



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT CORPORATION

ACN 146 985 355

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING Canberra 24th - 25th July 2019 Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Members: Michael von Berg (RARC), Brian Howard (RARC), Pat McIntosh (RARC), Paul O'Sullivan (RARA NSW), John James (RARA VIC), Dave McDonald (RARA QLD), Rod Graham (RARA SA), Kevin O'Halloran (RARA WA), Stephen Dunn (RARA ACT), Leo Van de Kamp (2 RARA), Jeff Barrett (3 RARC), David Morris (4 RARA), Roger Wainwright (5 RARA), Michael Garraway (7 RARA), Tony Sillcock (8 RARA), Doug McGrath (9 RARA), Stephen Brumby (5/7 RARA), and Merv Diction (2/4 RARA).

Appointments: Clem Russell (Advocate),
Bob Weir (Editor Duty First), and
Trevor Dixon (Company Secretary).

Apologies: 1 RARA, 6 RARA, 8/9 RARA.

Observers: Doug Bishop (RARA Vic), Kevin Sullivan (8 RARA)

Guests: DVA Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks AM,
RAR Colonel Commandant Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC (Ret'd),
RAR Regimental Colonel & Head of Corps Brigadier Kahlil Fegan DSC,
Phillip Thompson OAM MP,
National President DFWA Kel Ryan, and
Executive Director DFWA Alf Jaugietis.

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ITEM 1 – OPENING

The President, Michael von Berg, welcomed delegates to Canberra and declared the Meeting open at 9:55 am 24th July 2019. He made note of the Regimental Dining-in-Night held the previous evening where Maj Gen Mark Kelly AO DSC (Ret'd) and Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP were farewelled and RAR Regimental Colonel Brigadier Kahlil Fegan DSC gave an excellent address on current Infantry operational readiness and capabilities to meet the challenges of future demands.

For more detail refer to [ANNEX A - Regimental Dining-in-Night](#)

ITEM 2 - MINUTES OF PREVIOUS NCM 7TH – 8TH OCTOBER 2018

RESOLVED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE 2018 NCM BE ACCEPTED as a true and correct record of the meeting.

Moved Stephen Dunn
Seconded Merv Diction

Carried

ITEM 3 - BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

INSURANCE AND CROWDFUNDING

Secretary provided an update that the crowdfunding [website](#) has been put in place and that as it was anticipated that all funds raised would be acquitted against expected legal costs no funds were available to obtain any insurances. After discussion it was determined that quotations should be obtained, and funding options considered by the Board.

RESOLVED THAT OTHER MATTERS ARISING WOULD BE ADDRESSED IN AGENDA ITEMS.

Carried

ITEM 4 - REPORTS

President

Michael von Berg emphasised the RARA's ongoing prominence as a respected and influential voice of both the RAR Family and the wider veterans' community, both in a stand-alone capacity and in association with ADSO in advocacy representations directly to the Government and the Parliament.

Our advice is sought by politicians both at the State and Federal level. He highlighted our representative roles specifically in DVA's National Forums: PMAC, ESORT with himself, The Younger Veterans Forum with Phil Thompson who retired from his position when he entered Federal Parliament and is now replaced by Chris Tilley, ex 3 RAR who is currently employed by Dept of Correctional Services in SA, and the Operations Working Party with Clem Russell.

At the political level due to the way that we present our issues and the numbers of members we represent within the RAR Family and collectively at ADSO, we are taken very seriously and treated with the appropriate respect. We don't always win but we are listened to. At all times we are apolitical, engaging both sides of politics and the crossbenches to determine their positions and support for the issues we think are important.

In conclusion the Chairman recognised the ongoing work done by Roger Wainwright on the Korean War MIA Working Group before acknowledging the outstanding level of dedication and commitment to the RAR Corporation by Ted Chitham who retired as a Director and Secretary late last year.

VOTE OF THANKS TED CHITHAM. The Chairman outlined the foundation work conducted by Ted in establishing the National body along with his role as an inaugural Director and Company Secretary; he moved a vote of thanks that was unanimously endorsed by acclamation.

SECRETARY

Trevor Dixon highlighted that he didn't fully appreciate the amount of work that Ted Chitham previously did on behalf of the Association and that the Board was exploring avenues to engage a Secretariat to share the load and more importantly conduct more of the proactive activities necessary to facilitate successful outcomes for the RAR Family. Items in detail and settling the agenda were to be conducted in the "Issues Workshop" he would be leading later in the day.

STATE/TERRITORY AND BATTALION ASSOCIATION - REPORTS

RARA BATTALION reports were noted with a common continuing concern for difficulties related to membership growth particularly with the younger transiting veterans, succession planning and financial viability. The close relationship with the parent Battalions was pleasing. 8 RARA made an apology for their President Wilf Hedley who is unwell and unable to attend and 9 RARA advised they had changed to 3 year appointments on their committee and are finding that they are engaging veterans in a far more meaningful way through physical activities such as gym, sailing and archery etc as a return to health approach.

RARA NSW highlighted that they are actively engaged with RSL NSW, the Protocol Dept of Premier and Cabinet and City of Sydney Council on commemorative activities. Regimental Place is their most important point of contact with the general public, as such it is their raison d'être. It now has a Korean MIA plaque. Duty First has gone online and has no paid subscriptions; there are historical past dues from the printed editions that are being resolved with the relevant associations which hopefully will soon be put to bed. Paul O'Sullivan pointed out he is a Director on the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park and that the Centenary of ANZAC upgrade to its original design and renovations were now complete.

RARA Vic stated that the RARA is seen as the biggest entity amongst the ESO community in their State. They had submitted a proposal to the ANZAC Day Council for a memorial but had been declined and referred to speak with the Shrine of Remembrance. Tramways RSL has the largest cohort of younger veterans who were looking at selling up its assets but there are some concerns over financial impropriety which are being investigated by Consumer Affairs and this is creating a distraction to engaging and helping younger veterans.

RARA QLD are looking at winding up as an entity as they no longer actively seek memberships, referring the rare enquiry to the relevant Battalion Association and not having adequate manpower to conduct advocacy activities to State Govt due to their commitment to the National Memorial Walk. They will advise if their AGM confirms this proposition, at which stage the management of the NMW will revert back to RARC from the responsibility which we have delegated to Qld. Dad's Army will maintain the current NMW sub-committee which will then report directly to the RARC along with all assets and bank accounts at the conclusion of the delegated authority agreement with RARA Qld.

RARA SA acknowledged their silent beneficiary who bought out the premises they operate from and advised that as an Association they are treated seriously and consulted regularly by the SA Government.

