



The Royal Australian Regiment Association - ACT Branch

President's Report on the year 2019 for Annual General Meeting 21 April 2020

Overview

The focus of the RAR Association ACT Branch [RARA (ACT)] during 2019 and 2020 continued to be on ensuring that Regimental Commemorative events were well planned and conducted, and that we provided the membership with the opportunity to gather through our social program. The main events were the ANZAC Day March and Reunion on 25 April 2019 and our combined Regimental Birthday Dinner with the RAR Foundation on 21 November 2019 to mark the 71st Anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Regiment. The Branch also maintained its financial position and continued to encourage and grow its membership.

Committee

The RARA (ACT) Committee has continued to work hard and has my sincere thanks. The Committee currently comprises:

President – Stephen Dunn, AM
Vice President – Michael Cole
Secretary – Glenn Crosland
Assistant Secretary – John Robbins, CSC
Treasurer – Dave Grierson
Tony Daniels – Committee Member
Simon Whitehead – Committee Member
Jeremy Hanson, MLA CSC – Committee Member

Membership

Membership numbers have been steady over the past year, but there is a continuing need for more membership renewals and new memberships. There have been some losses, mainly due to some older members moving interstate to retirement destinations. These continue to be balanced by new memberships of younger members, particularly Timor Leste, Iraq, Afghanistan and peacekeeping RAR veterans still serving. Branch membership averages 70, with a number of associate [unfinancial] members.

Financial

The Association's financial position has remained steady over the past year. We need to keep working on our membership numbers to ensure the continued financial viability of the Association. Also, we must manage our available funds with care to support our commemorative and social activities. Our capacity to respond to solicitations for donations for various regimental causes is limited; and the committee continues to treat these approaches judiciously, while acknowledging that we can contribute periodically to important causes, such as upkeep of the RAR National Memorial at Enoggera.

Commemorative Events

The ANZAC Day March was well-attended this year with over 120 members marching and more than 100 attending the RARA Reunion at the Hotel Mercure. There was once again a mix of older and younger veterans marching, most of whom went on to the reunion. I am happy to report that in response to our letter to Dr Brendan Nelson, Director, of the Australian War Memorial and Mr John King, President of Returned and Services League of Australia after the march in 2018, the ANZAC Day March and National Service for 2019 returned to the very successful format of previous years. The general consensus of the members of the RARA [ACT] was that the ANZAC Day March and National Service for 2019 was very successful and well executed. His Excellency General The Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), Governor-General of Australia, made a surprise visit to the reunion this year and spent a couple of hours with the veterans. Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG was also in attendance.

We continued to commemorate the Regimental Battle Honours at the appropriate memorials [Kapyong in April, Coral/Balmoral in May, Long Tan in August and Maryang San in October]. Numbers attending remain small, but it is important that we continue to mark these Regimental events in the National Capital. The Branch is grateful to the support provided by RMC for the provision of the bugler, staff and sometimes cadets to support these events.

The Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day/Long Tan Day was celebrated on Friday 18 Aug 2018 at the National Vietnam War Memorial on ANZAC Pde. The Long Tan commemoration was organised by the Vietnam Veterans ACT & District Committee, chaired by Ian Thompson of the Veterans Support Centre, Belconnen. To assist with the continuity of this commemorative event, RARA (ACT) made a financial contribution of \$250.00 to help with expenses.

The committee has agreed to hold one additional annual commemorative event in June or July to cater for later operations. The additional commemorations will be as follows:

- 7 July 2020 – Middle East (Iraq/Afghanistan)
- 2021 – Somalia
- 2022 – East Timor
- 2023 – South East Asia (Malaya/Borneo/Thai-Malay Border/Malaysia)
- 2024 – Rwanda

As you are aware, the Federal Government instigated strict measures to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic which has placed restriction on the numbers that may attend commemorative events. As our members are in the COVID-19 high risk category the committee has decided to cancel all our 2020 commemorative events. This will be reviewed when the government lifts the restriction on numbers and social distancing.

Social

The Regimental Birthday Dinner in November remains the major social event for the year. The Dinner in 2019 was held on Thursday 21 November to celebrate the 71st Birthday of the Royal Australian Regiment. The Guest of Honour was the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency David Hurley. During dinner he presented the Hasset Award, for the most outstanding junior leader in the Royal Australian Regiment, and then gave a very interesting and informative after dinner speech. The dinner was attended by 90 Association and Foundation

members, and invited guests. The feedback from the Governor General and the members was the evening had been very successful.

The branch attended the RMC Infantry Lanyard presentations in June and November. Together with the Birthday Dinner and ANZAC Day Reunion, there is also the opportunity to have lunch at the Hotel Mercure after each of the four Commemorative Services. The Committee feels that this level of activity provides sufficient, sustainable social activity for the Association.

Key Issue for 2019/20

The main emphasis of the committee in 2019/20 will be increasing membership by reducing lapsed membership and increasing the recruitment of new members, particularly Timor Leste, Iraq, Afghanistan and Peacekeeping RAR veterans who are still serving. We have also started to address the issue of a succession plan of key committee positions with Glenn Crosland taking over as the Secretary from John Robbins. Finally, we have finished training on the new RARA (ACT) website and it is now up and running, although it is experiencing some issue at the moment.

Conclusion

The Association is in a stable position due to the untiring efforts of my fellow committee members. I would like to thank them again for their dedication and hard work on behalf of our membership. I would also like to thank the Military Shop for their continued support to the Association through the donation of raffle prizes for the Infantry Dinner and Anzac Day reunion.

Duty First



Stephen Dunn, AM

President

20 April 2020