members of the CESM committee, or others, should do this. Annette is strong and fit but an injury to her would be catastrophic to our operations. A Workcover claim would be very messy.



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The Premier's "**Round Table**" and later "**Town Hall 2021**" meetings followed the mess lunch on Wednesday the 20th, at which Bill Hignett gave an excellent talk on the Repat Veteran Wellbeing Centre and its advocacy work for all, including AFA members. The former was mostly a report with RADM Scarce on the TPGPSC. I did ask that they might look at our landline when the IT was upgraded. A digital questionnaire will be prepared and distributed. Peter Williams, VWMA, was pleased that it would occupy some of the building previously used by the HTSA. Don Stewart, Legacy, raised his eyebrows. As seen above the Premier, at the TH, went back on his promise, or prevaricated, to restore "Thailand" to the pavers. He did, however, promise to upgrade the IT facilities in the Torrens Training Depot. In response to questions he acknowledged the need to identify veterans (in hospitals, prisons, aged care etc.), perhaps also families and stated that he had asked all departmental CEs to recognise such a commitment. A "whole of Government approach"? A veteran centre in the North was requested. He suggested that the mentor/mentee programme had been a success, with 12 teams! The Anzac Highway plaques were not referred to. However, this matter and others will be included in a future submission from the Consortium.

The 75th Anniversary of **Australian War Widows** at Legacy House was an enjoyable party with too much food. Greg was there also. President Jan gave a lively speech explaining that their change from WWG to AWW places them nearer to the beginning of the alphabet. The Premier repeated his IT promise.

Earlier that morning, October 21, I had joined the **AFA Board** videoconference. A national revised constitution is being prepared and in doing so a better model for the national organisation is to be discussed. This reflects a problem of federalism and authority, data bases etc. We are asked to regard the recent additional capitation fee as being "for support of veteran services and welfare". Support for "Wings" magazine should be regarded as a separate matter. AFA does not wish to see the magazine fail. A letter from RAAFA NSW Pubs concerning a new MOU/contract was considered. Does the Magazine reflect AFA policy or RAAF policy? We discussed the Foundation (needing a ?Tri-service interim Board), Alumni, the Suicide Commissioner's interim report, a possible "Wingman" project, (like the mentor/mentee in reverse, going strong in WA), the National curriculum about Anzac Day and the Link Trainers. Two Board members recalled unpleasant experiences in a Link Trainer. Carl will



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write to DG AF Cadets regarding our unsatisfactory dealings with RAAF officers in this matter, and our desire that A13-123 remains in SA.

I have circulated my responses to **the Suicide Commissioner's** recommendations and submitted them to Carl. If any Councillors would care to take some personal interest in this scourge please ask to see that report; Annette can print a copy of the recommendations. The Royal Commissioner in Queensland is requesting submissions. It is curious that Dr Boss's recommendations include making claims easier; harmonizing all three Acts, increasing fees for Psychiatrists, (there is a shortage in all jurisdictions), training service providers in "veteran-culture competence", (like we had at Repat perhaps?) and de-stigmatizing mental ill health in the veteran community. Admitting that one is a psychiatrist creates a stigma! Dr Boss repeats previous reports recommending care in the "Transition process".

Robert Black. President, AFA SA, 25th of October 2021.