RARA WA advised that Jaime Clark's parents attended the 70th anniversary of the Regiment dinner in WA demonstrating the depth and commitment to the RAR Family. Private Clark died on 10 March 2005, after falling into a sinkhole while on patrol searching for hidden militia weapons at Mount Austen, east of Honiara in the Solomon Islands. He was 21 years old. WA is struggling with only three members attending the recent AGM. It was noted that Jack Babbage continues to be unwell.

RARA ACT informed the meeting that the complaint they raised in relation to the ANZAC Day march had been resolved and that the AWM had reverted to the old format. A brief report on the planning for this year's conference was presented.

Stephen Dunn informed the NCM that as a Director on the [RAR Foundation](#) he could advise that the Foundation continues to donate \$10,000 in cash to each Battalion along with its ongoing support and presentation of the Hassett Trophy for Best Junior Leader in the Regiment, battlefield tours in Vietnam, as well as resources being made available to current serving members of the Regiment and their families. It was also noted that they were unsure when the National RSL Defence Committee would next meet as it had been inactive recently and finally that John Robbins was unwell.

The Chair invited Stephen to brief the meeting on holding meetings in Canberra.

DISCUSSION – LOCATION OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Stephen Dunn continued with a discussion on the planning by ACT for the current meeting and the benefits in holding the AGM & NCM in Canberra on an ongoing basis with other locations by exception. The reduced travel costs with many members able to drive to the location, lower accommodation rates in the parliamentary winter recess, ability to negotiate a better deal for an ongoing commitment at the Mercure and greater access to the Minister, Secretary, Head of Corps, the Regimental Colonel and the Repatriation Commissioner amongst others were all considered.

RESOLVED THAT ALL FUTURE MEETINGS BE HELD IN CANBERRA and be organised by RARA ACT.

Moved Stephen Dunn
Seconded Michael Garraway

Carried

DUTY FIRST MAGAZINE

Editor Bob Weir advised that Vol 10, No 17 Winter 2019 edition of the magazine had been produced as an [electronic publication](#) with a [PDF version](#) also being circulated so that Associations and individuals could provide a printed copy for anyone unable to access the online format. He informed delegates that contributions from the Battalions was working well and that it was important for Associations to update their information with the Secretary so that he could provide current committee details in the magazine.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL WALK

Dave McDonald (President RARA Qld and Administration Officer NMW) reported that the [National Memorial Walk](#) remains a showpiece and is well maintained by Dads' Army with good support from the Gallipoli Barracks' based 6 RAR and 8/9 RAR. He identified the ageing Dads' Army volunteers and the pressing need for younger volunteers. The heightened security access to Gallipoli Barracks continues to adversely affect visits to the Walk.

Mike thanked the RAR Battalions and RAR Associations for their annual subscription contribution to the NMW's financial maintenance.

The Touch Screen is now operational using a scrolling manual search screen for visitors to locate names within the precinct. This is due to a lack of support from the Divisional Topography Survey Unit to digitise the records which has been disappointing when we anticipated being able to provide an interactive and interpretive experience with the technology.

[DVA NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE FORA](#)

[PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE \(PMAC\) - MENTAL HEALTH](#)

Michael von Berg advised his [PMAC](#) term concludes in Dec 2019 which will complete a six-year period on this Council.

He reported that the Council's primary strategic concentration has been in the "transition" space where poor and inadequate transition experienced by individuals has led to serious personal issues resulting in some cases to suicide, homelessness, financial hardship and even incarceration. The Council is trying to ease the pressures in this area through meaningful employment opportunities, further studies, conversion of military skills to civilian equivalents, improving and speeding up processes and a compact (covenant) with the Parliament and the broader community to reach out and assist veterans and their families.

[ESO ROUND TABLE \(ESORT\)](#)

As the RARA representative on this committee, Michael von Berg also reported that the [ESORT](#) is an effective and beneficial conduit between the Government, principally DVA and the ESO community.

As members we are seeking continuous review and improvements to ensure that there is a very strong caucus and support collectively of members on major matters of concern. The ESORT members and the ADSO members meet the afternoon prior to an ESORT meeting to discuss matters of importance which are to be raised the following day at the ESORT meeting. There is strength in numbers and if the total membership is behind a particular issue it is very difficult for DVA and the Minister to ignore providing it is covered in current legislation. The Veteran Centric Program we have been a part of for the last three years is starting to show incredible improvements.

[YOUNGER VETERANS - CONTEMPORARY NEEDS FORUM](#)

The [Younger Veterans Forum](#) has been attended for a number of years now by Director Phil Thompson who retired from both positions when he entered Federal Parliament. He has been replaced by Chris Tilley, ex 3 RAR who is currently employed by Dept of Correctional Services in South Australia. Chris will be invited to the next NCM and asked to prepare a report for the meeting highlighting the work of the forum along with issues being identified.

OPERATIONAL WORKING PARTY

Clem Russell passionately reported on the DVA [Operational Working Party](#) (OWP) with similar comments to last year in respect of:

The OWP has been hampered in its very important role due to a significant number of members who do not have direct experience in the provision of advocacy support relating to compensation and pension matters impacting current and former veterans and their eligible dependents. Unfortunately, it results in them requiring considerable briefings from DVA staff to bring them up to speed which limits the effectiveness of the meetings to discuss issues. This is not a DVA problem. It has resulted from the required selection process being ignored by some ESO's. Our concern has been noted but Clem is not optimistic things will change in the short term.

Communication between the existing levels of National Consultative Fora is virtually non-existent. Without this vital interaction there are considerable gaps in some information being used to form advice up and down the chain to levels determining policies and implementing operating processes with, at times, negative results. There is a concern on his part as representative of the RARC with the lack of use of the OWP as a medium of addressing identified problems, difficulties and concerns in the operation and/or conduct of the core business of DVA.

We are asked to provide submissions on any concerns for discussion at the meetings (three per year). Clem's own involvement in the advocacy sphere has been his guide to concerns raised but he can't appropriately serve on your behalf without your input. Raise your points through the Secretary or Chair for their direction to him and he will take them forward. The only request is that you ensure accuracy and direct evidence is provided, hearsay is no good. The credibility of the Corporation as an effective link in the chain of improvement of service and the troops depends on our case.

Clem also advised that there had been three different chairs recently and continuity was an issue. Further that if ESO's do not appoint experienced advocates to represent them the role of the OWP as an effective national forum may not survive the upcoming three yearly review of these fora.

