



Annual General Meeting 2015

President's Annual Report

Dear ANARE Club members

It is with pleasure that I submit my Report for the National Council 2014-15.

I would commence by paying my respect and gratitude to our former Treasurer, Mr Roland Leschinski who passed away on 8th July after an illness of nearly a year. To me, Roland was an ideal member of National Council. His contributions were measured, considered and well-presented and he was thoroughly professional in everything he undertook. He was a pleasure to work with and was utterly reliable. He had a quiet, almost scholarly demeanour and could be relied upon in every respect. He was in every way a perfect gentleman and he will be sorely missed. I am sure you will all join me in extending best wishes and condolences to Roland's widow, Chris and to his family.

Over the past two years National Council has been evolving into a truly national body, with representatives from all the Eastern States. In the past six months Dr Phil Crosby has been very active in developing a renewed group in the West and I hope that during the next year we will see a reconstituted Western Australian Branch. During the past year Council has met for a formal meeting in New South Wales, at Margaret Whitelaw's home – the meeting coinciding with a planned NSW Branch Slide Night. The meeting was open to all members and several local members attended throughout the meeting. I believe this is a good idea and I hope next year's Council will be willing to hold another meeting in NSW.

Council held a meeting in Kingston Tasmania, at the invitation of the Director of the Australian Antarctic Division, who agreed to brief us on operational, scientific and administrative activities of the Division. I believe this is the first time – at least since the move of the AAD from Melbourne – that such an invitation has been extended, and it is a reflection of the current excellent relations between the Club and the AAD. Tasmanian members were invited to that meeting and several attended. It was not a formal meeting of Council but it was a valuable opportunity for Tasmanian members to meet with their National Council.

I believe that it would be appropriate for the Annual General Meeting to be held outside Melbourne on alternative years as at present members from outside Victoria cannot participate in the AGM unless they are prepared to pay travel costs so to do. I think that as NSW and Tasmania have, after Victoria, the largest number of members, a system by which the AGM is held in Sydney and Hobart as well as Melbourne on a rotating basis would be a sensible step, perhaps holding the meeting on a Sunday afternoon to enable interstate members wishing to attend to be able to do so without incurring an overnight stay and, as Rule 30 (3) empowers National Council to decide the location of the AGM, I propose to include this in the business for the incoming National Council. The Club today is a national organisation with a national identity and this must be to its benefit and should be fostered.

One of the early matters facing Council was the referendum on the nature of the National Midwinter Dinner in Melbourne. As a result of that referendum, in which a majority of members – both in the overall Club and in each State - decided that the dinner attendance be open to a wider attendance criteria (options as determined by the 2014/15 Council) and as a result the dinner was opened to the guests of members. It needs to be remembered that the original decision of Council to put this resolution forward was due to the fact that at the time of the meeting in May 2014 it appeared that the numbers attending would fall short of those required to obtain the favourable conditions offered by the caterer and the venue operator, and that the shortfall would have to be met from Council's resources.

Although the numbers attending the dinner fell below the attendance for the previous year, it was pleasing to see several members taking advantage of the change to bring friends and partners to the dinner. I am particularly grateful to Dr Margaret Whitelaw who chaired the subcommittee responsible for determining how the resolution would be put into effect. The Melbourne Midwinter Dinner remains the *National* Dinner for the Club which I believe is entirely appropriate, as Melbourne remains the 'spiritual home' of the ANARE Club. However, while it remains the Club's 'flagship' event and is administered through National Council, it is appropriate that National Council makes the necessary decisions to keep it viable.

National Council is particularly grateful to its member and former President, Brian Harvey, for making additional space in his workshop premises available to the Club for storage of its memorabilia, back numbers of *Aurora* and stocks of sales items. This extremely generous offer will greatly assist the incoming Council to get on with the task of sorting and classifying artefacts and other memorabilia and will also provide an opportunity to move the large number of written records from their previous location in Chris Gamgee's home. I hope that the incoming Council will find time to collate all the Club's Minute Books which will now all be held in the same location, thus ensuring that this valuable historical reference can be sorted and made available to members. I believe it would be appropriate to have a complete copy of the Minutes lodged with the National Library of Australia as these records form an

important part of the history of Australia's involvement in the Antarctic. I have deposited a copy of the history of the ANARE Ski club with the Library.

