



SUBMARINE ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

Patron Vice Admiral Ian MacDougall, AC, AFSM, RAN (rtd)

National President SAA Report - Melbourne 2011

Greetings to all,

Well I must say it has been a most enjoyable and at times interesting, year since I took on this position as your President. It has been and continues to be a learning curve for me and certainly we have been working hard to rectify some shortcomings, particularly communications. I would like to say that I take responsibility for the issues in communications between the branches and National Body. We are improving on this front and I have no doubt that over the next twelve months communications will become our strong point within the Association.

Since the last AGM in Coffs I have striven to raise the SAA profile within the Submarine and wider Navy communities. We have seen some new members from within the serving community and some who served at HMAS PLATYPUS in supporting roles (without whom life would have been that much harder for us). There have been several articles placed in the Trade and I regularly ask the branches for articles to help raise our profile. The current Commander Submarine Force Australia, Captain Brett Sampson RAN is also keen to assist both the local branch and National body of the SAA whenever possible. To this end we have established a single point of contact within the Submarine Force being the Corporate Communications Officer which will ease the extra workload that sometimes comes my way as a serving member from within the SAA. Andrew (Buj) is doing an excellent job in this position and his support both to me and the SAA has been second to none. We believe that his position is the best suited to provide the two way stream of information between the Submarine Force and the SAA. The quid pro quo however is the request for articles so I would urge all of you to start providing branch updates to SUBFOR, particularly events of significance, for inclusion in the Trade. Reminders are forwarded to the National Secretary for the branch secretaries.

I recently attended a meeting in Fremantle with CDRE Mark Sander RAN (Director General Future Submarine Program), CAPT Garry Kennedy RAN, Lloyd Blake (representing both SIA and SAA) and last but by no means least Sid President of SAA WA to discuss the role we and Navy can play in 2014 in celebrating 100 years of Australian Submarines. This was a very productive meeting and was pleasing to see that the SAA is thought at this level in Navy. 2014 and 2015 are going to be big and we as an organization need to agree to what we want to do. WA are taking the lead due to SUBCON being in WA but I hope all branches are thinking of what they can do to celebrate the major submarine centenary events in these two years but also how they can help WA. We are part of the Submarine Community and we all in this community need to work together to achieve something that the not just the Australian public but the International Submarine community will remember for a very long time to come. Talking about the International Submarine community, Lloyd and Sid have just returned to Australia from Turkey. They attended the 48th International Submarine Congress to present Australia's case to host the 2014 International Submarine Congress as part of our Submarine Centenary events. Despite a lot of effort they were defeated by one vote (7 to 6) and this event will be hosted by Greece. They deserve our thanks for the effort they put into this and although we don't get the congress we will

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be getting a lot of international submariners due to their efforts. We also have learnt a bit more about this group and I know Sid will be producing a report that will enlighten us all. BZ - Lloyd and Sid.

Your National Executive working closely with the National Committee and branches worked extremely hard to produce a new draft constitution. I commend this document to you as it enhances the previous document and we believe simplifies the way we manage not only the running of the SAA but how we can effectively keep this document up to date. However, as I mentioned at the 2010 AGM the saga of constitution must end at this AGM. We either go forward with a new document or retain the old. The time for debating this has ended and you were all given a fair chance to comment. For those of you who remain unhappy you need to stop and think about how damaging this is to the Association and why you may not even have contributed to the process over the past months. Please also remember that the majority want to embrace our aims and goals but more importantly have a good time with friends. I am not saying what has been produced is perfect as we will never be able to please everyone but it should be taken as a positive and worthwhile step forward in meeting what some, not all, wanted. The Constitution has taken me and others away from core business and we now need to progress with other matters whilst fine tuning what we have delivered if it is accepted at the upcoming AGM. What we must all remember is what works for one branch may not work for another but there can be scope to accommodate without disadvantage.

I attended ANZAC Day 2011 as guest of the Albany City Council and RSL. This co-incided with the dedication of a plaque to AE2 by the Chairman of the AE2 Foundation, RADM Peter Briggs AM CSC RAN Retd. I laid wreaths on behalf of the SAA at a service of remembrance for Kapyong and also at the Dawn and Main ANZAC Day services. The feedback from those who attended was extremely positive and it strengthened the Submarine bond with Albany. It also enabled me to have discussions with the Mayor, RSL and NAA regarding Centenary of ANZAC events and SAA involvement. In particular, the re-enactment of the troopships leaving Albany in November 1914, which included AE2.

I travelled to Qld last year to attend the funeral of a very young ex-Submariner and read the Submariners Prayer at his request. Unfortunately members of the Qld branch were unable to meet with me whilst I was in Brisbane. Geoff Anderson and I met over coffee at HMAS STIRLING last year for discussions relating to SAA matters and recently I met with Geoff Burns and Andy Galley in Canberra when in town on a flying visit. Sadly a few day before this meeting the Canberra Services Club in Manuka of which I am a previous Director and where the ACT Branch were meeting was destroyed by fire. If I am in your part of the woods I will make every effort to meet with those of you who are around or attend meetings that co-incide with my visit. If you are over this way please don't hesitate to look me up to say hello.

I returned to Albany to represent the SAA at the USN SUBVETS Memorial Service on Sunday 30th May. This service is conducted by serving USN Submariners currently embedded with the Submarine Force at FBW. On the Friday night our comrades from the Submariners Association (Australia Branch) gave a presentation to TS Vancouver and I provided a slide show on the SAA and Australian

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Submarines for future viewing. Again I was able to have discussions with the various organizations and in particular the Mayor relating to future SAA involvement in Albany.

Talking about Mayors I have also had informal discussions with both the Mayor of Rockingham and the Mayor of Fremantle regarding involvement in 2014. They are very keen to be involved which bodes well for us all.

There are many people who are deserving of recognition over the period and I would like to thank the Victorian Branch for their hard work in organizing this year's SUBCON. I am sure those of us who are attending will have a great time. Rob Woolrych continues his hard work to ensure our service is recognized and I know we are all very grateful to Rob and the NAA in this. Many of you have asked about whether the ASM will be upgraded to an AASM and I have discussed this with Rob to ensure we do not duplicate the work he and the NAA are continuing on this front. Rob is working towards an update on this front soon. The person I most wish to thank and recognize here is Norm Williams our Acting National Secretary. He has continued even in ill health to ensure continuity. Norm thank you for all you have and continue to do for the SAA but you and we need to put your health first. To Ken Williams thank you for your continued contribution to the Harbour Foreshore Trust planning on HMAS PLATYPUS. Final thanks need to go to our families and friends who continue to support us and the Association throughout.

Victoria came up with a suggestion for SUBFOR involvement in SUBCON and I am happy to say that SUBFOR have agreed to fund two high performing Submariners (one male, one female) to attend future SUBCONS. Although we had agreement for one to attend this year time was not our side as the person selected had to decline due to other work commitments. However this is a great opportunity for future SUBCONS and the only cost to us is to fund their night.

As I have mentioned over the last year I have found myself unable to do everything I wanted to achieve in this position and that is one of the reasons why I have nominated again for the position of National President. I hope that I have served you well over the last twelve months and that you are willing to give me a further period to be part of your Command Team.

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In closing I would ask you all to pause for a moment to remember those of our fellow Submariners who have passed over the bar in preceding twelve months. We should also remember those of our families who are also no longer with us. Also not forgetting those of the ADF who have lost their lives in the War against Terrorism.

Look after each other and your families. Thank you all.

Yours Aye

DARREN THOMPSON
President
Submarines Association Australia

30 May 2011

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