[RESOLUTION OF VITA INSURANCE.](#) [After a brief discussion it was resolved to continue the VITA subscription paid by RARC even though Clem was at this stage our only working Advocate. Carried](#)

Clem further advised that the Advocacy Training and Development Program ([ATDP](#)) has very similar reporting and ESO-internal management processes to the previous Training & Information Programme (TIP). The major difference for ESO's is now the enforcement of these requirements to ensure the processes are implemented in order to develop the appropriate level of advocacy skills in their representatives. He has 22 claims and reviews currently on the books involving 70 conditions, some of these are in paper format but overwhelmingly most are online through the [ESO portal](#). Delays are often due to inadequate information provided by, or disengagement from, the claims process by the Veteran. Overall, he is happy with DVA's performance.

Other points raised by Clem:

- RARC has bought him a new printer but a Grant application may need to be made for a replacement computer before too long
- Kedron-Wavell RSL is referring many of their requests for assistance from serving members for claims and review matters to us as a result of the easy access to RAR (QLD) office on-base at Gallipoli Barracks.
- A reminder that DVA operates on within the requirements of extant legislation, Advocates don't "get" benefits for their clients they simply provide options to assist current and former members of the ADF and their entitled dependents to access eligible entitlements.

[DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS \(DVA\)](#)

Liz Cosson as Secretary of DVA has already made significant changes in the Department and continues to be incredibly supportive and is making a difference in DVA's operating principles:

- Veterans' First with a focus on people and not claims
- Understanding the unique nature and impact of military service
- A focus on wellness not illness
- Respect and recognition
- Beneficial not adversarial application of legislation, and
- The shift to recognising veterans from their first day of service as DVA clients in conjunction with the determination of all service activities to pre-determine liability for injury removing the burden of proof on Veterans.

Michael von Berg then advised that he has seen too much playing of “the woman” rather than the ball across DVA as a whole and that morale is suffering as a consequence. We need to support the commitment to change and that is being driven by the PM, Minister and the Secretary as well as Veterans. It was also noted that Department of Human Services has the computer capacity and capability to process Veteran payments much better than DVA not only has this now been successfully implemented, it has been extended to connect to Defence so that records are seamlessly transferred too.

RESOLVED THAT THE PRESIDENT SEND A LETTER OF SUPPORT TO DVA highlighting our understanding and commitment to the significant improvements in the Department and the direction it is heading in.

Carried

ITEM 5 - RARA THREE HORIZONS ROADMAP

Pat McIntosh led a review of the progress with the RARA Service Development [Roadmap 2019-2025](#). He advised council members that the framework was predominantly used in business and it had been adapted for use by the Association. Importantly, work needs to progress on all three horizons but Horizon 2 and 3 cannot be completed until work on the preceding horizons had been concluded. The latest copy of the Roadmap is maintained online and available on the RARA National website.

The discussion centred around revising the timeframes for action. Key priorities are to open up membership to all former and current members of the RAR and their families and to enable a simplified, seamless, digital communications network that will allow us to engage with our members. It was acknowledged that some associations may need to retain the non-digital means of communications and arrange separate events to cater for their cohorts.

As the Roadmap is designed to simplify the functions of the associations so as make succession planning easier it is hoped that the Roadmap actions can be completed as soon as possible so that we can more effectively deal with the matters that are of concern to our members.

Decision The revised timeframes for action were agreed and there were no further changes to the Roadmap.

ITEM 6 - ADVOCACY UPDATE – KEL RYAN (DFWA & ADSO)

Kel Ryan, National President of [DFWA](#) gave a presentation on [ADSO](#) with a background history on the formation of DFWA, determination of issues affecting the Defence Family and the importance of the value in advocating to Government.

He advised that he believed the ESO community needed to get better at using the number of voices behind the representation.

CURRENT ISSUES

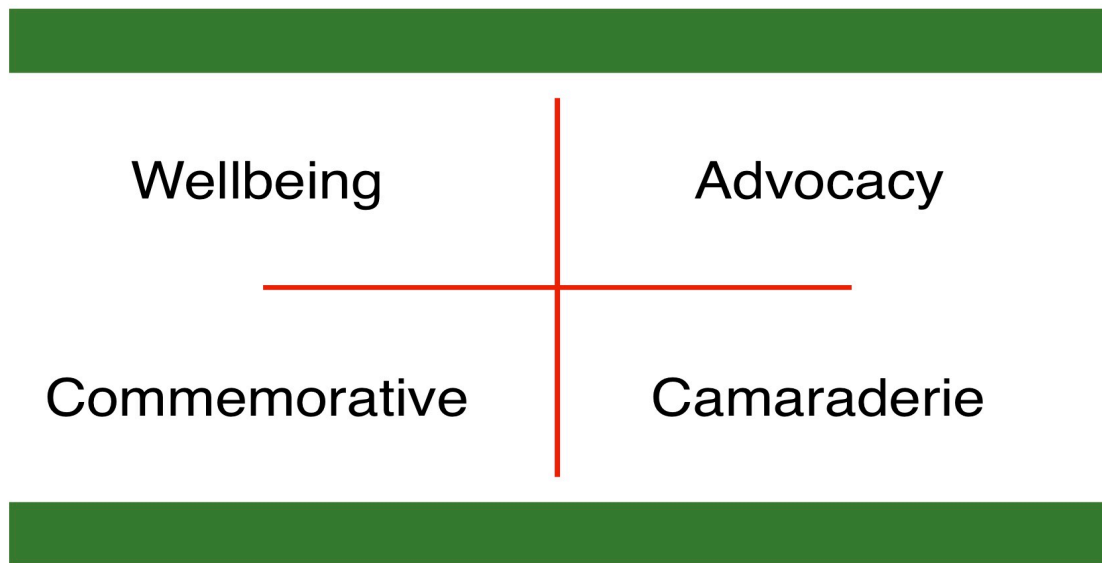
- i. TPI/SR & DISABILITY COMPENSATION PAYMENTS
- ii. DFRDB
- iii. COMMONWEALTH SUPERANNUATION CORPORATION (CSC)
- iv. MILITARY COVENANT BEFORE THE SENATE AT THE MOMENT, AND
- v. THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION report and that retention of DVA as a departmental entity had bipartisan support in the current parliament.

Other areas being worked on include the Aged Care Royal Commission with DFWA's submissions to focus on DVA. The ADSO is at the stage now where it proposes to incorporate as a separate corporate entity. This will facilitate a democratic process through membership, a shareholders/member's agreement and a code of conduct or rules for the 22 current members. The Foundation Members are considering what the structure and control will be so that it maintains focus on core objectives. The purpose is to be in the position to secure funding from DVA and corporate sponsorship to fund central secretarial, research and travel and accommodation costs where required. This is advancement towards "One Voice" representation of the veteran community to Government and the Parliament.

