



# War Veterans Village [Narrabeen] RSL sub-Branch

Through an active membership we keep the ANZAC spirit alive and growing

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## DISPATCHES

September & October

“The price of Liberty is eternal Vigilance”

### The President's Message

The end of the year is coming, as is the State Congress. This year's Congress will be one of, if not the most significant since 1987 when the current Constitution was presented. There has been a lot of work carried out to get this draft into a format which is hoped to be acceptable to the majority of members. We are fortunate to have our District Council President, Bill Hardman OAM, as a member of the DC7 which has had a very influential input to this process. Bill was our guest speaker at our August meeting.

This draft is completely different to the one rejected last year and it should enable us as an organisation to move forward rather than be stuck in limbo. We shall await the outcome of Congress.

On the subject of Congress, we should receive the agenda in the next month, so that we can consider each motion and give John Sowden, our Delegate, a direction on how we wish him to vote. I encourage you to keep an eye out for this and attend the next meeting. There will be more to discuss than just the Draft Constitution.

Our Trustees and Executive will be preparing the 2020 budget shortly. Please let us know if there are any specific activities you would like considered for inclusion.

Finally, I will be on holidays from 21<sup>st</sup> August to 14<sup>th</sup> October inclusive. During my absence John Sowden, Vice President, will assume my responsibilities.

Lest We Forget  
Bob Durbin  
President

### Defining Constitutional Matters

What is the DC7? – This is a Committee comprising the Presidents of 7 of the District Councils. All of these persons are elected representatives and 3 of the 7 were on the original panel dealing with the New Draft Constitution.

What are SOP's – These are Standard Operating Procedures and take the place of the old By-Laws and Regulations. They are intended to make the administration of a sub-Branch easier.



### Attention - Must Read

General Meeting  
Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September  
9.30am

Montgomery Centre  
Guest Speaker – Jason Kioko  
Acting Manager: Home for Heroes  
Topic – Looking Ahead

### Visit to the War Veterans Village Museum

Following an invitation from the Museum Committee, inviting sub-Branch members, to have morning tea, tour the Museum and Chapel, we have arranged a visit for:

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September. Meet at 10am in the ground floor foyer of the Gallipoli Building.

Cost \$7.00 with payment to the sub-Branch Office no later than 19<sup>th</sup> September

### NSW RSL State Congress

This is being held at the Albury Entertainment Centre from Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October to Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October. Our Vice President John Sowden will be attending as our delegate, with voting rights. He will be joining other members of our Northern Beaches District sub-Branches.

The main agenda item will be the New Draft Constitution and Standing Operating Procedures.

### NEW NSW RSL State Branch Website

Members can login directly onto the New RSL NSW website. Go to [www.rslnsw.org.au](http://www.rslnsw.org.au)  
Click on the heading

**RSL NSW**

Be ready to explore a new very friendly website full of great pictures and lots of information.

Should you want to access information as a member then login on your browser page to [www.member.suite.rslnsw.org.au](http://www.member.suite.rslnsw.org.au)

Click on the heading

**Members' suite/rslnsw.org.au**

### War Veterans Village (Narrabeen) RSL sub-Branch - Own Website

The Committee has given approval for our Publicity Officer – Doug Smyth, to proceed with the establishment of our own Website. With the timeframe required, we should see the launch in December.



Study these flags and choose which one represents The Australian National Flag. So you think you know? You may have to check those flying in the Village.

*Editor: You' will find the answer on page 8.*

### Twilight Bowls

Hosted by War Veterans Bowling Club Pty Limited

Two teams:

War Vets sub-Branch-v-War Vets Bowling Club

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2019 commencing at 2pm

Venue – Village bowling green

Dress code Mufti

Cost Per person – Registration for Game - \$5.00

Registration for BBQ - \$5.00

(both Game and BBQ - \$10.00)

All fees/nominations together with payment to sub-Branch Office by 27<sup>th</sup> September

### Old People's Home FOR 4 year olds



The following article (which included Stuart Doyle's photo), was taken from The Sun Telegraph's Watch

#### A GOOD TIME FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Set your clocks, take the phone off the hook and cancel all your plans to go out and mark your diary to watch what I have called the most heart-warming TV show this year.

