



Chair Report for AGM 21st October 2017

This report outlines the activities and progress of the RAAHC since the previous Annual General Meeting held on the 15th October 2016. Over the last year, the RAAHC Board of Directors has met regularly and continued to develop the Company as a national organisation meeting its core purpose **to promote the significance of Australia's Artillery, its history and heritage**. During 2017 Lieutenant Colonel Rob Crawford has joined the Board and taken up the role of Collections Director, a role in which he has been particularly active. Unfortunately Brian Hall who joined the Board as our Honorary Treasurer in 2016 has recently indicated that he will resign from the Board at the AGM due to health reasons. We are now looking for a suitable volunteer to take up this role.

In undertaking its core purpose, the RAAHC continues to support the activities of the RAA Regimental Committee, the RAA Head of Regiment and the RAA Representative Colonel Commandant and to work closely with a range of stakeholders, regional and unit artillery organisations and individuals around Australia. In recognition of the value the RAAHC adds to the heritage of Australian artillery, the RAAHC has been offered permanent formal observer status on the RAA Regimental Committee.

The achievements of the RAAHC are detailed in the Board papers and Financial Report for 2017 that has been on our website for several weeks as well as being reported throughout the year in "Cannonball" and through RAAHC periodic "Airburst" newsletters. Our plans for the current three years are outlined in the RAAHC Corporate Plan FY 2016-19 which is available to all members and the public on our website.

I again wish to acknowledge the continued success of our two RAAHC Anzac Centenary projects – the Anzac Centennial 18 Pounder Memorial Gun Project and the *Firepower* History Seminar Series – both of which will continue until 2018. Much effort has gone into both these activities by dedicated volunteers.

There is a very comprehensive report on the Anzac Centennial Gun (ACG) and its support to a range of Anzac Centenary activities throughout eastern Australia in the recent Autumn 2017 Cannonball. I regret to report the tragic death of one of the ACG volunteers, Luke Dowell, in a car accident in September 2017. Luke was a stalwart supporter of the team and the Lead Driver for many of the events. He leaves a young family that will sorely miss him. A gun detachment from the ACG volunteers will represent Australia at the Passchendaele Salute at Fort Seclin in France on 10 November 2017. All the volunteers are meeting their own costs for this trip. At this stage we believe the ACG will also parade in Brisbane as part of the Anzac Parade in April 2018.

The RAAHC History Seminar Series has also continued strongly with a further three very successful seminars conducted in Canberra during the year on *Firepower: Lessons From*

the Great War. A further four seminars are planned over the next year. I encourage all who can get to the Canberra seminars to do so as they are very interesting.

The RAAHC has now completed the disposal of most of the RAAHC collection in accordance with the disposal plan advised to members. All items identified as appropriate and useful for the future Australian Army Artillery Museum (being part of a combined Armour/Artillery Museum to be built outside the secure area at Puckapunyal) have now been formally gifted to the Commonwealth through the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU). This includes items already transferred to Bandiana in 2012 and other items that were located at North Fort. The items that will go to the Commonwealth by the end of 2017 are estimated to be worth over \$54,000 and include much of the Whitelaw Collection. In all the RAAHC will have gifted a collection worth more than \$874,000 to assist the Army in preserving the Regiment's heritage. Some other items have been gifted or loaned to various responsible organisations where requested, including a number of uniforms to Government House in Sydney. Surplus items not required have been advertised and then sold at auction with the funds being made available to the RAAHC to sponsor future projects that meet our core purpose.

I am pleased to report that we continue to maintain a warm relationship with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) that facilitates our presence at North Fort. A new Memorandum of Understanding with SHFT has been agreed that protects our remaining assets at North Fort, particularly the valuable collection in the RAAHC library and Australia's Memorial Walk. As SHFT adjusts its focus in accordance with their longer-term management plan, SHFT has requested that all items on loan from either Army or the RAAHC for public display held at North Fort be removed. Arrangements are in hand with AAHU to recover these weapons and relevant buildings at North Fort will be vacated by the end of this year.

Throughout the last year, development of the Sir Roden Cutler VC Artillery Research Centre (CRC) has continued with its digitisation, review of holdings and continued cataloguing of the Whitelaw Collection. During this year Major Alan Smith (Retd) has also donated his research papers and references supporting his articles when the Editor of *Cannonball* and his five published manuscripts on artillery topics. The CRC has also provided significant historical and heritage information services over the last year; two key themes were information on individuals who served in WW1, and the location of heritage artillery pieces. The Company maintains its network of researchers and successfully encouraged the publication of many worthy articles in the RAAHC's journal, *Cannonball*. The RAAHC is also answering enquiries from overseas which indicates we are now more than a locally recognised organisation, and the international reach of our website.

The RAAHC's Obituary Coordinator, Peter Bruce, continues to add obituaries he receives to our website. It is becoming a significant research resource with more than 140 entries.

Australia's Memorial Walk at North Fort remains under the care of the RAAHC. Improvements continue to the Walk with some major refurbishments being undertaken to the monuments over the last 12 months. While it remains the intention of the RAAHC to handover the Walk to the SHFT for their continued care at a mutually agreeable time, options still exist to add both individual and centre piece pavers, and in fact we have seen an increased level of requests and placement of pavers over the last 12 months due to the marketing and management of new Memorial Walk manager, John Balfour.

In conclusion, it has again been a busy year for the RAAHC. I consider the RAAHC continues to be well positioned to effectively support Australian Artillery history and heritage, and has appropriate artillery links around Australia. We continue to strive to further strengthen our influence and effect. I encourage all Gunners and those interested in the heritage of Australian artillery to support us by becoming full or affiliated members of the RAAHC. I remind all that anyone who is serving in the Australian Defence Force or is already a member of one of the artillery associations around Australia may become an affiliated member for free. Tax-free donations to support our activities are always most welcome and do assist the RAAHC to ensure we can play our part in maintaining the heritage of the RAA and Australian artillery.

Finally, I wish once again to thank all those who have contributed to the success of the RAAHC this year, particularly the wide range of volunteers around Australia that assist our activities and projects. Amongst these, I wish to particularly thank those volunteers working on our various projects and in the Cutler Research Centre. Thanks also to all the RAAHC Directors for their significant contributions throughout the year. Finally, I offer a special thank you to our Patron, Major General Steve Gower AO, AO (Mil) as well as to our Honorary Solicitor Paul Fordyce. I also particularly wish to thank and mention our Honorary Auditor Bill Neill who will stand down at this AGM having assisted the RAAHC in this role for over 20 years. This is a truly wonderful contribution. I am also pleased to announce that Graham Martin has volunteered to be nominated as our new Honorary Auditor.

Ubique,



Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)