Hori Howard raised an opportunity for "cheat sheets" to be circulated so that members could approach their members of parliament prior to and during election campaigns to advocate effectively. It is also important to encourage RARA members to join the ADSO Fair Go Campaign Action Groups [here](#)

ITEM 7 - ISSUES WORKSHOP

The Secretary, Trevor Dixon facilitated an issues based workshop, it was initiated on the basis that as a generalisation individuals tend to focus on “Events” around *Camaraderie* and *Commemorations*, as Associations we need to flip that thinking to concentrate on “Issues” both *Wellbeing* for the welfare of individual members and *Advocacy* for the welfare of the RAR Family as a whole.



The workshop highlighted three main items that RARA members need to focus on; Suicide (Mental Health) and Transition as the two most important areas looking towards the wellbeing of the RAR Family and membership internally.

For a more detailed summary, refer to [Annex B - Issue Workshop notes](#)

ITEM 8 - AGENDA ITEMS & ISSUES ARISING FROM WORKSHOP

SUICIDE (MENTAL HEALTH) & TRANSITION

Over past years much work has been done by RARA to promote and connect the RAR Family to appropriate organisations who can provide necessary care and support. It is a complex problem for which there is no one-size fits all. Members were referred to the following websites for more detailed information on;

[Overwatch Australia](#), [Veterans Care](#), [Survive to Thrive](#), [Operation Compass](#), [Trojans Trek](#), and [Open Arms](#) along with [Beyond Blue](#) and [Lifeline](#). The RARA National website will also be updated to highlight these important organisations and make it easier for the RAR Family to access the resources. The [Defence Health and Wellbeing Portal](#) is also available as another access point to both current and former service members.

Roger Wainwright noted that Brian Budden, a life member of 5 RARA deserves recognition for the four in-Memorium donations he has made to support Trojan's Trek. His latest donation of \$10,000 is in honour of MAJ Don Bourne, OC C Coy 5RAR who was KIA on 14 February 1967. This brings the total donations from Brian in support of Trojan's Trek to \$40,000 in honour of men of C Coy 5 RAR who were KIA in 1966-67.

RAR BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliography provides [an online](#) historical and research capability capacity. All members have a contribution to make identifying and reporting RAR references not already discovered. Russell Linwood is to be commended for his commitment and results to date as highlighted in [his report](#). The meeting then discussed the most suitable location to establish a central location for holding hard copies of material not in print circulation or digital format. Several ideas including the School of Infantry and the Infantry Museum were determined to be impractical due to either access or infrastructure limitations.

LIBRARY LOCATION RESOLUTION. It was resolved to ask the Bibliography team to initiate contact with firstly the National Library and/or Archives then the respective State bodies in Queensland if no favourable decision is obtained from National then report back to the NCM on the outcome.

Moved Paul O'Sullivan
Seconded Jeffery Barrett

Carried

CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Discussion The secretary Trevor Dixon presented detailed information as available online in relation to the Client Satisfaction Survey and other [DVA](#) related matters. It was noted that the younger Veterans demographics are now segmented in the survey and reported on separately:

- 2018 DVA Client Survey [Fact Sheet](#),
- 2019-20 DVA [Budget Figures](#),
- Summary budget figures exclusive of GST for VEA, MRCA and SRCA represent \$10.4 Bn in payments out of the total for administration, commemoration and all other payments and services \$10.7 Bn, and
- DVA's [CLIK portal](#)

The Consolidated Library of Information and Knowledge (CLIK) contains the Department's legislation, policy and reference material. Major redevelopments to CLIK were completed in early December 2014 culminating in the release of a new web-based version of the information resource. Access the new [CLIK website](#).

DEFAMATION CASE

Michael von Berg left the meeting and Pat McIntosh assumed the Chair. Rod Graham then gave a report on the basis that whilst appreciated, he felt the level of donations were far below the level he expected; that the process for giving donations was complicated for some people and that the message was not being clearly understood.

Discussion then revolved around the fact that specific information about the case could not be fully disclosed until the matter was finalised. Rod was advised that Army would not, in the opinion of the meeting, enter into any review of ICBs previously issued. On further fund raising, while it was accepted that more funds were required the reality was that unless we can tell the full story and quantify the amount of funds needed, members are reluctant to donate. There was agreement that a subsequent fund raise could occur when the full story could be told. It was advised that two updates on the case had been circulated to members, with the [latest one](#) being presented at the meeting.

RESOLUTION: WHILE RECOGNISING THAT FURTHER FUNDING IS REQUIRED NOW, ASSOCIATIONS WOULD CONSIDER FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RARA LEGAL FUND ONCE THE OUTCOME AND COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE COURT CASE ARE KNOWN.

Michael von Berg returned and resumed the Chair.

KOREAN VETERANS MID NOMINAL ROLE NOTATION

Leo van de Kamp advised the meeting of an [anomaly](#) in relation to MID's not appearing on the nominal role for Korean War Veterans.

RESOLUTION THAT MICHAEL VON BERG WILL FOLLOW UP AT THE ESORT with Liz Cosson.

MIA KOREA WORKING GROUP (WG)

Roger Wainwright, our representative on the Korea MIA [Working Party](#), reported on developments since the USA/North Korean Agreement for the recovery of war dead remains from North Korea. Noted, that the MOU between Australia and the USA had been signed. It allows identification, through DNA sampling human remains from the War held by the US Army that may be Australians.

Roger further advised there was only two meeting a year now and that he was happy to continue on the working group, the President then thanked him for his representation.

MERCHANDISING

Michael von Berg has negotiated a drop shipping deal with the [Military Shop](#) in line with the margin other Associations have established. Stephen Brumby presented examples of the merchandising that 5/7 RARA is now selling online. A site visit was conducted for members wishing to meet with the South African family that run the business after the conclusion of the NCM. "Army Shop" and the "Infantry Corps Shop" also merchandise their products online through this business.

RESOLUTION - MEMBERS NOW SIGN AGREEMENTS AS APPROPRIATE WITH THE MILITARY SHOP to produce, hold and ship merchandising for each Association. The Military Shop will pay a commission on sales of 5% and provide the website content to put an online shop on members websites.

OWNERSHIP NMW

LEGAL TENURE OF RARC MAINTAINING THE NMW AND OWNERSHIP BY THE RAR was discussed with responsibility lying with the resident Battalions at Gallipoli Barracks. This has still not been formalised in an agreement. This has been ongoing for many years and will be followed up further with Commander 1st Division Major General Jake Ellwood, DSC AM by Michael von Berg.