After months of wading through hours of reality show nonsense and grim politics, this social experiment – pairing four year olds with the same number of residents at a Sydney retirement village for merged classes – just filled my soul with joy. The producers have done a brilliant job of casting a great mix of shy and outgoing personalities at both ends of the age spectrum, who ultimately bring out the best in each other during this program which hoped the little ones would bring some of the older folk

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out of their lonely shells and back to their happier selves.

It's a format first aired in the UK, which was then rolled out in other nursing homes and geriatricians here are looking to convince Government the same should happen in Australia.

It gets my whole hearted tick of approval.

Written by Holly Byrnes – National TV editor, New Corp. Australian Network.

The show started to be screened on ABC Channel 2 On Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> at 8.30pm for one hour and continues for 5 weeks.

Five of our sub-Branch members are featured: Iren Axton, Shirley McLaren, Stuart Doyle, Bevan Harris, Ben Taylor and John Bowers.

### Caring for our Members

Hello Everyone,

Since our last issue I have been to London and back and enjoyed a very special time. Thank you to Jan Slater for continuing to care for members whilst I was away.

During the last two months three of our members wives have passed away. It's a very painful time and our hearts reach out to them and we offer our support. Another member, June Sweet has been admitted to Peter Cosgrove House in poor health.

Our dear member Stephen Watkins is doing it tough again. He is in Northside Clinic. This past year has been a difficult one for him.

I have had the privilege to meet up with two new residents from 'Homes for Heroes' and they are both settling in well to Village life, enjoying being so close to the surf.

Our sub-Branch Treasurer, Horst Kuessner has had his own battle going, after a big back operation resulting in severe pain. He informed me he is getting better and hopes to be home soon.

I have had lunch with three of our members at Lone Pine and coffee with four at the local Augusta Shops.

Last Sunday, Vietnam Day (18<sup>th</sup> August), there was a very memorable Service held in the Village Chapel followed by a special Afternoon Tea and was very good to catch up with some of our family members.

That's all from me, keep well and warm.

Love to all Patti Page – Welfare

*Editor: If you know of anyone who is not coping well with their health or just having a hard time then contact Patti on her mobile: 0402 542 534*

## Raising Funds – Chocolate Bar Promotion

It was agreed unanimously at our last General Meeting that our first special fund raising event, for the sub-Branch, would be selling chocolate bars to members.

The 100 gram bar, at \$4.00 each, comes in a Commemorative wrapper. Each bar has a wrapper with a different “Remembrance Day” theme. There will be 25 dark chocolate bars and 175 milk chocolate bars.

Bars will be available for purchase after the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019. (After our President returns from his first period of leave of absence).

## Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Our phones – Wireless      Cooking – Fireless  
Cars – Keyless              Food – Fatless  
Tyres – Tubeless          Dress – Sleeveless  
Youth – Jobless            Leaders – Shameless  
Relationships – Meaningless  
Attitudes – Careless      Education – Valueless  
Feelings – Heartless      Children – Mannerless  
We are – SPEECHLESS  
Government is – CLUELESS  
Our Politicians – WORTHLESS!  
I’m scared – Sh----ss

## Waiting in Line

Every minute someone leaves this world behind.  
We are all in “the line” without knowing it.  
We never know how many people are before us.  
We cannot move to the back of the line.  
We cannot step out of the line.  
We cannot avoid the line.  
So while we wait in line -  
Make moments count.  
Make priorities.  
Make the time.  
Make your gifts known.  
Make a nobody feel like a somebody.  
Make your voice heard.  
Make the small things big.  
Make someone smile.  
Make the change.  
Make love.  
Make up.  
Make peace.  
Make sure to tell your people they are loved.  
Make sure to have no regrets.  
Make sure you are ready.

