

## NP's Up-Date Letter to Members Dated: 01 September 2023

Colleagues,

My apologies for not having spoken to you earlier on what has been keeping myself and the National Executive busy over what has been a particularly challenging time. At the forefront has been establishing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NAA and the Navy. As I hope your members are now becoming aware, this has now come into being.

There is a lot covered in this 'up-date' document but I hope you will persevere on the understanding that in the future it is my earnest hope that messages and up-dates will reach you via the National Bosun's Call (NBC) Newsletter. I have mistakenly assumed the NBC was being sent out nationally to members via Section and Sub-Sections and even onto some member's email addresses but am now advised that has not been happening. Clearly there are IT capability issues at play and with the quite extraordinary pro bono work being done by a small band of very talented and dedicated IT 'gurus' under the stewardship of Glenn Williams, the NAA Webmaster, I hope we will soon see a means of having the membership aware of what is going on in a timely manner. Glenn has been at the forefront of improving and safeguarding the IT workings of our Membership and Association data and we are indebted to him and his colleagues for this work.

In addressing those key issues that come to mind, I hope I might bring you up to-date with matters that have come our way; our endeavours in addressing the best interests of the Association; and, hopefully dispel misconceptions and provide clarity where necessary. Hopefully, those who are already across these matters will bear with me for the aim is to reach out to as many members as is possible with this information package.

### Up-Date Briefing Notes:

1. When I first assumed the role of National President (NP) there were loud calls from within the membership that 'I needed to establish a closer working relationship with the Navy, our Parent Service, and to find the means of increasing the membership of the NAA'. On the first task, I am delighted to advise that we have made extraordinary progress. Though Vice Admiral Hammond had assumed the role of Chief of Navy (CN) in mid-2022, my first formal meeting with him was not until 10th May 23. I don't believe anyone would necessarily be surprised at this for the tempo of operational and other matters confronting CN and all within his senior leadership team is unprecedented in recent years. In the company of Mrs Wendy Lissing, our newly appointed Assistant National Secretary, our aim was to discuss options as to establishing a working relationship with Navy principally, the use of the Australian White Ensign (AWE) in our banner and flag and as a Funeral Pall; formalising the access the RAN Bereavement Pins; NAA access to Navy ship's badges and the RAN Badge in 'co-branding' of merchandise for our members; and, a number of other matters.

2. At this juncture I need to alert you to the fact that we had already heard the Navy were considering how best to govern the improper use of their badges and in particular, the AWE in the wake of what were seen to be examples of wanton disregard for Service Protocols. The anecdotal advice was that a total embargo was under consideration within Navy Headquarters. What we wanted to do was to seek approval for the NAA to use that which has

been an integral to our identity. I had seen images of NAA Banners and a Flag bearing the 'old' White Ensign (in use in the RAN from 1901 – 1967) in use within the Association. It was perhaps one of the very first questions I had, whereby I asked if we had been given approval to do so. While we had documented evidence of the approval to have the King's Crown atop our NAA Badge, no-one came forward from within the Association with evidence in relation to the WE/AWE. This then became a top priority! We all know that the NAA Badge and Motto (Once Navy, Always Navy) were trademarked quite some years ago, certainly well before my tenure. Why do I mention this now: it means that whenever we use the badge or motto there are specifications as to the design, shape colour etc that must be adhered to.

3. Returning now to my meeting with CN: I was delighted to hear at the outset that CN is very supportive of the NAA having access to the AWE but his intent was that 'this had to be stipulated and administered in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the RAN and NAA'. Further, he acknowledged that the AWE in our Anzac Day Banners serves as a 'beacon' to serving and naval veterans who found themselves without a designated 'Ship or Association' with whom to march.

4. CN then expressed a desire to see a senior member of his staff invited as an **ex officio** member, into the NAA NX; therein facilitating the closest working relationship possible between the Navy and the NAA. What is an ex officio: *a member of a body (notably a board, committee, council i.e., the NAA NX) who is part of it by virtue of holding another office (i.e., Senior Appointment within Navy Headquarters)*. I am presently working on that letter. I very much hope you will see that this is a most historic and fundamental change that has the capacity of impacting upon practically all aspects of the NAA. Whilst we need to take time to work through these momentous developments, the aim will be to keep matters within the NAA as straight forward as possible and with as little adjustment as is necessary. The meeting with CN was undoubtedly the beginning of a new era for our Association.

