



Chair Report for AGM 16th November 2019

This report outlines the activities and progress of the RAAHC since the previous Annual General Meeting held on the 27th October 2018. Over the last year, the RAAHC Board of Directors has met regularly and continued to develop the Company as a national organisation focused on its core purpose **to promote the significance of Australia's Artillery, its history and heritage**. Since July 2019 Ron West, Bill Foxall and James Eling have joined the RAAHC Board, and another volunteer will do so at the AGM. On 1 September Vince Williams stepped down from the Board to undertake a major commitment to his local RSL sub-Branch. We welcome our new Board members and thank Vince for his most significant contribution to the Board for the last 9 years.

The achievements of the RAAHC over the last 12 months are detailed in the Board papers and Financial Report for 2018/19 that are available on our website as well as being reported throughout the year in "Cannonball" on our Facebook site and by RAAHC periodic "Airburst" newsletters.

The RAAHC Corporate Plan FY 2018-20 is still current and available to all members and the public on our website. During the last 12 months we have continued to focus our support to the RAA Regimental Committee and to clarify the importance of informing all about our activities and resources. In this respect Brian Hall has taken up a new role as the RAAHC Publicity Officer.

I again wish to acknowledge the continued progress and success of our two major RAAHC Anzac Centenary projects – the Anzac Centennial 18 Pounder Memorial Gun Project and the *Firepower* History Seminar Series – and to announce the commencement of a new seminar series and project working with the Regiment and the Gunner community to record the recent history of the RAA from 1973-2021. It is proposed that this project will unfold in two broad parts: the first stage will invite the RAA regiments and batteries to tell their own stories and chronology of events through a series of history seminars; while the second stage will address the compilation, synthesis and writing of a volume of history that captures these stories.

The Anzac Centennial Gun (ACG) project has been a great success. Following the wonderful restoration of an 18 Pounder Gun and limber from World War 1 and the development, training and maintenance of a team of dedicated riders and horses, the ACG has been paraded, displayed and occasionally fired at over 40 national, state and local events over the last four years. As advised previously it is our intention that the ACG and limber will be permanently on display to the Australian community. We are hoping this may be at a new Australian Army Artillery Museum once it is built but meanwhile we are still considering a suitable and accessible temporary site for it to be displayed.

The RAAHC History Seminar Series *Firepower: Lessons From the Great War* concluded with the last Seminar no 11 in November 2018. I am pleased to report an anthology of the many fascinating articles presented during the Firepower seminars is proceeding well under the guidance of an excellent editor and Steering Group and with the assistance of the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU). The resulting book *Clash of the Gods of War: Australian Artillery and the Firepower Lessons of the Great War*, to be published early in 2020, will be exceptional, bringing together scholars and practitioners to present fresh and erudite insights into the development of Australian artillery through the First World War and the application of firepower more broadly.

While the RAAHC continues to control a small historical collection on long loan to a variety of organisations throughout Australia, the bulk of the previous RAAHC collection has been transferred to the Army and is now in Bandiana awaiting transfer eventually to the future Australian Army Artillery Heritage Centre. The importance and value of the major gift to the Army that the RAAHC collection represents has been warmly acknowledged both by the Chief of the Army and the Head of the Australia Army History Unit.

The RAAHC continues to actively promote the history and activities of the Regiment – right up to current events that occurred this year – through the RAAHC Website and the periodic distribution of our journal *Cannonball*, our newsletter *Airburst*, and on our RAAHC Facebook site. In particular, the RAAHC website (<http://www.artilleryhistory.org>) continues to expand and is the source of much valuable historical and current information on the RAA. For example, it now includes links to the national Artillery Register, the Cutler Research Centre and records about Gunners “Past and Present”. I thank Kevin Browning, Peter Bruce, Peter Hartup, Graham Hampton and Paul Camilleri among others, for their continued development of such Gunner records. I encourage all to add to these records by sending to us additional data on guns around Australia and biographies of Gunners.

Over the reporting period we have continued to develop the Sir Roden Cutler VC Artillery Research Centre (CRC) at North Fort from a stand-alone, paper and other media based library to a ‘Trove’ compliant, online, remotely accessible research centre while retaining and improving fundamental library capabilities. Items held in the CRC include books, periodicals, army pamphlets, photos, maps, films, DVDs, personal papers and research files that contain information relevant to the history and heritage of Australian artillery. Some items are unique and quite a few are fragile and rare. The development process is therefore a demanding long-term project although some of the digital record is already “on-line” through the website. At the same time, the CRC, in conjunction with the RAA Regimental History Committee with its network of specialist researchers, has continued to respond to requests for information and to provide a wide range of historical and heritage information services. I encourage anyone inclined to join the Company’s research efforts to contact us to offer their volunteer support or to explore opportunities.

Our other RAAHC projects also continue to develop. We are still accepting orders for pavers to be included in Australia’s Memorial Walk at North Fort. Disappointingly, as already reported in *Cannonball*, the etching of the stories shown the Monuments on the Walk that was undertaken in 2016 has not been successful and the images are rapidly wearing and fading. We are therefore now examining a range of options and funding to ensure that the Walk will continue to appropriately honour all those who have served in Colonial forces of Australia, the RAN, Australian Army, RAAF, the Australian Merchant Navy and their families and Allies. This includes a QR code to be shown at each Monument that links to the

associated stories via our RAAHC website. Our preferred solution on the Walk is to mount brass plaques on the four other Monuments (similar to that on the Peacekeeping Monument). We will start the restoration this year but the complete project will be an expensive exercise that may take several years to complete. We have appointed a project officer and will be seeking grants and donations to assist the funding. Meanwhile we continue to add pavers to the Walk, with some 70 added over the last 12 months. I sincerely thank John Balfour for the great work he undertakes to market and manage the Memorial Walk and Roy Mellior and others for their maintenance of the Walk.

In conclusion, it has been a successful year for the RAAHC. The RAAHC continues to effectively support and promote Australian artillery history and heritage, and has appropriate artillery links around Australia. We continue to strive to further strengthen our influence and effect nationally. 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. We rely on such support to continue our activities. I thank all those who have renewed their Membership in 2019. I also 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-deductible donations and bequests to support our activities are always most welcome and do assist the RAAHC to ensure we can continue our contribution to maintaining the heritage of the RAA and Australian artillery.

Finally, I wish to sincerely 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 an expanding range of heritage projects. Amongst these, I wish to particularly acknowledge those volunteers working on our various projects and in the CRC. 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 and our Honorary Auditor Graham Martin.

This is my last report as the Chair of the RAAHC. I will stand down from the Board at this AGM to encourage others to join the Board and present a fresh approach as the Chair, a position that I have been honoured to fill since 2010. During that period, with the support of all our Board members, volunteers and supporters, we have developed the RAAHC to be a widely respected and viable national organisation focused on maintaining the history and heritage of Australian artillery and working closely with the Regimental Committee and other artillery organisations throughout Australia. I plan to remain assisting the RAAHC at the CRC and look forward to supporting the continued success of the RAAHC.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Ford".

Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)