As mentioned above, the AAD invited National Council to a briefing and discussion with its senior management. This was held in Hobart on 8th May. At that meeting the discussion covered matters including the continuing availability of the Club Berth, the current review being undertaken on the historical artefacts at present held at Kingston, the long-term directions of the Antarctic Program and ways in which the Club can work more closely with the Division.

As can be seen from these notes, National Council has been very active over the past year. We have held four meetings during the year – the first in Melbourne, the second via Skype (which proved to be very successful) and an open meeting in Sydney and an open meeting in Melbourne. Another meeting is to be held prior to the AGM in order to finalise business for that meeting. Members are always welcome to attend meetings of National Council as observers. Council invited Mr Neil Brandie to both the Sydney and the Melbourne meetings to give a presentation on his experience as the Club's representative on Voyage 1. The Club invited the Chinese Consul-General for Antarctic affairs (Mr Yilin Wu) to the Melbourne open meeting in May to give a presentation on current CHINARE programs. Mr Wu had served in Antarctica as station leader at Zhong Shan in 1998. Unfortunately, this meeting was not well attended.

An inevitable impact of these meetings is the cost of travel for members to attend, especially given the fact that during the last year, the number of Councillors from interstate was greater than the number from Victoria. When I was first elected to Council there were four of the thirteen members attending from interstate – last year that rose to seven, and it would appear that in the coming year the figure will again be seven. This is an inevitable consequence of the increasingly representative nature of Council in relation to our national membership base, and it would be demonstrably unjust to deny eligibility for Council membership on a basis of geographical residence.

National Council has set travel rates for each State and for rural Victoria. These rates are based on the cheapest available air fare and costs involved journeying from Melbourne Airport to the place of the meeting. We do *not* provide reimbursement for accommodation or for travel from the member's residence to the airport in his or her home town and, as a result, several Councillors are left out of pocket through their attendance and I appreciate the sacrifice these members make. This was particularly the case with Council's visit to Kingston for the AAD briefing, where only a nominal amount (below the actual cost) was reimbursed and several interstaters had to stay overnight in Hobart on the night before in order to be able to get to the meeting by 1030. The Club, quite properly, I believe, does not reimburse Councillors travel to attend social functions such as midwinter dinners, and I

appreciate the fact that several interstate members attended both the National Midwinter Dinner and other dinners outside their home State at their own expense. Given the success of the Skype meeting held in December, I would expect the incoming National Council to consider a second meeting to be held via that medium.

Many of you will be aware that the current Director of the Australian Antarctic Division, Dr Tony Fleming, has decided for personal reasons to step down from the directorship. This is an unfortunate move for the Club as Dr Fleming was a strong supporter of the 'expeditioner ethic' and was very interested in working closely with the Club. As Raymond Priestley's grandson, he had been brought up with the history of Antarctic exploration and his presence at the AAD will be sorely missed.

I was delighted, as I am sure all members will be, to see that the new Director of the AAD is Dr Nick Gales. Dr Gales will be known to many of you and it is, I believe, of considerable significance that he is the first Director of the AAD to have been a winter expeditioner in the ANARE program (Davis 1986). I look forward to working with him and I am certain that the current good relationship between the Club and the Division will continue under his leadership

I am sure all members were pleased – as I was – to see Mr Dick Thompson's name in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, in which he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM). This long overdue recognition of one of the key players in the early years of ANARE was very welcome.

Whilst on the subject of honours and awards, I was also delighted to see Dr Des Lugg AM chosen as this year's recipient of the Phillip Law Medal. Des is well known to many of us and his contributions to Antarctic Medicine on both Australian and international levels are legion. It was a great privilege and a pleasure to be able to present Des with medal at the Hobart Midwinter dinner on 20th June this year. I believe that the Phillip Law Medal is now well established as the premium national award of recognition for contributions to Australian Antarctic endeavour. However, like all awards, it is only as good as the nominations received, so I urge you all to consider suitable nominees for next year's award. Applications close on 31st December and details are available either on our web-page or from the Secretary.

The Club was very well represented by Mr Neil Brandie as the occupant of the Club Berth for the 2014-15 summer season. Neil undertook valuable work in presenting the value of Club membership to expeditioners and ran a brisk sale of Club merchandise. As noted above, Neil subsequently made presentations on his voyage experience to open meetings of National Council in Melbourne and Sydney, both of which were very well received.