5. I hope you are all aware of the two very important pieces of correspondence that I received early last week. First; the matter of asking The King to be our Patron-in-Chief. With Her Majesty The Queen having been our Patron-in-Chief since 1922, until her passing in September last year, the NC agreed we should approach The King. I wrote to the Palace on 24 Sep 22, and when we had not received a response by mid-2023, I wrote to the Official Secretary to The Governor General on 13 July 2023, seeking his advice. In a letter dated 19 July 2023, he undertook to raise the matter with The Palace on our behalf. In a letter from the Deputy Private Secretary to The King dated 08 August 2023, we see that a decision as to which patronages the King will be in a position to take-up is yet to be made. When advice is received, I will promptly convey that to you through your Section President. Let us hope we have good news in due course.

6. Second; we have now seen a copy of a letter from the Chief of Staff (COS), Navy Headquarters, dated 08 June 2023, pertaining to the MOU. Unaccountably we had not received a hardcopy of the letter and it was not until I had spoken to the Navy Brand Officer on Wed 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023, on another matter, that I would get to see an electronic copy. The most important provision is that we now have approval from Navy to have the AWE incorporated in the NAA Ensign and in our Anzac Day Banners.

7. Before I make further comment on our initial reading of the letter, I wish to draw our collective attention to what is said towards the end: ‘*In all cases cited above, the NAA National President is considered to be the “NAA Approving Authority” for managing requests for the use of Protected Emblems, in consultation with the appropriate Navy Directorate. This Agreement will remain in force from 01 January 2023 to 31 December 2027, at which point it will be formally reviewed*’. Therein we will do all that is possible to ensure the success of this trial initiative and hopefully at the time of the formal review by Navy we can attain a longer, if not in perpetuity tenure, should that be possible.

8. This is a bold undertaking on the part of the Navy and we have been offered a very privileged role in partnership with them. As we would expect there are protocols and obligations we will need to adhere to, as is the case within the NAA with our badge and motto being trademarked. We see in the COS letter that ‘*The NAA President is authorised to commission commemorative banners for each Section branch and district sub branch of the NAA to be paraded on commemorative occasions, following consultation with Navy on its design*’. We will deliberate on that and what the practicalities may be. For example; we see that in the example provided, the ACT Section Banner is not compliant with our trademarked provisions in that the motto shown has been overtaken some years ago. I do not envisage we will see this particular banner changed until it is decided upon within that Section to purchase a replacement. Most importantly, we see that the AWE and the NAA Badge are suitable incorporated in the banner.

9. At this juncture there are issues within the MOU upon which I will seek clarification from Navy. For example: where ‘*The NAA President is authorised to commission co-branded merchandise (currently limited to coffee mugs) for sale to (ex-) RAN members of the NAA, using current and historical ship’s badges*’, I will seek advice in relation to the WRANS Badge, which I see as being a ‘historic’ naval service badge and confirmation as what constitutes a historical ship’s badge e.g., those ships and establishments that are no longer in commission and, perhaps the like of a team (CDT?) or Unit (Beecroft Bombardment Range – TRV? – RANTAU)? There may also be the possibility of co-branding with an ANC Training Ship with which a Section/Sub-Section has a close working/supporting relationship.

10. I sincerely hope we can move onto some exciting NAA Merchandising initiatives in the form of a NAA /RAN Co-Branded design. It appears clear that where we wish to use a badge or image that is not the property of the NAA e.g., a member wishing to purchase a co-branded mug bearing the badge of his/her old ship, the prospective purchaser (project coordinator) will need to provide the NAA Brand Manager with the proposed design with the NAA Badge on one side and their old ship/etc on the other. Should they wish to use the RAN Badge and not that of the NAA, they will need to make a request directly to Navy for that will not be in the purview of the NAA. There is a lot here to cover so I feel I will not wander further into the weeds for the moment.

