



## South Australian Division

### President's Report to Council Friday the 25th of February 2022

**Meetings and Functions.** 27<sup>th</sup> of January, meeting with Ian Smith et al re changes to Vietnam Commemorations; 2<sup>nd</sup> of February meeting to discuss strategy re Thailand pavers; 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting with RADM Scarce re Steering Committee report; 4<sup>th</sup> 10.30 am meeting with Jacek Gniadek and David Edwards re security and access; 2 pm RAAFA Mitcham committee; 10<sup>th</sup> teleconference with Blair Boyer, opposition spokesman; 12<sup>th</sup> MS Teams meeting with Greg re Riley book; 13<sup>th</sup> attendance at Bangka Day Commemoration.

**Vietnam Commemorations.** This meeting was called on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January to discuss possible changes to the Vietnam commemoration on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, Long Tan day. The Northern suburbs branch of the VVAA has conducted this service with the Salisbury Council in recent years. Both VVAA and RSL feel that it should return to the Torrens Precinct as there is now a Vietnam War Memorial. There will be two commemorations this year; at Salisbury on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a Torrens event on the 21<sup>st</sup>. There will be some sensitivity over any changes. In particular the RAAF Edinburgh has been linked with the Salisbury commemoration. Greg Weller will be invited to the next meeting. In addition there will be an informal gathering on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last return voyage of HMAS Sydney. The VVFA has a separate commemoration near the anniversary of Coral and Balmoral. At a later meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> it was agreed that the commemoration on the 21<sup>st</sup> will have a Vietnamese choir and will be followed by a Vietnamese lunch. Greg will forward to Ian significant RAAF Vietnam veterans and offer banners.

**Thailand Paver Strategy.** I have sent a separate email about the planned strategy, agreed at a meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, to flood the Premier (Minister for VA) with requests to add Thailand to the pavement of the Anzac Centenary walk. He will thus be informed of the veteran community view and will not need to await any response from the VAC. I hope that you will all sign a postcard. Warwick or I will collect at the TTD or Salisbury office and deliver them without the need for postage. Letters were sent to all State Parliamentarians on about the 20<sup>th</sup> of February. They were asked to persuade Premier Marshall to add Thailand to the Centenary walkway. A copy of the postcard was attached.

**Torrens Precinct Steering Committee report.** RADM Scarce, chairman of the SC gave a brief summary to ESO representatives on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. He outlined five recommendations re: Creation of a Commemorative (?Heritage) Precinct; Educational value, with linkage to schools, AWM, VWMA etc.; some Occupancy and Utilisation issues; the need for a Curated Programme (?Calendar) of events, and thus appointment of a "curator"; and Governance. He expressed surprise when I warned him that Governance through Veterans SA does not equate to Governance by veterans.

**DEW discussion** with respect to Access Cards and Security. Warwick, Greg, Annette (by phone while isolated) and I met with Jacek Gniadek and David Edwards on the 4<sup>th</sup>. We had the usual difficulties as to who is responsible for what, lack of communication and parking policy and practice. However the main matters that we did resolve were: access cards and security issues. The former will be more strictly applied and will require more positive vehicle identification, and a signature. A four digit PIN is requested. However access to the building will be more easily obtained without the fear of setting off the alarm (expensive) as each day will have an hour when the building (ground or second floor) will be alarmed and when not. In recent days the first edition of the DEW Newsletter for occupants has arrived, and forwarded to Councillors. Communication may be about to improve.

Opposition spokesman meeting. **Blair Boyer's meeting** by Zoom was non-controversial. The postcard campaign was not mentioned. Party politics should be avoided. Agenda included the Steering committee report (awaited) the National Emergency Medal awards to Reserve ADF firefighters; a Strategic plan that Veterans SA has developed (thought to be poorly presented and too complicated); the Thailand pavers; and several planned programs, for example "storyright" and "mindright" by Amanda van Hoof of MESHSA and of a future exhibition on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April.

Frank Lampard reminded us about future reconciliation and commemorative events in May and July. He also told about several deceased indigenous veterans whose remains had been transferred from inappropriate places to their own "country". Dion Cowdrey ("Heroes on the Homefront"?) spoke of an event called "Robe to Recovery" of which I was, and remain, unaware. Mal Thiele, VVFA, told about a Camp Andrew Russell in the country, another matter that is news to me.

**Launch of book about WW2 Spitfire pilot Fred Riley.** Greg Weller is planning for this fascinating book "Strong to Serve" to be launched near the family home at Tea Tree Gully at 1.30 pm on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March. Fred turns 103 on the date of our Council meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> of February (?*March*). His return to sitting in a Spitfire last year was the first occasion since he was shot down by "friendly fire" during Operation Market Garden. Author Joseph Mack is a serving RAAF Officer, formerly a TACO with 10 SQN, Edinburgh. Mack's research includes material about the squadrons in which Fred served. Number 130 RAF squadron was also called the Punjab Squadron. Fred will probably be the oldest WW2 veteran in SA. The previous oldest, Byron (Bronco) Doley died recently at 104. I attended his funeral on the 21<sup>st</sup>. He lived his entire life at Happy Valley when not at war.

**Bangka Island Massacre Commemorative Service.** This annual service was honoured by the presence of both the Governor General HE David Hurley AC DSC and our Governor HE Frances Adamson AC, patron of the SAWMPFT. General Hurley's address was superb, emphasizing the importance of recognising the significance of our history. He described the 22 nurses machine-gunned on Radji Beach as "22 threads in our National Fabric" as he dedicated the 22 stainless steel poles, each with a brief bio of the nurses. Once again there was little recognition of the WAAF nurses who died on service elsewhere, as noted also by AIRCDRE Bender. Warwick Raymont, whose aunt was a victim of Japanese WW2 atrocity, laid a wreath on her behalf and on behalf of the AFA, which will reimburse his costs.

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **bombing of Darwin**, 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1942, will be commemorated at Salisbury tomorrow (Saturday). I shall attend on behalf of the Division. The Elizabeth/Salisbury branch will also be represented at "its club rooms", Salisbury RSL sub branch.

**Mitcham** will have its AGM on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March. Following the resignation of Don Hawking Suzette Vidura has become Treasurer. Her post as Membership Officer will be taken by Ian Duncan. At its branch meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February Kim Hutton showed a DVD with images and the story of the former Bowls Clubs. It was a most successful Club, attracting RAAFA Members including former Treasurer and Membership Officer, the late Don Roach, and ex-Army Treasurer Don Hawking. Recent attendances of just 15 are a concern. Covid -19 may still be a problem for members.

Robert Black, President, 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.