RARC BANNER

Discussion was held on the need for the RARC Banner image to be updated, a request was made to all members to try and obtain an editable version from their printer if they have recently produced any new banners.

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT

Michael von Berg advised that initially a 28-day period was announced for submissions to the Productivity Commission, an extension was however requested and granted. There has been significant consultation and discussion since the draft report was released and it is acknowledged that it will take a significant period of time to achieve an end game where the Department can operate seamlessly due to computing infrastructure and four pieces of legislation being administered.

There is no political will to abolish the DVA and as reported earlier in the NCM, the RARC is on the whole, pleased with the future direction of the Department.

The finalised full Productivity Commission report is available [here](#).

RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH (RCB)

The Secretary advised that there are a lot of opinions on this issue both amongst member Associations and online commentators. RARC is not making a determination on the validity of the [RCB Groups](#) claims as we are not the relevant authority. What has been consistently advocated and needs to be made clear is that we support that their evidence be presented to an independent body.

This is important as they have a significant amount of material that has not previously been considered by Defence which has been obtained through FOI request and time related declassifications.

RESOLVED TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING TO HAVE RCB CASE REVIEWED INDEPENDENTLY.

Carried

[DVA SECRETARIES COMMITMENT TO CHANGE](#)

The recent [open letter](#) from DVA Secretary Liz Cosson was discussed and it was agreed that the leadership she was demonstrating should be commended as per previous discussions, RARC supports the transformation of DVA that she has initiated.

[Agenda suspended for ADDRESS BY REPATRIATION COMMISSIONER, MR DON SPINKS AM](#)

[ITEM 9 - ADDRESS BY REPATRIATION COMMISSIONER, MR DON SPINKS AM](#)

The Commissioner gave a presentation and conducted an extensive Q&A session with members. A summary can be seen at [Annex C - Address by Repatriation Commissioner, Mr Don Spinks AM](#).

Members greatly appreciated the frank and informative manner in which Don updated the NCM on the proactive direction that DVA is heading.

[ITEM 10 - AGENDA RESUMED](#)

[RARA SA - DVA WITHDRAWAL OF GYM SERVICE AFTER 6 VISITS](#)

Rod Graham had raised this as a question to the DVA Secretary during her presentation last year. Michael von Berg advised that it was being investigated by ESORT and that no further review would take place in the next 6 months. Clem Russell informed the meeting that from the 1st of October 2019 it would increase to 12 visits' before requiring a new GP referral.

[8/9 RARA - NMW AMBASSADORS](#)

Greg Decker presented a proposal from 8/9 RARA at last year's meeting to introduce Ambassadors in assisting overcome the inability of recruiting volunteers to Dads Army for the NMW. The Ambassadors along with the Patron would be responsible for raising the awareness of the RAR NMW. Their role would be simply promoting the NMW to past servicemen and women. The details would be refined, and comments sought from the National Council members.

This matter was held over for subsequent updates from Greg Decker at future NCM's.

PEACEKEEPERS

APPVA is working on a number of [issues](#) in relation to Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, the key areas discussed in the meeting were the changes in police officers previously being covered by the Veterans Entitlement Act (VEA) but not under subsequent legislation, and

“The view of some Senior ADF Officers toward Peacekeeping Service has been noted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute ([ASPI](#)) in 2012, as “...going on a well-paid UN holiday...” This approach is unhelpful, when there are issues that need to be resolved by Defence. It is also insulting toward the service rendered by those Peacekeeper Veterans who have experienced significant trauma in a malevolent Peacekeeping environment.”

It was resolved that the RARC not take up the fight on these issues as that was being done already by APPVA. RARC will provide support where appropriate.

RAR COUNCIL MEETING

The 2019 meeting will take place around August 17th this year, the report from Michael von Berg reiterated his previous report from 2018. At the RAR Council meeting which he has been attending for 8 years he was only given the opportunity to present the RARA report and was not included in any other discussions or presentations. In his view it was a complete waste of time and money to spend three days at the School of Infantry (SOI) at his own cost for a 30-minute presentation and formal dinner also at his cost and no further involvement.

Having been cleared at the highest levels through his previous activities and as the talks were largely all about trucks, next year he will prepare a written report if the format is to be a similar approach, it can be read out by DHOC. Michael will check in with HOC to determine if the RARC will be reinstated in an inclusive capacity.

REGIMENTAL HISTORY EDUCATION – A PROPOSAL BY DAVE McDONALD

The [paper](#) prepared by Dave McDonald was circulated the previous evening, the meeting then discussed its merits and opportunities. Notes can be seen at [Annex D - Regimental History Education Discussion Notes](#).

RESOLVED TO FIND OUT FROM CO'S AND RSM'S WHAT IS CURRENTLY HAPPENING and to explore the opportunity to assist in maintaining and enhancing the understanding of the rich history of the Regiment. Michael von Berg to Action.

[MALAYSIAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION \(MVA\)](#)

Hori Howard gave an update that the AWM is updating the Nominal Roll for Borneo/Malaya veterans and that the MVA is seeking have an appropriate memorial established in Canberra. RARC support is in place and will be provided when the opportunity arises.

[ITEM 11 – RESOLUTIONS](#)

No resolutions were tabled for consideration at this year's NCM.

[ITEM 12 - GENERAL BUSINESS](#)

Refer to Annex E - Past Presentations Relevant to ongoing NCM'S, no further general business was raised.

[ITEM 13 - NEXT MEETING](#) 21-23 JULY 2020 CANBERRA

The proposed format for this meeting will be;

- Happy Hour on Tuesday evening of the fly-in day
- AGM and NCM on the Wednesday
- Last Post service at the AWM Wednesday afternoon
- Regimental Dining-In-Night Wednesday evening
- Conclude NCM Thursday afternoon.

[ITEM 14 - AFTER ACTION REVIEW \(AAR\)](#)

Minutes and Roadmap will be circulated within the next fortnight and posted online once confirmed. The Secretary requested that attendees review and provide feedback on the meeting but more importantly; the advocacy issues - ideas, questions and observations!

ITEM 15 - MEETING CLOSED

The President thanked the delegates for their contribution to the Meeting's success and support to the RARA and RAR Corporation. He wished their Associations continued growth wellbeing and success.

He thanked the Department of Veterans Affairs for their anticipated continuing financial support with the Grant-in-Aid of \$10,000 to fund the AGM and NCM expenses.