11. Some of you will have heard of Challenge Coins (CC). They are perhaps best described as a medallion generally of a size marginally larger than a 50c coin. Within the Military and other services or organisations they are given or exchanged as a token of appreciation, a gift or perhaps as a souvenir. There are some who are avid collectors within Defence and the Association. I see them as being a smaller and more assessable alternative to the Ships Plaques we would be familiar with from our time in the Service. When designing a CC, the process can be relatively straight forward if it comprises components i.e., an image or

words belonging to that group/association. It is when the design includes an image or words that are from another group/association or are deemed to be free-hold within the general community where challenges (excuse the pun) can arise. Suffice to say that in relation to a CC design presently before us, I have felt it prudent to seek clarification from authorities outside the NAA on some design aspects that are not ‘ours’, so as to not place the Association in an invidious position should we inadvertently overstep a protocol or instruction. Further, whilst we now have approval to incorporate the AWE in our Ensign and Banners and, our badge and ‘historical ships’ on merchandise, it is presently specified in the MOU as being limited to coffee mugs only. I will now be discussing the possibility and means of expanding the range of NAA Merchandise with Navy. That includes the use of the AWE on a CC, for example. I would hope this will not be a protracted process. In the meantime: there are issues of manufacture options; cost; payment for goods procured; distribution; and, project coordination, to be progressed and presented for deliberation by the National Council (NC) and a determination reached as to the ‘way ahead’ for this and other CCs.

12. As you aware we presently have a Sections in all but the NT, hopefully in time we can establish a presence the ‘Top End’; the NC aims to meet twice a year with one meeting being somewhere in this vast land of ours and for the foreseeable future, the other meeting will be in Canberra and there we would envisage also conducting the AGM. Why Canberra: because there we have greater access to Navy Headquarters and Government Departments; wherein we invite the Chief of Navy to attend; at our last meeting (17-18 May 2023) the then incoming Secretary DVA attended in person, along with several of her senior team members; we also had a senior member of the ADF Transition Team (TT) join us to provide an insight as to what is being done to assist ADF personnel when they leave the Service and what role the Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) can possibly play in that process. This is another task that has been presented to me as ‘*something the NP needs to get the NAA involved in*’. With the joint ADF structure of the Department of Defence – Defence People Group TT, we specifically requested a ‘Navy member’ to come to our meeting so as to learn as much as we could of what is happening with Navy Personnel when transitioning out of the Service. From what we have seen and heard we may be able to join in with other ESOs in having a ‘stand or table’ at a TT Form when next one is conducted in a ‘capital city or major town’ near you. We are developing a pamphlet and a series of information A4 sized posters which we will present shortly for the NC to consider. There is not an endless supply of funds so we will need to discuss options at the Executive and Section level as to procuring copies to be handed out.

13. Whilst speaking of our NC/AGM Meetings it is worth mentioning that without the Grant-in-Aid monies coming to us from DVA, which we cannot always be assured will be forthcoming, but historically ranges between 9-10 thousand dollars. This assists enormously to offset the travel and venue (meeting room and catering during the proceedings) costs, and without which we would be in dire straits. As it is, we routinely have to rely of Association monies to offset some of these costs. As you know, the Sections have to pay for their delegate’s accommodation and for some that is becoming a heavy load to bear. We are watching this closely and deliberating on what we may have to do should it all become too costly. To reiterate; without the DVA funding support our ability to conduct twice a year NC or AGM Face-to-Face Meetings would be severely impacted.

14. At our last NC Meeting we received a timely reminder that all the monies that National receives in the form of Capitation, is spent on the production and distribution of hard copies of our NAA Quarterly White Ensign Magazine. We are investigating options to

lower our costs and as an example we have used a lesser-grade of paper in the latest edition. We will continue to monitor this matter for the magazine is the Flagstaff Publication for our membership and is so very well received outside the Association. I must admit that in the light of comments or inquires along the way as to what was happening with the capitation funds, I found it very informative to have this information presented at that meeting. There are no other financial income sources for National to utilise without tapping into Association monies held. The next edition is now being compiled and features our Submariners.

