

PRESIDENT'S REPORT
DFWA ACT AGM – 9 OCTOBER 2018

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for your attendance this evening. Your attendance and the holding of this AGM is an important governance activity for the Association to ensure it is managed in a proper manner. To that end I note this AGM was advertised by way of a notice in The Canberra Times on 15 September 2018, as well as on our website, in *Camaraderie* and finally by a recent direct email to members.

The Branch Committee met formally six times in the FY year.. and was also able to work “out of session” when necessary with the use of email communication. I wish to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to Committee members for their support and the effort they put into the work of the Association.

Your Treasurer Paul Jones has prepared audited reports for your information. You will see that we again have a small surplus. As I have advised in the past, but is necessary to repeat, that whilst we have a healthy capital balance your Committee will not squander it. All expenditures are backed up by Committee approvals and regular reporting to the Committee. Paul is here tonight and I invite you to raise any questions you may have when his report is formally tabled.

Trevor Goodhew, your Membership Registrar, has worked hard managing all our membership issues.

During the past year due to ill health Trevor has had to relinquish most of his extensive volunteer works in the ACT ESO community, but has agreed to continue in his capacity as membership officer, and I am extremely grateful for this.

Our four pension, welfare and advocacy officers – Hilton Leonard, Kerry Mellor, Annette Sadler and Keith Russell - have again assisted dozens of individuals, some requiring just some quick advice, others requiring many hours of personal assistance. Between them, they have some 60 active cases “on their books”. Your Branch supports them in numerous ways, such as funding their attendance at training courses, out of pocket expenses etc, as is noted in the financial reports.

As advised in my last report, the new training and registration arrangements being imposed on our advocates by the DVA will adversely impact on the number of advocates the DFWA and all other Ex Service Organisations in the coming years. In the case of the ACT DFWA, our advocates will be ramping down their works in the coming year or two, for that reason as well as for personal health and other issues.

Our acting Defence Widows Group convenor – Christine Lamb – has provided a written report which will be tabled at this meeting. The hard work, dedication and commitment of Christine and her Committee warrant our special thanks. Christine graciously stepped into the shoes of Annette Sadler who has relinquished her work with the DWG and advocacy due to ill health. I was pleased that Annette’s efforts were recently recognised by the award of Honorary Life Membership of the DFWA.

Your Hon Secretary, Gerard Gough, warrants special mention for doing the myriad of secretariat and representational events in support of the Branch. Regretfully for us, Gerard is about to be posted and as a result we will soon be losing his services as our Hon Secretary. I pass to Gerard our special thanks for the dedication he has shown to the Branch and am delighted he has agreed to keep involved with supporting the Association on a national level. Thank you again Gerard and we hope to see you back in the ACT sometime in the future !

Ladies and Gentlemen before concluding my formal report to you, I wish to make two points:

- Firstly, that it is my contention that the DFWA as whole operates on two levels – and this needs to be clearly understood by our membership. On the national level the significant behind the scenes lobbying activities are fundamental to achieving the aims of the Association. These activities are well reported in the DFWA s magazine *Camaraderie* and on our website. I specifically mention to the various well researched and detailed submissions to Government and other bodies as an example of this. At the local level, Branches support more “hands on” operations to its members, and this is well reflected in the ACT Branch in the operations of our advocates and the work of the DWG.

- Secondly, my concerns for the future. We are finding it difficult at both the Branch and National level to find new members, and no more so than finding new Branch Committee members. This situation is shared not just by DFWA Branches but by most ESOs, nationwide. So how the next 5 years or so pan out for the DFWA as a whole, I am not sure. For the Branch, I have taken the decision to reduce the number of formal Committee meetings to four a year, and do more of our routine work out of session, primarily by email communication, in order to reduce the workload of our Committee members.

In closing, I wish to repeat the thanks and the passing our best wishes to our outgoing Committee members Annette Sadler, Trevor Goodhew and Gerard Gough. Thank you for the hard work and dedication to the DFWA.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Les Bienkiewicz 09 October 2018