## Issues of “Dispatches for 2019

A reminder that our next issue will be for November / December and is due for publication on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October. Deadline for copy is Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October at 12 noon. All articles welcome.

## Diary Dates to Remember

- \*\* Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 9am, Committee Meeting, in the Amy Taylor Room.
  - \*\* Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 9.30am, General Meeting in the Montgomery Centre.  
Guest Speaker – Jason Kioko – Acting Manager ‘Homes for Heroes’ Topic: “Looking Ahead”
  - \*\* Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> September, 10.00am, Museum Tour. Meet in foyer of Gallipoli Building (see separate notice - Page 1)
  - \*\* Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2pm, Twilight Bowls, Village Bowling Green. Followed by a BBQ. (See separate notice – Page 2)
  - \*\* Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 9am, Committee Meeting in the Amy Taylor Room.
  - \*\* Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 9.30am, General Meeting in the Montgomery Centre.
- Note your diary NOW for the October General Meeting, so you can be sure to be there.



**Attention - Must read**  
October General Meeting is on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October at 9.30am in the Montgomery Theatre  
Join members to hear about the latest happenings and enjoy a light morning tea

## Membership Report

Sadly, we report the passing of the following dear members:  
Bob McMullin, Professor Denis Turner OAM and Ken Smith.  
Membership Status at 24<sup>th</sup> August:  
Life Members - 2, Life Subscribers - 3, Service Members - 55, Associate Members - 26, Affiliate Members - 23  
Total Membership = 109  
Prospective Members Pending:  
Service Members – Peter Mansfield and John Cameron  
Do you know of anyone who may want to join our sub-Branch? A resident who recently moved into the village? Someone maybe, just waiting to be asked.

## RAN in Vietnam

Between 1965 and 1972 elements of the RAN undertook continuous operational service in Vietnam. During this period the Navy performed a variety of operational tasks at sea, ashore and in the air. The RAN's primary contribution consisted of destroyers, Fleet Air Arm personnel attached to a United States (US) Army assault helicopter company and the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) No.9 Squadron, a Clearance Diving Team, and a logistic support force consisting of transport and escort ships. Other RAN personnel served ashore in medical teams or performed staff duties at the Australian Embassy in Saigon or the Australian Task Force Headquarters in Nui Dat. The RAN Fleet Band also completed a short tour of Vietnam entertaining troops during periods of rest and recreation (R&R).

The Vietnam War was not a markedly naval conflict but for the 13,500 members of the RAN who saw active service it was undoubtedly a high tempo environment. The RAN's contribution, although small in comparison to that of the United States Navy (USN), was diverse and played a significant part in the Australian Forces overall commitment.

The largest single commitment by the Royal Australian Navy to Vietnam was the provision of a destroyer on a rotational basis to the United States Navy's Seventh Fleet for service on what became known as the 'gun line'. RAN warships provided naval gunfire support from March 1967 to September 1971. They also participated in Operation SEA DRAGON, the bombardment of North Vietnamese military targets and the interdiction of supply routes and logistic craft along the coast of North Vietnam from the Demilitarized Zone to the Red River Delta, from April 1967 until it was suspended in November 1968.

The first RAN destroyers to deploy to Vietnam were the Charles F Adams class guided missile destroyers (DDG) *Hobart*, *Perth* and *Brisbane*. The Australian DDGs were well suited for the task of providing Naval Gunfire Support (NGS). Armed with two 5-inch 54-calibre gun mounts that fired a standard 76-pound High Explosive (HE) shell, they were capable of bringing down accurate 5-inch gunfire at a rate of 40 rounds per minute on targets at ranges beyond 14 nautical miles in most conditions.

The Daring class destroyer HMAS *Vendetta* was also deployed for service on the gun line. Her main armament consisted of six 4.5-inch guns that were capable of providing accurate and rapid fire to a range of nine nautical miles at a rate of 16 rounds per gun per minute.