15. There is a matter that has caused me a great deal of heartache wherein I hope I can allay any misconceptions or unfounded reporting. When I first joined the NAA, I would frequently find myself at a commemorative service here in the ACT; the national Anzac Day and Day of Remembrance services; the Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration; the Battle for Greece and Crete; Last Post Ceremonies at the AWM; and, the HMAS *Canberra* Memorial Service. During most of these we would rightly find ourselves reciting the Naval Ode: ‘*They have no grave but the cruel sea....*’. For some time, I found myself asking where I fitted in this picture, for I had served and thankfully, returned. When it comes time for me to ‘cross the bar’ what would be said at my funeral? The Naval Ode is sacred and I would never contemplate there being any change in the circumstances in which the NAA is privileged to be in the position to honour those who have lost their lives in naval service.

16. What has transpired here is that I thought it worthwhile to explore the possibility of there being an ‘Ode to The Naval Veteran’. The proposed ode was presented to the NC on 23 Jun 22 (Port Adelaide NC Mtg), and accepted as the ‘NAA Ode to The Naval Veteran’. The ode speaks of ‘*wounds seen and unseen*’ i.e., not limited to, but including PTSD and Cancers; ‘*deeds known and unknown*’ i.e., we know of there being numerous instances of selfless bravery by naval personnel but the very nature of our service in ships, submarines and naval aircraft means that not all such acts are ‘seen by others’ and therein due recognition may not be forthcoming. We only need look at the battle faced in seeing Teddy Sheean VC, fittingly recognised. What does all this mean for you as a member of the NAA contemplating your own ‘crossing the bar’ service; you now have a NAA ode in the mix for what is to be said at your funeral. There are NO stipulations or obligations; this ode is NOT to replace the Naval Ode, nothing can or should ever be considered as doing so. It is not for me or any other member to tell you what you should be doing in this regard. If anyone has said as much their assertion is totally unfounded. As we in the ACT Section have chosen to do at our Section Meetings and the HMAS *Canberra* Memorial Service, we recite the Naval Ode in commemoration of all who have lost their lives in naval service; the NAA Ode to the Naval Veteran in commemoration of those who have returned and subsequently ‘crossed the bar’; and, the Ode of Remembrance in commemoration of all who have served and paid the ultimate prize in the service of the nation. Within the Executive we will presently begin working on a ‘Guide’ for the conduct of a NAA Funeral Service which will include a number of options in relation to which ode/s a member would wish to be used; prayers; and, other words which will be there NOT as a ‘set template’ but specifically, to provide options.

17. I have been heartened by positive comments and words of appreciation from members who have wondered as to the words of the naval ode in regard to their circumstances and, from those who were not able to serve at sea, wherein they see the NAA Ode to The Naval Veteran as being a fitting tribute to their service. Should any member of the NAA wish to have the Naval Ode said at their funeral be it ashore or out a sea, that is their

prerogative and has nothing to do with any other member of the Association. It was never intended or envisaged otherwise. The choice is yours!

18. I spoke at the outset as to the two primary missions laid before me when I first assumed the duties of National President. I have reported at length on what has transpired in relation to establishing a closer relationship with Navy. The other is the attracting and signing up of new members and of course there are no fail-safe or sure-fired means of doing this. When I look about me, I do not see any other volunteer organisation, veteran based or otherwise, that is not experiencing a decline in membership. At a more immediate perspective we in the ACT Section have been delighted to welcome a number new members in past months. One had recently completed full-time service and then served with a government agency. I asked why he had joined the NAA and he said that it was in search of ‘naval camaraderie’, which is as I see it, is our primary and most valued asset. So how do we get that message out into the community; I do not personally use social media but we are deliberating on what we might do in that space to ‘advertise and promote’ the NAA and how we can offer ‘naval camaraderie’ amongst ‘an egalitarian and inclusive gathering of like-minded naval veterans and those with an interest in the Navy’. Be assured this is a high priority and if anyone has an example or concept that will see new members joining our ranks, please share that with the NC and NX members. Thank you.

