



South Australian Division

President's Report to SA Division Council 9th of December 2019

Meetings and attendances. Tony Piccolo Forum 19th of November; Funerals for Eacott, Mitchell 22nd; AGM Friends of Vietnam Invalid Veterans' Association 23rd; Repat reactivation, CLG RSL 24th; Robert Kimber "Windhover" author, with Greg and Kevin Gogler 26th; AAT document review 2nd of December; Piccolo reception 4th; to come: NZ Webinar 1030 on Transition 10th; AFA Board 10th; EFC: Ross Smith rededication, 10th; R Ae Soc Dinner 10th evening; Mayor's reception 13th after Mitcham Yuletide meeting.

Shadow Minister Tony Piccolo has shown a great interest in ESO matters, as has his PA Dr Tom Counce, and his leader Peter Malinauskas. This compares with the minimal contact with our Minister for VA, Premier Marshall. If the Marshall Government is a one term government this relationship may soon be important.

The **FOVIVA AGM** was another interesting experience with the Vietnamese community, and Vietnam Veteran representatives. This charity supports limbless and other severely disabled veterans in Vietnam. I could not read the reports but could read the size of donations, from \$100 upwards. Auction for quilts, made by VVF wives, reached over \$1100.

The open **Repat reactivation** meeting at the CLG RSL was a great disappointment. An interstate, respected, company, Hammond, will develop three buildings with semi-independent units for patients with severe dementia, after demolishing the OPD building (we asked for consultations, specialist and general) and eliminating a score of parking spaces. No announcement was made about returning surgical and related services as promised pre-election. The "Veteran Hub", around the re-situated P&G veteran service centre, will be developed, but will it want to be in a "Dementia precinct"?

Windhover is in effect a love story told through letters and diaries of a couple separated by war service with the RAF. It is an interesting social history which includes an account of the extensive training required of a pilot for combat, ultimately in a Beaufighter Squadron.

The Royal Commission into veteran suicide will now proceed, despite strong ESO opposition, (ESORT, RSL, DFWA, ADSO and our National President's explanatory letter), on grounds that it will delay changes already recommended from three Inquiries. Now, in my view, we must be seen to support it on behalf of the grieving mothers. It was pleasing to see sensible, neutral comments on ABC TV program "The Drum", from RSL NSW President, James Brown.

The Webinar on Transition and Veteran Suicide tomorrow may be instructive, but it will coincide with the AFA Board videoconference.

Further EFC events are anticipated with interest. Tomorrow, the 10th of December, will mark 100 years since the Vickers Vimy touched down in Darwin. The re-dedication of the **Ross Smith statue** in Cresswell Gardens is an open one, hosted by the Lord Mayor and History SA. It follows a tradition of services attended by Queens Old Scholars, at perhaps the last of which Bob Cowper DFC and bar Leg Hon (Fr) gave the address. That evening the Royal Aeronautical Society will have a Dinner at the NMAF Club. Between these events I hope to take part in a teleconference of the AFA Board. The Lord Mayor is also hosting a reception on Friday evening the 13th, after the **Mitcham Yuletide** meeting at which Greg



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Weller and Arthur Jeeves will respond to toasts, to the RAAF and to the Association. I hope that members saw on SBS yesterday “The Greatest Air Race”.

On Wednesday the 11th the “gang of 13 ESO reps” will meet again at P&G RSL, under Bill Denny and Bill Hignett to discuss: the disappointing **Repat** developments (“Dementia Village”; still no surgery); inequitable BEST funding; and the scandal that is the **Queensland RSL Charity Lottery**.

The **DCG** meeting has been postponed. Robert Black, President