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In good conditions *Vendetta*'s guns were capable of expending up to 100 rounds per minute.

HMAS *Hobart* was the first DDG to join the US Seventh Fleet on 15 March 1967 beginning the six monthly rotation of RAN destroyers for service on the gun line. *Hobart* and *Perth* deployed three times to Vietnam, *Brisbane* twice and *Vendetta* once. The destroyers carried out NGS missions in all of South Vietnam's four military regions and *Hobart* and *Perth* were actively involved in SEA DRAGON. *Hobart* and *Perth* came under fire on a number of occasions. *Perth* was hit once during her first deployment and *Hobart* suffered two killed and seven wounded when she was mistakenly hit by missiles fired from a United States Air Force jet aircraft.

*Hobart* was awarded a US Navy Unit Commendation in recognition of her service in Vietnam while *Perth* received both the US Navy Unit Commendation and the US Meritorious Unit Commendation. This honour allowed both ships to fly distinguishing pennants known as 'burgees' from their masthead when alongside for the duration of their commissions. In their five years service in Vietnam, the four gun line destroyers steamed over 397,000 miles and fired 102,546 rounds.

In April 1971 the McMahon Liberal Government announced that Australian forces in Vietnam would be reduced. This led to the withdrawal of the clearance diving team in May and the RAN Helicopter Flight in June. The final RAN destroyer to serve on the gun line, *Brisbane* returned to Sydney on 15 October 1971.

HMAS *Brisbane* was one of 3 Perth-class guided missile destroyers to serve in the Royal Australian Navy. The US designed ship was laid down at Bay City, Michigan in 1965, launched in 1966 and commissioned into RAN in 1967. Named after the city of Brisbane, Queensland.



HMAS Brisbane II (D41)

Source reference: Navy Website – <http://www.navy.gov.au>

## Chaplains Corner

Each year I have the privilege of attending and participating in various ex-service and military commemoration services. I have recently assisted in the conduct of "The Battle of Fromelles" and two services relating to the Korean War. I highlight these two in particular as they have special significance in Australia's military history and the recognition of service and sacrifice.

*The battle of Fromelles on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916 was a bloody initiation for Australian soldiers to warfare on the Western Front. Soldiers of the newly arrived 5th Australian Division, together with the British 61st Division, were ordered to attack strongly fortified German front line positions near the Aubert's Ridge in French Flanders. The attack was intended as a feint to hold German reserves from moving south to the Somme where a large Allied offensive had begun on 1<sup>st</sup> July. The feint was a disastrous failure. Australian and British soldiers assaulted over open ground in broad daylight and under direct observation and heavy fire from the German lines. Over 5,500 Australians became casualties. Almost 2,000 of them were killed in action or died of wounds and some 400 were captured. This is believed to be the greatest loss by a single division in 24 hours during the entire First World War. Some consider Fromelles the most tragic event in Australia's history. (Source: Australian War Memorial)*

The Battle of Fromelles Commemoration Service is conducted by the Family and Friends of the First A.I.F. (FFFAIF) association. From humble beginnings, this has developed into a very special and significant service in the community's calendar. Representatives of the Australian and French governments attend and address the assembly. There are also family representatives of those who fought in this battle who attend and address the assembly.

This is a testament to the importance of remembrance. As a sub-Branch we have recently discussed the Korean War which is so often the 'forgotten war'. There are two services held annually; one at The ANZAC Memorial Hyde Park South and the other at the Korean War Memorial Moore Park Sydney. While both services are attended by Australian and Korean veterans of the Korean War, numbers are starting to reduce as their age and infirmities take their toll.