Mike thanked the RARA ACT, especially Stephen Dunn and Secretary Trevor Dixon for planning and facilitating a successful meeting.

He also reiterated that the RARC is there to serve and support the State RAR and Battalion Associations. He stated that we were at a generational period of flux and that we should all try to attract more younger veterans to get involved at all levels. We have all come too far in our journey and must do all we can in "Keeping the Spirit Alive".

The 2019 Meeting was closed at 11.38 am 25th July 2019



Michael von Berg
Chairman
5th August 2019



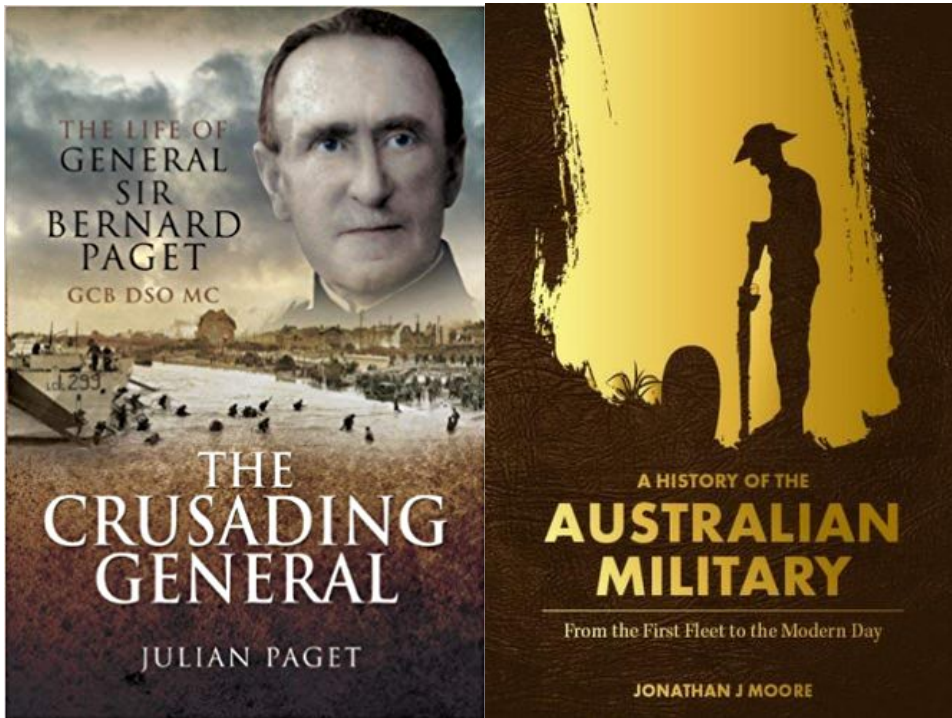
Trevor Dixon
Company Secretary
5th August 2019

ANNEXURES

- A. Regimental Dining-in-Night
- B. Issues Workshop notes
- C. Address by Repatriation Commissioner, Mr Don Spinks AM
- D. Regimental History Education Discussion Notes
- E. Past Presentations Relevant to ongoing NCM'S
- F. Site Visit

[ANNEX A - REGIMENTAL DINING-IN-NIGHT](#)

The Regimental Dining-in-Night was held at the Mercure Canberra on 23rd July 2019. Maj Gen Mark Kelly AO DSC (Ret'd) and Mr Phillip Thompson OAM MP were farewelled and presented "The Crusading General" and "Australian Military" respectively by president Michael von Berg MC OAM after which each of them made a short address.



Regimental Colonel Brigadier Kahlil Fegan DSC gave an excellent presentation on current Infantry operational readiness and capabilities to meet the challenges of future demands. Kahlil then addressed a Q&A session where he detailed the support level maintained post-operational deployment.

ANNEX B – ISSUES WORKSHOP NOTES

The three big ideas identified from the workshop were:

1. Suicide & Self-Harm (Mental Health)
2. Transition
 - a. to employment
 - b. to rehabilitation
3. Membership of RARA's

To focus the thinking of the workshop an overarching theme “Value – what’s in it for me” was used to ensure veteran-centric outcomes were delivered. From that, the remaining ideas were explored, and it was identified that the ones not directly relevant to Suicide and Transition were basically the missing piece to solve the membership problem; soldiers will come to us if they see us delivering the things they want and need!

- Advocacy – we need to get better at identifying and prosecuting the issues important to our members through proactive engagements rather than reactive responses.
- Suicide and self-harm – promote more visibly the available help and resources.
- Transition – the concept of the RAR Friends system should be explored again, similar to Operation Overwatch as a network of buddies to provide support from a perspective of a fellow soldier.
- National Memorial Walk access – an opportunity to engage and connect with a wider audience.
- Build on established CO and RSM relationships - develop deeper engagements with Battalion Officer and NCO's.
- Become financially viable – the online merchandising opportunity is one avenue.
- Communicate our value better – understand what we bring to the table and promote it wider and more often.
- Junior Officer and NCO education – an opportunity to introduce a value proposition to Army and be involved in a meaningful way with current serving soldiers of the Regiment. This is also an opportunity to bridge generational gaps as the junior leaders become or advocates and re-message the story in the right “language”.
- Showcase Success – there are far more good news stories than negative especially in respect to DVA but also for example; employment, volunteer work, or businesses established. This is one of the improved communication opportunities, establish poster child stories that can be sent out via Video, Newsletters, Facebook etc.
- Strategically target committee executive positions - rather than passively acting on the offered talent pool, headhunt experts who are focused and specialists in their fields.

ANNEX C - ADDRESS BY REPATRIATION COMMISSIONER, MR DON SPINKS AM

Background:

For the first time, a former Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army has been appointed as the Repatriation Commissioner when outgoing Commissioner Major General Mark Kelly completed his appointment on 30 June this year.

Don Spinks, who recently retired from the Australian Defence Force with almost 40 years' experience, took over as Repatriation Commissioner and as a Member of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission for a period of five years from 1 July 2019.

Presentation:

Don began his address with the observation that he had a mandate of “veterans’ engagement” when he took on the role then ran the NCM through a PowerPoint presentation followed by an extensive Q&A session.