19. Much occurs out of sight and whilst I have already mentioned the work of the NAA Webmaster, all members of the NX are kept busy. Eileen Calway, our National Treasurer, has overseen the transfer of the bulk of our banking to the Bendigo Bank and as you would hopefully be aware, we did away with the Pay-Pal facility quite some time ago. Eileen advises me our PLI, Advocate and Volunteer Insurance payments are up to-date and we have just received our DVA Grant for year 2023, this time it is for \$10,000. Can I ask that we all endeavour to get the Capitation Payment to Eileen by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. That will assist her greatly. Speaking of Eileen’s tasks on our behalf, we are looking at the administration of all Association financial matters being with the Treasurer. At present the National Registrar handles monies in the purchase of NAA Badges and any engraving requirements. These expenses then need to be accounted for (i.e., production of receipts etc) in the auditing process for the Association and, as is recommended by the Auditor, all monetary actions ought to be with the Treasurer. Accordingly, proposed By-Law amendments will be presented for consideration in time for the next NC.

20. You will all be aware that our effort thus far to secure the services of a National Secretary have not been successful. We can not imagine the dilemma we would face had Russell Pettis not been prepared to stay on as an Administrator while our search continues. This, of course, cannot carry on indefinitely.

21. In concluding this very lengthy up-date, it would be timely for me to provide an insight as to how I go about my duties within the Executive, NC and wider veteran forums. As we in the NX prepare for a NC or AGM Meeting we discuss the matters at hand and on reaching a consensus or a majority view, that is then the position we take into the meeting whereat, the NX has just one vote. You can be assured no one member of the Executive has sway over us all. Whilst I may have a concept or possible solution in mind, nothing emerges from the Executive that has not been deliberated upon and amongst us there is a great deal of experience and wise counsel that can and is, drawn upon in whatever we agree to undertake or promote. Similarly, when we determine a matter would not be in the best interests of the

members and the Association (i.e., at the NC/AGM we have 'one vote'. At the NC/AGM meetings I seek to fill the role of a facilitator, wherein one of my tasks is to see that the participants get to have their say. If I wish to speak on any matter, I then need to vacate the 'chair' in order to do so. Time limitations will sometimes impact on proceedings but all participants are encouraged to have their say there or in the company of other delegates outside the meeting.

22. I am your representative in the DVA hosted ex-service organisation 'round table' forum; the ESORT. There I am working with ESO representatives from the three Services; Legacy; War Widows; Soldier-on; and, others. It is important to remember that 'this forum is hosted by DVA and they invite ESOs to participate'. That said, be assured I do advocate or press for solutions with vigour where necessary, or possible. I know there is a great deal for us to do and to watch out for where DVA is concerned but am of the belief that we can get more done in collaboration with the Department. There have been times when we have seen the Minister for Veterans Affairs in attendance or we have been taken up to Parliament House for a particular briefing e.g., the Budget; the 'harmonisation' of the three Acts pertaining to veteran support. I am very pleased to report that the working relationship we presently have with key members within DVA is most positive and we have a number of the DVA leadership team on the electronic mailing list for the NBC.

23. For your information we are presently pursuing a request for the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal to reconsider the decision made in 2013 not to recommend the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to two WWII personnel namely, Lieutenant Commander Robert Rankin and Leading Seaman Ronald Taylor, both lost onboard HMAS *Yarra* sunk on Wednesday, 4 March 1942. In this we are most fortunate to have in our midst the highly acclaimed naval historian and advocate Dr John Carroll PhD, author of '*Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind*'. This published work provides an all-inclusive chronology of the part played by HMAS *Sydney*, the '*Vung Tau Ferry*', and her Escort Ships in the Vietnam War. It is John's paper that we believe provides new evidence pertaining to the actions of both Rankin and Taylor and therein are seen to clearly satisfying the prerequisites for the award of The Victoria Cross for Australia. The NAA is proud to be supporting Dr Carroll in this endeavour. We are also pursuing the possibility of a medallic or Commemorative Medallion for the vast number of RAN personnel and others from the ADF, who played a critical role in Darwin in the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy.

24. I think that is enough for now but if there is an issue you want to speak to me about, please do so: [david.manolas@navalassoc.org.au](mailto:david.manolas@navalassoc.org.au) Mob: 0427 504 564)

Yours aye,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Manolas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Manolas