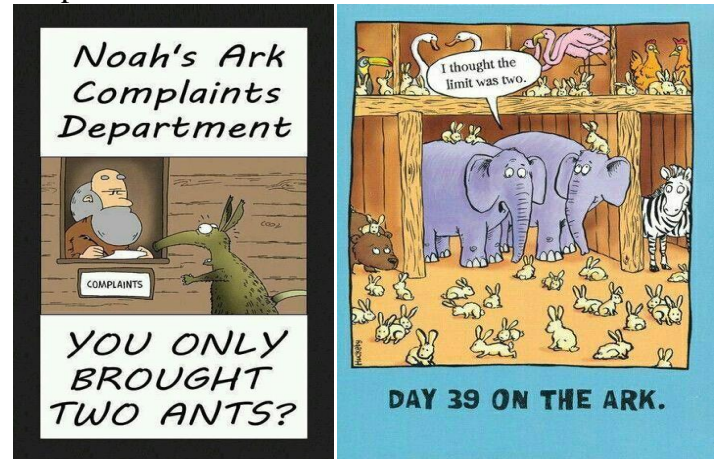
Fortunately there is a small band of non-Korean War veterans who have accepted the responsibility of continuing this "Act of Remembrance".

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While it is 11 months away, you might consider adding one or more of these events to your own calendar to provide your support for those who have gone before us.

Lest we forget.  
In His Service  
Bob Durbin  
Chaplain



## VP Day

One of our Vice- Presidents, John Sowden, attended the Victory in the Pacific (VP) Commemoration Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony on the 74<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cessation of Hostilities in World War II on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945 at the Cenotaph, Martin Place.

Mr Gareth McGray OAM was MC and Mr Harry Allie BEM (Retd) gave an acknowledgement of Country.

The Ceremony was organised by RSL NSW.

The Governor, Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC gave a most interesting, personal and relevant address. The Royal Australian Navy Band Sydney provided the music for a hymn, the National Anthem and the Vice Regal Salutes.

John placed a Wreath on the Cenotaph during the service, on behalf of our sub-Branch.



The Group photo on the War Memorial Steps at Canberra Shirley McLaren is in the second row, third from the right

## Honouring Women of United Defence Service

Honouring Women & Families United by Defence Service (HWUDS) Last Post Ceremony and National Dinner held 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

What a wonderful, moving emotional day and night starting with the Last Post Ceremony Sunset Service at the Australian War Memorial Canberra.

The ceremony commemorated the sacrifice of Matron Jean Miles Walker, nurse from WWI, who died on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 age 39. One can only imagine the hardship those nurses endured as they tended the wounded in appalling conditions with limited medical supplies.

Wreaths were laid by His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia and Mrs. Linda Hurley followed by members from both sides of Parliament.

I was given the honour assisted by my granddaughter Brooke Walsh Ex-RAN to lay a wreath honouring all war widows and female veterans from WWII.

After the ceremony we assembled on the War Memorial steps for a group photo.

Then we moved on to Parliament House for the National Dinner.

The official dignitaries and guests gathered in the marble foyer where we were entertained with music by the RMC all Female Quintet.

Over 500 guests were asked to take their seats in the Great Hall as the Governor General David and Mrs. Linda Hurley with Senator Linda Reynolds, Minister for Defence, representing the Prime Minister, to name a few, assembled in the marble foyer with their allocated war widows beside them.

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This is where for me, the surprises started. Guests were asked to stand and Flags carried by the Australian Federation Guard entered the Great Hall.

Next came Senator Linda Reynolds and I thought I was escorting the Senator but as we entered the MC announced "Mrs. Shirley McLaren .... I thought, oh! my goodness, that's me! .... joined the WRAAF and then a short history of my service.

The last to be presented was Merle Hare 99 & 7 months Ex-RAN WWI escorted by the Governor General.

I wondered why there was a box of tissues on each table.

**SACRIFICE:** The dinner address by Dr. Brendon Nelson began with, "His Excellency and everyone in this room is a distinguished guest". What a wonderful speaker Dr. Nelson is.

This was followed by a video featuring WWII RAN Merle Hare & WRAAF Korean war widow Shirley McLaren. 'Pass the box of tissues please'.