Presentation Key points:

- There has been a lot of inquiries and reviews historically with some action, the Productivity Commission report resulted in wide consultation, what is clear is that there is bi-partisan support in the parliament to retain DVA.
- DVA now has a focus on wellbeing and wellness, there is a transition from a transactional organisation to wellness focused on veterans and their families.
- Simplification of approvals has been an outcome of digital processing along with a soon to be introduced single point of telephone contact with the 1800 VETERAN number.
- 17,000 new clients have been identified as a consequence of this simplified approach who were not previously known the DVA.
- The Australian Defence [Veterans’ Covenant](#) serves to recognise and acknowledge the unique nature of military service, it is supported by the Veterans’ Recognition Program, which includes the [Veteran Card](#), [lapel pin](#) and [oath](#).
- Focus is on “connecting” through the Veterans voice in ESO’s, rebuilding trust.
- Don has extended the invitation for any veteran to chat with him and encourages them to re-engage.
- The ‘system’ is professional not personal i.e. it is entitlements based.
- DVA is now trying to apply legislation in a beneficial not adversarial manner.

- The Minister is directing that a national mental health strategy and action plan is to be developed with a timetable for implementation before end-of-year. It is based on an “illness to wellness” model.
- Feedback is needed on collaboration to promote the healthy relationship the vast majority of veterans’ experience with DVA; health care, transition, partnerships, & engagement.
- The work of Dr Stephanie Hodson in launching “Open Arms” following the rebranding of VVCS ensuring that 24/7 support is readily available and widely known about has been very successful. Connection can be by phone 1800 011 046, online chat on the website & through social media.

Q&A:

There was an obvious passion and consideration to not only ask questions but also make suggestions and explore opportunities. In summary comments by both the Commissioner and members included:

- There has been clumsiness and poor interpretation of legislation in the past, this has not been deliberate and the disaffected are a small percentage in comparison to satisfied DVA clients.
- Transition to employment has greatly improved compared to previous generations. The pathway & packages delivered by Defence Community Organisation ([DCO](#)) provides education opportunities including RPL of relevant skills and CV writing for example. The system is changing to provide maximum resources to those leaving after short term service so that they re-engage quickly into civilian employment.
- ESO’s should contact DCO and attend a transition seminar/expo as an observer so that they can appreciate the level of support available today
- Career Transition Assistance Scheme ([CTAS](#)) is very different today.
- The Prime Minister's Veterans' [Employment Program](#) is designed to raise awareness with employers, both private and public sector, of the value and unique experience of our veterans, it was launched on 17 November 2016.
- The Productivity Commission report recommends a transition authority to sit over DVA and Defence.
- Recognition of veterans after one day fulltime service means that from 1st January 2016 ADF members are connected to DVA immediately, and once registered online they should receive their White Card within four weeks or so.
- Don also suggested that attendance by Defence members at transition seminars become compulsory.

- \$4.2M has been made available to assist suicide prevention initiatives, RARC has assisted Overwatch Australia become a beneficiary of these funds.
- Cross-engagement and communication between the various DVA Fora and the broader veteran community is not as effective as it could be; the upcoming three-year National Consultancy Forum review is an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of these forums.
- DVA runs a “Why are we here?” induction for their staff to help them understand servicemen and women better.

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked Don for the insight he had provided and wished him well in his endeavours assisting veterans in his new role.

ANNEX D - REGIMENTAL HISTORY EDUCATION DISCUSSION NOTES

Contributions to the discussion included:

- Steve Brumby - RNSWR produced a soldier's handbook for this purpose and arranged regular visits from the "old and bolds".
- Bob Weir – SOI used to prepare this as a handout not sure if they still do. The RAInf Magazine certainly provides regular content relevant to educating soldiers on Regimental History and Battalion CO's are responsible for conducting Unit specific inductions to maintain their unique history.
- Hori Howard – we need to identify the current level of training conducted at the SOI and within Battalions.
- Dave McDonald – from the feedback he's getting at Gallipoli Barracks he feels not a lot is being done.
- Stephen Dunn – reiterated the contribution that the RAR Foundation makes in both financial and awards to assist the Battalions towards this goal.
- Doug Bishop – assisting soldiers in this capacity at the transition stage would be advantageous to ensuring a connection in case they require assistance or guidance from us.

Summary is that the NCM saw merit in the proposal from a membership perspective but that this did not solve any problems for Army as such. It was felt that we need to identify how our involvement leads to outcomes like; "survivability", "rehabilitation", "retention" or "transition" etc so that there is an incentive that is highly visible and to their advantage. The paper should be repositioned to be Army centric not focused on the self-centric component of membership for the RARA.

ANNEX E - PAST PRESENTATIONS RELEVANT TO ONGOING NCM'S

i. OVERWATCH AUSTRALIA (OA)

Paul Sexton, OA Director and previously the national operations manager is based in Brisbane. He is a pioneer of the initial establishment of [RAR Overwatch](#) which has today expanded to [Overwatch Australia](#) with coverage for all military services (Navy, Army and Air Force) and within those into Corps, Units, Ships and Squadrons.

RAR Overwatch was a Facebook group formed in 2013/14 after spate of suicides of members of RAR both past and present as a dedicated response communications net connected to the membership of the Facebook group RAR Buddies.

The strength of the group was identified as the interconnectivity of the members of RAR that when used as a network, provides close to 3 degrees of separation of anyone who served with the Regiment of 2Cdo, RAR and SASR.

The group extended its model to other corps and RAN and RAAF (i.e. RAAC Overwatch, RAE Overwatch etc) in 2015 to maximise the networks to identify mutual friends and colleagues of those in need coordinated by members of likeminded corps and services and we rebranded as Overwatch Australia as an umbrella term for the net encompassing all Facebook groups under a command channel of coordinators from all Overwatch corps/services groups under the name Task Force Overwatch. With channel named Situation Room where emergency responses that are sensitive to a respondee's privacy are maintained at all times.

As of Oct 2018, Overwatch Australia has a volunteer responder list of 5000 both domestically and internationally. We have interlinked with members of the veteran community in Allied countries such as US, UK and NZ which increases our reach for ADF members globally. We reciprocate this allowing allied veterans' organisations to use our resources in Australia to respond to theirs in need.

All volunteer responders are encouraged to participate in Mental Health First Aid courses such as Op Life and ASSIST suicide prevention courses. VVCS has been active in allowing our members and families to participate free of cost.

We allow all members to choose their own level of involvement from three basic levels of membership;

- 1- Response coordinators who lead responses from initiation to post-response follow ups
- 2- First Responders who volunteer to be available locally for coffee meetups through to knocking on doors of those identified as at risk.

3- Observers who monitor their own Facebook pages and general community for any signs of distress, psychologically emotionally, physically, financially and their relationships.

Observers conduct their daily personal life outside of Overwatch and if they identify a warning signal in a friend which they can't adequately respond to themselves, they flag this in their respective corps page to escalate the situation to others to fight for information in regards to location, phone number, level of response needed in conjunction with a response coordinator, who then dispatches a first responder to make face to face contact with the member in need and report back to Overwatch coordinator and determine which ESO or medical service is best suited to assist and assist the member in need to warm refer.

