



South Australian Division

President's Report to Council Friday 18th of March 2022

Meetings and attendances. 19th of February Salisbury commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin Anniversary; 24th meeting re Vietnam War services; 27th of February funeral for Brenton Doley; 28th Veterans Health Advisory Council; 2nd of March AFA National Board; 3rd address to lunch group on Operational Deployments; 4th Mitcham branch committee; 5th attendance at "Wilkins Trilogy Part 1"; 7th Funeral for David Andary OBE before RUSI Lunch to hear Reg Carruthers; 8th meeting at 1200 with postcard campaign colleagues; and at 2.00pm with Greg Weller and Bishops at Cathedral re Ross Smith funeral Centenary remembrance service in June; 10th evening address by Brett Gooden on Germany's operation Natter; 12th Vietnam War anniversary of return of HMAS Sydney, TPG; 15th 11.00am interment of Ron Mills' ashes, Payneham. 5.30 pm appearance at Walkerville Council re preservation of "Aviemore"; 16th Mess lunch; 17th RUSI address by Penny Wong MP on "Current Challenges" NMAF Club; 18th 10.00 am Mitcham AGM.

Funerals and Burials. I attended funeral services for two WW2 veterans during the last month and will have represented the AFA at the interment of ashes of a third. David Andary was a Mitcham branch member who served in the SW Pacific islands as a medic after forgoing a chance to study Medicine at university. Post war he returned to Berri joining his father, who with 6 yo David, had migrated from Lebanon in 1930. David became a community and Industry leader, being appointed OBE in 1978. Brenton "Bronco" Doley was an army engineer on Kokoda who returned to his birthplace Happy Valley, where he remained until his death aged 104. He was the State's oldest WW2 veteran. Fred Riley, former Spitfire pilot, is now our oldest at 103. His biography by RAAF Officer Joseph Mack is to be launched in the next few weeks. The interment of Ron Mills's ashes will be a low key event with his family at Payneham cemetery on Tuesday the 15th. Ron's service with the RAAF was curtailed by illness that prevented overseas service. It was a source of personal disappointment; he never sought medallic recognition, nor compensation. But all three men had volunteered to serve and gave up their youth for our nation.

VHAC. The MS Teams meeting agenda did not include any major matters of concern. Recent Repat announcements are somewhat underwhelming. The Health Minister still will not call it a hospital. Veteran Mental health services remain fragmented.

AFA Board. The video-conference included a request that we consider a better national "Federal System", review the National constitution, have a proper national data base and continue to improve communications. Subsequently National President Carl Schiller agreed to provide a regular report for our SA AFA Newsletter. The next meeting in May will be the first face-to-face meeting for over a year. The AGM will be included. I would hope that others from SA will consider service to the National Board as Director or subcommittee member.

RUSI and other addresses. I have greatly enjoyed hearing and being informed by Reg Carruthers (Air and Space Warfare and Information) and will have heard Penny Wong before we meet. At the NMAF Club I was disappointed that Peter Ingman's address on the RAAF in SA in WW2 was postponed for Covid reasons. In his place Brett Gooden spoke on Germany's Operation Natter which aimed to send "gunners" by rocket to 12,000 metres altitude against B17s. It might have succeeded but advanced Aviation Medicine enormously leading to



South Australian Division

developments in Space Medicine. If councillors wish to join me at future talks of interest please let me know.

Sir Hubert Wilkins MC and bar. After Ross Smith and Richard Williams was George Hubert Wilkins SA's next most important aviator before Andy Thomas? He was not a military aviator, nor did he serve in Air Force, but his contributions to exploration in polar regions, his war-photography in and before WW1, and his oft demonstrated courage against all forms of adversity are extraordinary. Two of his biographies are appropriately titled "The Unseen Anzac" and "The Last Explorer".

A Festival fringe one man show summarised his life experiences from growing up in marginal SA farming land to exploration in the Arctic and service in WW1 during which Monash described him as "one of the bravest men in my Corps". He was twice awarded and received a Military Cross. He was knighted "Sir Hubert" as, it has been suggested that, "Sir George" might have confused the King (George, the Vth.)

The Thailand paver postcard campaign. You all will know of this matter, which has been taken up with determination by our RSL and other colleagues. By the date of the election the Premier's office will have received over 1000 postcards in favour of adding a "Thailand" paver or two. The VAC, to which the Premier had referred the matter, will not meet until 31 March to look for a handful in the veteran community who might vote against. I thank all of you who have contributed to the campaign.

Wreath or Book tribute? Secretary Warwick felt uncomfortable that the AFA alone presented a book tribute as opposed to a wreath at the Salisbury Darwin Bombing commemoration. This Council decided last year that wreaths would be purchased only for major commemorative events. Do we wish to debate this question again? Is one gift secmore respectful, the other of greater utility?

Sir Ross Smith funeral centenary Cathedral Service. Greg's superb organisation two years ago and the booklet used in that service were presented to the Dean of the Cathedral and Assistant Bishop Jenny Wilson at our meeting 10 days ago. They needed no persuasion and are enthusiastic supporters of the service, to be held on Wednesday June the 15th. Further meetings with RAAF Chaplain, Bandmaster, WOFF et al are planned.

Robert Black
President AFA SA 18th of March 2022.