**SPIRIT:** Message from the Prime Minister and speech by Senator Linda Reynolds Minister for Defence.

Wing Commander (Retd) Sharon Bown spoke on a nurses journey in the RAAF. 'Pass the tissues please'.

**COURAGE:** Message from Minister for Veterans Affairs Darren Chester MP.

The Last Post was played by RMC band buglers as thousands of red poppies floated down from the ceiling. 'Pass the tissues please'.

Enter piper Jen Hamer, The Highlands playing "Military Lament".

**HOPE:** An auction was held, the prize, ten people to be guests of Dr. Brendon Nelson. This raised the outstanding sum of \$10,000.00 !

Closing remarks from the Secretary Dept. Vet Affairs, Liz Cosson AM CSC.

The Oz Youth Choir sang and the evening ended with music, dancing, networking, laughter, hugs. 'Pass the tissues please'.

When sleep escapes me I am able to reflect on **SACRIFICE, SPIRIT, COURAGE** and **HOPE** and 'Pass the tissues please'.

Shirley McLaren.

*Editor: Shirley was both exhausted but yet exhilarated after her trip to Canberra. On return she had lots of letters of thanks to write and people to contact sharing her experiences. Even with her busy schedule Shirley managed to put this report together. Thank you Shirley.*

## Vietnam Veterans Day

The Vietnam Veterans Day service, attended by 20 plus people, was held at the chapel in the War Vet Village on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August at 2pm. Chaplain Bob Durbin conducted the Commemorative service complemented by image overheads with hymns.

\*Ian Galloway, as guest speaker spoke about his tour of duty as a naval serviceman during the Vietnam Conflict.

\*Ian was a Chief Petty Officer who was sent to Bay City, Lake Huron, USA, and during his service was on base at the commissioning of the HMAS Brisbane II in 1967. He then sailed on the destroyer down the St Lawrence to Boston, staying for sometime carrying out sea trials. It was then through the Panama Canal up to San Diego, Long Beach California on to Hawaii for four months with more sea trials on the way before some well earned leave!!

Returning from leave they headed to Brisbane. The City that the destroyer was named after. In honor they were given the keys to the city. Making preparations here for conflict and on reaching Sydney, they then set sail for Vietnam. They were positioned south of the DMZ, 2 miles off Hue, where as the gun-line they were assisted by US helicopter pilots to target the enemy lines. They spent six months in these waters and continued on for 12 months before returning to Sydney on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1971.

Ian then left the Navy to enter civilian life and the Australian work force.

After the service the attendees were invited to afternoon tea in the Afghan room where cakes and slices, with tea, coffee and orange juice was served.

*Editor: Thank you Ian for your participation as guest speakers hearing your involvement with the Vietnam Conflict and the lead up to it. A brief phone call was also greatly appreciated. Readers, please refer to Page 4 for an article on the "RAN in Vietnam".*

## Progress on Re-Organisation of RSL NSW

*Editor: The following has been edited due to space.*

This report lists the highlights of Mr. Hardman's address at our August General Meeting:-

- a) Effectively, the work previously undertaken in producing the first draft for the new constitution was the result of the efforts of a number of persons with inadequate understanding of the RSL and its functions/aims with the result that it had to be completely overhauled.
- b) The task of correcting the unacceptable draft was essentially given to the DC7 (a committee comprising the Presidents of 7 of the District Councils). All of these persons are elected representatives and 3 of the 7 were on

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## POLO SHIRT

SIZES	14/S	16/M	18/L	20/XL	22/2XL	24/3XL
ADULT						
to fit chest (cm)	90	95	100	105	110	115



Your orderform: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please order me one polo shirt: Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost = \$28.00. (A subsidy of \$26 is being made by your sub-Branch as approved unanimously at the April General Meeting)

Cut off this slip and return it in an envelope with your payment to the sub-Branch Office. No order accepted unless payment is made. \$28.