All our members are trained and led to identify credible and imminent threats of harm to self or others and call 000 immediately in those cases for welfare checks by emergency services. We always endeavour to initiate follow up checks by members known military support network in order to monitor and support in an ongoing capacity before we stand down.

Our global network has allowed such speed from initial post in Overwatch to face to face response as 25mins in Capital cities in Australia to 35mins in Arizona to 44mins in Rural North Thailand. Each response is different in response times but the above are an indication of how fast our responders can act under the Overwatch model.

Our major operational risks we have identified and are working on are regulatory compliance, privacy control and personnel management of our response coordinators across the 9+ channels.

ii. [THE VETERANS FAMILY TOOL KIT VIDEO SERIES](#)

Pat McIntosh introduced the Bolton Clark series of videos which aims to inform and educate current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and importantly families and friends, about mental health. These videos cover post-traumatic mental health, avenues to treatment, and how to best support yourself and your loved one. The videos are designed to break down the stigma around seeking help, and include input from veterans, families, and experts in the field.

Read more and watch videos [here](#).

The President thanked Pat McIntosh and Bolton Clark for their active support of veterans and their families.

iii. [TROJANS TREK](#)

[Trojans Trek](#) is going from strength to strength as a successful program of changing people's lives who are affected by PTSD and other mental health issues. Many years of advocating for financial support from DVA for this program is continually refused on the basis that the program is not "evidence based" which is completely untrue. It is evidence based but in the minds of DVA the sample tested is too small, which is unfair as the program can only cover the numbers assisted based on financial capability which operates on an annual to annual basis. TT is unable to plan long term due to a lack of long-term funding, but some comments made by the Minister in relation to a special fund that is proposed may give TT another opportunity.

iv. [SURVIVE TO THRIVE NATION](#)

Dane Christison has taken [Survive to Thrive](#), his online PTSD peer-to-peer support program to the next level since our last meeting. The initial clinical review by the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation indicated that the program was successful in treating PTSD and other mental health illnesses. In the last 12 months Dane has been in discussions with the Phoenix Foundation (DVA's medical authority) to conduct a full-scale peer reviewed trial to confirm the initial findings. Our application to the Supporting Younger Veterans Grant program to fund this trial was unsuccessful however Survive to Thrive Nation has not only negotiated with DVA to pay for this with different funds, they have also been in discussion with Defence to implement the program in transition and pre-transition to both rehabilitate trained soldiers to return to work or discharge them healthy and able to participate in employment post service.

v. [VETERANS CARE ASSOCIATION \(VCA\)](#)

[Veterans Care Association](#) was established by Deacon Gary Stone to support returning veterans and their families to overcome PTSD and other challenges in returning to civilian life. It acts as a central hub for veterans' services, bringing together traditional medical practitioners, complimentary/holistic PRACTITIONERS, therapists, counsellors and more to support good health and vitality.

Ted Chitham briefed on this Veterans Support Organisation (VSO) and highlighted its growth and success in receiving an \$80,000 Supporting Younger Veterans grant from DVA to employ a Life Coach. Bolton Clark is a VCA sponsor.

vi. [OPERATION COMPASS](#)

Ray Martin presented details of the program [Operation Compass](#) which is a Commonwealth Department of Health trial conducted through the Northern Australia Primary Health Care Network. It is a grass-roots community- wide campaign aimed at optimizing well-being within the ex-ADF community. The campaigns are designed to address and reduce the rate of suicides and increase positive well-being through connection to life in the Townsville post-ADF.

vii. [MEFLOQUINE](#)

Invitation – Inquiry into ADF use Of Mefloquine and Tafenoquine. On 19 June 2018 the senate referred to the foreign affairs, Defence and trade references committee a range of matters relating to the ADF use of mefloquine and tafenoquine for inquiry and report by 17 September 2018. The full terms of reference are to inquire with particular reference to;

- a. the current and past policies and practices for prescribing quinoline anti-malarial drugs to ADF personnel, and identifying and reporting adverse drug reactions from quinoline anti-malarial drugs among ADF personnel,
- b. the nature and extent of any adverse health effects of those who have taken mefloquine/tafenoquine on serving and former ADF personnel,
- c. the support available for partners, carers and families of personnel who experience any adverse health effects of quinoline anti-malarial drugs,
- d. a comparison of international evidence/literature available on the impact of quinoline anti-malarials,
- e. how other governments have responded to claims regarding quinoline anti-malarials, and
- f. any other related matters.

The purpose of this letter of invitation is to draw your attention to the inquiry and to invite you or your organisation to make a written submission to the committee by 31 July 2018.

viii. [RIFLE COMPANY BUTTERWORTH](#)

The RCB Review Group maintains their own [website](#) and activities on this issue with a summary of the background outlining their case available [here](#). This issue is being carried and funded by the RCB veterans themselves who have:

- o discovered compelling evidence from national and international sources
- o had two separate and gratuitous legal advices from different source that encourages action in the courts
- o their own website and [Facebook](#) sites
- o was endorsed by the RARC, RAAFA and DFWA for an independent inquiry

The principle historic issue is one of honesty and transparency by the Government of the day and those that have followed in perpetuating the “untruth” that the RCB was deployed to Butterworth and Malaya on a training rotation when in fact all evidence supports the fact that the RCB was deployed to protect a strategic asset in a hostile still environment. The untruth is denying veterans of their entitlements and proper place historically of their role during that time.

ix. [RARA WA - DEATH NOTICES IN NEWSPAPERS](#)

WA sought information on what other RAR Associations do. Ted Chitham advised that in the States where the Battalion Associations are strong, they provide the Death Notice of their former RAR member who has passed away. In Queensland’s case the RARA Qld found itself duplicating the notice so it now provides an RAR Association ‘Sash’, which goes across the Coffin and just prior to the burial, or cremation, is retrieved and presented to the next of kin of the deceased. Many Battalion Associations have their own sashes and apply the same procedure.

In WA they do not have strong Battalion Associations the RAR Association (WA Branch) prefers to pay homage to a deceased member with a Death Notice in the West Australian newspaper, which contains the RAR badge.

[ANNEX F - SITE VISIT](#)

At the conclusion of the meeting members who were not familiar with the drop shipping process and range of goods available for merchandising attended a presentation by the Military Shop.



The Military Shop
65 Kembla Street
Fyshwick ACT, Australia

Examples of the merchandise available that has been produced for 5/7 RARA as follows:

























[END](#)

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