Report to Members 2 of 2015

When this association was first established in 1984, or thereabouts, its original aims and aspirations were for the interests and welfare of those of us with Vietnam service. Just to reinforce this point, it might be worthwhile to reflect on our current numbers, as provided by the Hon: Secretary.

We have 613 members, which includes some non-active members.

Of these, 537 are those of us with Vietnam service.

Far East Strategic Reserve Service (FESR) only: Nine (9)

Associates: 38

Honorary: 26

HMAS *Sydney 2*: Three (3)

As a consequence, when we appear to emphasise the point about ‘*those of us with Vietnam service*’, we are attempting to address the interests and welfare of the vast bulk of our membership. This does not mean that we do not give due consideration to all our members, as those with FESR service will readily attest from past ventures - by this association - on their behalf. The granting of the NGSM, to those eligible, and the ASM for FESR service are but two examples.

The current purpose behind referring to the above data is to emphasise the fact that many of our shipmates have passed away since our inception, **59** of them with Vietnam service - many of whom were about our vintage - some even younger.

When one adds up the ages of these men at passing and divides this by their number (**59**) one is left with an average age of almost **66**. Then, by taking into consideration where the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW) - who base their figures on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data - states: *‘Men aged 65 in 2010-2012 could expect to live another* ***19.1*** *years (an expected age at death of* ***84.1****) years)’*. It can be readily assumed from this that service with the RAN - during the Vietnam War - must have had an adverse effect on the health and welfare of many of those who served, based upon this data.

On a much lighter note, during a recent visit to Hobart for the Wooden Boat Festival, 6-9 February, it became the topic of much conversation at breakfast when it was noted in the Hobart *Mercury*, that HMAS *Sydney* ‘Anchors Away, 2.7 Tonnes of anchor dropped to the bottom of the Derwent River’, ‘so what’ you might say, but on this occasion it had broken at the lugless joining shackle, and was unable to be ‘heaved in’. The delay meant that *Sydney* could not play the part of the Royal Hobart Regatta flagship.

While enjoying the obvious delights of Hobart, we also made contact with Stan Davis, and was met at the airport on our departure by Di Eggins. Both were in fine form and enjoy keeping in touch by both forms of media provided by the association. Shortly after our visit, Stan was endeavouring to get hold of an article on our 97 year old member - Fred House - and his flying escapades, which some of you will have seen by now on the website. Fred and our Hon: Secretary, David Dwyer, have a common interest, both are avid apiarists.

For general information which may allay some concern in members due to some less than accurate information, being circulated recently from a source which shall remain nameless. The original *Deeming Instrument* of 22 May 1986 - for Logistic Support service in Vietnam - was signed by Kim Beazley not Paul Keating. This was revoked by Bronwyn Bishop on 23 December 1997, and backdated to May, following the Allotment and Port-to-Port fiasco of that year.

The SS referred to as part of the ID on Gold/White Cards of that era simply signifies ‘Special Service’, the term used for service in a war zone in those days. (I think they now use ‘warlike’ and ‘non-warlike’, peace-keeping’ and ‘peace-making’). For example, those of us who reside in Victoria have VSS; I would suggest that other states have something similar. Suggest that SSS means South Australia, nothing more than that.

On a more sombre note, a former President of the association, one Neil Anthony McInnes, passed away 22 February. He did two or three of the first few voyages in HMAS *Sydney*, former ABQMG R55793. May he rest in peace.

On Friday 6 March, both David Dwyer and I attended the passing out parade of ‘Shipp’ Division at HMAS *Cerberus*. ‘Shipp’ Division is named after Neil Ervin Shipp, a Leading Airman who was KIA on 31 May 1969 while serving with RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam, as part of ‘EMU’ Squadron.

*Cerberus* lived up to its reputation as being the most unpredictable place weather wise. Having front-row seats may be a great place to view proceedings, but with a stiff south-westerly and constant drizzle, it became a matter of how many times can we shift the chairs back to avoid getting soaked. Our days of being ‘wet, homesick and frightened’ have long since passed us by. Many thanks to Lt. Claire Dempsey and Lt. Melissa Cowling for their courtesy on the day - the information regarding the prize recipients were provided some two days later by Lt. Dempsey.

Sportsperson of the Intake: Rct. MLS Sophie Claire Churchill aged 20

Cert. Academic Excellence: Rct. Lachlan James Dukes aged 19

Award for Leadership Potential: Rct. CSO Daniel Robert Graham aged 26

WO of Navy Excellence Award: Rct. Musician Samuel L Sheppard aged 26

Recruit of Intake: Rct. ET Aaron Jay Stevens aged 17

HMAS *Warramunga* Top Shot: Rct. ATA James Brian Allen aged 27

For the information of members, the association gives a prize to the recruit who ‘demonstrates strength of character, sense of duty, enthusiasm, a professional attitude and willingness to take responsibility. These qualities clearly illustrate leadership potential.’

On 10 March, my submission on behalf of the association regarding possible amendments/review/updates to SOP 84/2014, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia was sent to the Repatriation Medical Authority for their consideration.

Similarly, on 12 March, my submission on behalf of the association regarding possible amendments/review/updates to SOP65/2007, Parkinson’s Disease & Parkinsonism was sent to the Repatriation Medical Authority for their consideration.

Both of these submissions have the support of the National Council of the Naval Association of Australia through their President, Mr Russell Pettis FAIM. His letter of support has followed these submissions, and the Minister has been informed of our continued pursuit of these matters.

The final two submissions will be forwarded in due course once I have cross-checked references and made sure we present the best case we can. The data mentioned above will go towards emphasising the importance we place on these requests for reviews of relevant Statements of Principles and the relationship these have to the contaminated water factors.

In conclusion, I ask that all members support the association in any way they can. You are the ones that can make the difference between us continuing to act on your behalf and/or saying why bother, no one but us seems to care.

Finally, be alert on Anzac Day, the ABC cameras will be right onto you. No rude gestures please.

Very best to you all

Dr John R Carroll

15 March 2015