

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO STATE SECTIONS

July 2020



It has been some time since the National Council has been able to physically meet and discuss the various issues which our Association faces everyday. Unfortunately the impact of the COVID-19 Virus has been catastrophic to the Australian Nation and all of its people. We in the NAA, have not been immune to the risks, the challenges and the isolation caused by the virus. We pride ourselves in our work for our shipmates, their families and our ability to project our naval heritage in the general community. However these activities have been put on hold in one form or another across the country for a little while.

But I am pleased to report that although we cannot meet in a physical sense, a lot is happening within the National Council. Various celebrations are still being planned for later in 2020 or in early 2021 to commemorate the centenary of the NAA. State Presidents have been advising me of their efforts in planning to hold dinners and commemorative events in their States, with their Patrons actively involved. Our Centenary edition of the White Ensign Magazine will be published in late August and will feature comments from our Patron – the Governor General and the Chief of Navy. It will be a bumper issue and a good souvenir for our members.

The nation wide lock downs have given us a good chance to reflect on the challenges facing the NAA beyond the pandemic and into our second century of operation. The National Executive have prepared a paper for DVA reflecting on our direction beyond Covid-19 and a summary will be published in the centenary edition of the WEM. Membership has been a matter of great concern to all of us as we enter our senior years. It became apparent at a reception aboard HMAS CANBERRA earlier this year, in the presence of a large cohort of serving RAN personnel that the NAA brand was almost non-existent within the Navy. This is a major concern as our Constitution demands that to be a Full member, each potential member must have been a serving or former member of the RAN, a member of an Allied Navy, a merchant seaman with service with Allied Navies, a senior member of an Australian Navy Cadet Unit or the Partner of a Full member. Consequently, if our brand is unknown to the wider marine family, we have little chance of securing new members. Fortunately, we have had a major breakthrough with the Chief of Navy (CN). After a request from our national President and with our national Secretary working up through the chain of command, we have had significant success in publicising the NAA to the RAN. CN has agreed that the White Ensign Magazine (WEM) will be loaded in digital form onto the RAN internal digital information based system – **FORCENET** – for all personnel to freely access, read and enjoy. We will expose the NAA to the entire RAN and the National Executive hope that recruitment will start as a result of this exposure. The centenary edition will be the first edition to be loaded onto **FORCENET**.

Other areas where we have been quite active are in strongly supporting the campaign to

back the award of the posthumous VC to Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean and supporting those sailors who are striving to gain recognition for all RAN personnel who supported DARWIN's recovery after Cyclone Tracy in 1975. They are seeking the award of the National Emergency Medal to all 3000 sailors who served during that recovery programme in DARWIN.

Participation in the Ex Service Round Table (ESORT) in Canberra has been ongoing via Zoom Video Conferencing with the Senior Team at DVA. The National Secretary has participated and he has been distributing notes from each meeting to State Secretaries for distribution to Sub-sections. He informs us that there may be some stormy waters heading the way of the ESO's with a Review into DVA and its functions by the Productivity Commission which released its report in July 2019 and the speculation is rife that a new model will be proposed for the role of DVA, the role of ESO's in the area of Advocacy and the level of service provided to be streamlined in ways still to be announced. However the NAA will strongly represent the views of Navy veterans and their families through our own efforts and our participation as a senior member of ADSO.

Finally, we still have not been able to hold our National AGM as travel and large meetings are still prohibited in most States, particularly in Victoria. The 2019 National Executive continues to serve, with a new National Membership Registrar – Glenn Williams – as George Mock resigned for health reasons recently. In closing I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work done by George over the last three years to introduce our new website.

Please stay safe and healthy during these uncertain times. Once Navy Always Navy.

Yours Aye,

Graham Savage  
National President  
Naval Association of Australia