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the original panel dealing with the constitution.

c) The new thrust was all about "structure":-

The Board comprises 7 to 10 persons

State Administration will be provided by ANZAC House,

District Councils will manage sub-Branches in their District,

The whole is a bottom up organisation

d) The Board is a Board of Governance and Management is accommodated in the District Council system.

e) The State President and the Chairman of the Board are not the same person which resolves any conflict of interest.

As of next year, **for the Board only**, the voting will be on a one member one vote basis which is the reason all membership is currently being confirmed.

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f) The District Council Presidents will have more power in the new system (including the power to remove Directors). Other voting is on delegate basis at Congress as before.

g) The current staff of State Branch is 56 persons and can no longer be afforded – one of the main reasons for shifting aspects of management to District Councils.

h) One of the issues that will need to be addressed by each sub-Branch is whether to incorporate or not – it is an issue of legal entity – one of the results is that sub-Branches will no longer require Trustees if incorporated.

i) Intended that the new constitution will be out in September

i) the process is going well.

### **The RAF and RAAF at War”**

24<sup>th</sup> April 1942 75 SQN RAAF Port Moresby Papua  
Flt Sgt R.W. Crawford (Pilot) Age 20  
A29-76 (1) Kitty hawk P-40E

On this morning, the C.O., Flt Lt Les Jackson and I, were doing top cover (aerodrome protection) over Port Moresby. For this standing patrol, Les was in A29-43 ‘M’ and I was in A29-76 ‘I’. Flying in echelon formation. After being airborne for at least 1½ hours, we were informed by radio that a Japanese raid was coming in. We maintained our air cover at 8–10,000 feet, while the rest of the squadron scrambled to 20,000 feet.

Forced to land through lack of fuel, we chose Kila rather than Jackson Strip. We took off to the west and saw a small black dot coming towards us, and as it became closer, we recognised it as a US B-26 Martin Marauder. By this time, we were at 600 feet and still climbing when the B-26 passed below us flying at 500 feet. I counted three “Zeros” on its tail, one of which opened fire. It appeared that the “Zeros” had not seen us, so we flew straight to attack them in a climbing turn to help the B-26.

When Les opened fire on the third “Zero”, he saw his bullets hit the cockpit and tail. He then followed it as it turned sharply to starboard and climbed to about 7,000 feet, but here Les blanked out due to excessive G-forces.

I made a quarter attack from above on the second “Zero”, firing two medium bursts from about 100 yards, with no result observed. This second “Zero”

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then did a climbing turn and got onto my tail.

I now had a major problem; I was flying at low level, with a full load of fuel, and had two highly manoeuvrable “Zeros” on my tail. Had I been a few thousand feet up I could have dived away from them and escaped.

They now took turns to attack me, and I was hit a number of times; one bullet bursting the fuel tank, another broke my port rudder wire. One bullet severed my throat mike, by now I was flying at about 50 feet, and could hear and feel the bullets hitting the Armour plate on the back of my seat. I was left with no option but to ditch.

With the gear up and no flap. I touched the water tail first at 90-100 mph, holding the stick back to keep the air scoop out of the water. The aircraft bounced lightly two or three times before it lost speed and the nose dropped, the air scoop filled with water and the aircraft nose-dipped.



I sat on the tailplane, and hid behind the rudder as the “Zeros” flew low overhead. I was not sure whether they intended to strafe me, but they flew across the harbour to attack some Catalina flying boats from 11 Squadron.

My aircraft sank in about two minutes in about 6 feet of water, and I had spent some time sitting on the tail lane before I was picked up.

I eventually was picked up by a fuel barge, which had been sent out to recover me. They took me back to the wharf, where I found that I was all in one piece, apart from the graze on my neck and some cuts on my arms and legs from shrapnel.

My aircraft eventually was salvaged and converted to components.

Extract from “the RAAF at War” by Jim Turner.

*Editor: Thank you to Neil Stronach for this article. Neil has others. Look forward for the next articles in the March / April and July / August editions of “Dispatches” in 2020.*

The flag answer: Did you pick number 3? Well done.