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September 2020



Newsletter
of the
RAAF
STAFF COLLEGE
ASSOCIATION Inc

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The 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

12:00 hours

Friday 9 October 2020

at the Royal Canberra Golf Club, Yarralumla

to be followed at 12:30 pm by a luncheon

Speaker:

Mr Peter Jennings, PSM

Executive Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute

(Please see separate notice and meeting papers included with this newsletter.)

From the President

While it has literally been sometime between drinks for us as an Association, I am very pleased to advise that, notwithstanding last-minute policy changes by the ACT Government, we expect to be able to proceed with our planned end-of-year AGM and luncheon meeting. That said, I understand that with current border closures likely to be in place for some time yet, members who travel from interstate may be unable to join us at this meeting. We remain open to suggestions, noting that we could establish a video link for a few, by Skype or FaceTime, for example, but without a Zoom account we are unable to offer such connectivity on a broader basis.

As you can imagine, the effects of Covid-19 are being felt in many ways throughout the Air Force. Earlier this year for example, working from home was the norm, as it still is in parts of Victoria for example. Meanwhile, Covid-19 has created some uncertainty about end-of-year interstate postings, especially to and from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Spare a thought for those involved. Covid-19 will also impact on the costs for our lunch, as I will explain later.

Of course, one upside for Air Force is that we are unlikely to have a pilot shortage in the immediate future, particularly as apparently large numbers of airline B737 pilots in particular are seeking opportunities to fly our three RAAF B737-based platforms. We are certainly living in interesting times, a theme I will return to when introducing our guest speaker.

In keeping with the time-honoured formula of when you are on a good thing, stick to it - until disrupted by Covid-19 which, fortunately has resulted in the loss of only one meeting) - 2019/20 saw us continue the well-established formula of luncheon meetings. Apart from enjoying each other's company we have been very fortunate to have two superb speakers during the past year: The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson, AO – then Director of the Australian War Memorial last October, and in February, Professor Hugh White, AO – Emeritus Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University. Unfortunately, we missed our mid-year meeting this year. However, on the up-side, courtesy of an invitation from Dr Nelson, last November a large number of our members had the good fortune to participate in a private, escorted tour of the Australian War Memorial's collection stored at Mitchell in the Memorial's Treloar Storage Annex. Perhaps this 'excursion' might be an example of the activities we might be able to undertake in the future.

As is customary at this time of the year, and as it continues to be appropriate, I acknowledge the ongoing commitment and efforts of your committee members (who I understand are happy to continue), Paul McMahon, Frank Kelly and David Wade. Given recently changed ACT legislation, which precludes a member from auditing their association's accounts, this year we were unable to call on the services of our always very diligent auditor, Russ Walls. Instead, we were very fortunate that Lieutenant Colonel Maurie Galt, MBE (Ret'd) provided the audit service for us – joint co-operation perhaps? Finally, as always, I want to again acknowledge the excellent ongoing support we receive from Carey Lander and her team at the Royal Canberra Golf Club.

On the subject of the Royal Canberra Golf Club, I need to tell you that there will be a couple of Covid-19-driven changes to our next lunch. First the obvious one – numbers attending. The Covid-safe limit for the Royal Canberra Golf Club's Westbourne Room restricts us to a total attendance (including our guest speaker) of thirty-five, so if you are able to attend, the thirty-four seats for members (only) will be allocated on a first to respond, first to be seated basis. (Should there be spaces available a couple of days before nominations close, we will advise members accordingly, and guests will be accepted on a first to respond, first seated basis.) Second: the dreaded issue of cost – and yes, it has increased. Those attending last year's AGM may recall that we resolved to increase the charge for those attending to \$65 to cover the luncheon costs. As it turned out, we didn't remember that when it came to charging attendees at our subsequent luncheon in February this year – we paid \$60 per head. Now, Covid-19 has further complicated that calculus, Carey advising that 'Cost has increased slightly to \$50.00 per person for a main course and individual cheese plate (due to COVID we are not permitted to have shared platters for guests it has to be an individual plate per person)'. Noting that we also have to pay for beverages we consume, and the meal for our guest speaker, the estimated cost per member will be \$72 – we have rounded it down to \$70. Yes, it is getting expensive, but at least we will each have an individual plate of cheese!

Finally, I am very pleased to advise that the very high standard established by our recent speakers will be maintained at our next meeting. Our guest speaker, Mr Peter Jennings, PSM, Executive Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute since May 2012, is a well-known and very highly regarded national security commentator, who has worked at senior levels in the Australian Public Service on defence and national security. His career highlights include being Deputy Secretary for Strategy in the Defence Department (2009-12); Chief of Staff to the Minister for Defence (1996-98) and Senior Advisor for Strategic Policy to the Prime Minister (2002-03). We are in for an excellent, and no doubt topical address, and an excellent lunch!

As always, I look forward to seeing you at the Royal Canberra Golf Club on Friday 9 October, at which time I trust Canberra will still be Covid-free so we can relax, enjoy fine company, food, wine and an excellent presentation.

Stay well,

Ian Pearson

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