During the year National Council resolved to erect two memorial plaques commemorating lives lost by early expeditioners. The first commemorated those

expeditioners of Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition who were lost at sea when the relief ship – SS *Endeavour* - was lost with all hands just after relieving the 1914 winter party. This plaque was taken to Macquarie Island on Voyage 4 and has been erected in the mess.

The second commemorated all those Australian and New Zealand members of Mawson's AAE and the earlier 'heroic age' expeditions who lost their lives in the Great War. This plaque was handed over to the Division at our May meeting in Hobart and I was privileged to be invited to formally unveil it at the AAD's annual memorial service at Kingston 19th June. The original impetus for these memorials came from David Dodd and Club Member Dr Herbert Dartnall. A small sub-committee comprising myself, David Dodd and Herb Dartnall undertook the research into this and worked with the Australian War Memorial and the New Zealand Defence Force in the preparation of the plaque. We believe this is the only such memorial of its kind – there is no equivalent in either New Zealand or the United Kingdom and it is appropriate to take this action in this, the centenary of ANZAC.

Council resolved that the cost of these two memorials be met from Club funds on the basis that these were 'once off' commitments.

During the past two months, the editor of *Aurora* (Dr David Ellyard) and Council Member Mr Ralph ('Noddy') Fletcher undertook an examination of the possibility of a new publisher for our Journal. We are now trialling an edition published by Edge Print. I expect that David will report on this more fully in his Editor's Report. I would like to acknowledge my thanks to Noddy and David for taking this important step, as well as recording my thanks to David for his continuing work as Editor. It is in many ways a thankless task and David is to be commended for his work in this area. *Aurora* remains the principal means of keeping the Club alive and well and David's efforts in this respect deserve the full support of all members.

Over the past year Brian Harvey and Charmaine Alford have looked after our sales and there is a wide range of merchandise now obtainable and members are encouraged to go to our webpage to see what is available, both for themselves and as gifts. Last year the AAD gave us permission to use the Leopard Seal 'ANARE' logo in addition to the Club 'penguin' one and we have incorporated this into a wide range of clothing items. Our sales items form an important part of the Club's revenue raising activities and I would ask you all to support it.

One of the impacts of 21st Century operations is the increasing reliance of the Club on electronic means of communication and accounting. As many of you will realise, these new media change rapidly as technology improves and our operating systems are now becoming a bit out dated and difficult to maintain. I am deeply grateful – as

is the entire Council – to Denise Allen for all the work she undertakes in this field, especially as she does not feel entirely comfortable with the technology. During the next few months Denise, helped by Chris Gamgee and an external consultant will be looking at ways of updating the system and making it somewhat more user friendly and also more efficient in meeting the day to day operations of the Club.

Membership continues to be an aspect of concern to National Council. There has been a slight but constant decrease in membership numbers as older members pass away and some other members do not renew their subscriptions. Recruitment of new members is most important and I would urge you all to encourage former expeditioners whom you know and are not members to consider joining up. Margaret Whitelaw's tireless work in maintaining our membership records is a vital part of the day to day business of the Club and I am indebted to her for her work in this area.

The Club was invited, at very short notice, to contribute to a Performance Audit of the AAD by the Australian National Audit Office, entitled *Supporting Australia's Antarctic Program*. National Council received contributions to this undertaking from Neil Brandie and from Dr Des Lugg and Prof Pat Quilty and incorporated these into a submission.

Looking ahead, 2017 will be the 70th anniversary of the first post-war Australian Antarctic Expedition and the creation of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions and we will need to look to ways to commemorate this important event. Similarly, 2018 is the sixtieth anniversary of the first International Geophysical Year and thus of Wilkes Station, and 2019 is the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Casey "tunnel", so there are some significant anniversaries on the horizon.

I wish to record my thanks to all the members of National Council for their work in the past year. The Club is an Incorporated Association, governed by the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* (Victoria) and our *Rules of Association* (2013) which are made pursuant to that Act provide that "The business of the Association must be managed by or under the direction of the National Council" (Rule 42). This places legal obligations upon Council members and calls for a considerable range of management skills and all members of Council are required by Rule 45 to become familiar with both the Rules and the Act. This is especially the case as the Act introduced substantial change to the requirements for management and reporting and is a quite complex piece of legislation. Therefore, continuity – as far as possible – should be a characteristic of the Council.

We have been fortunate in this respect that a number of members of Council have served for several years and this sound experience base has made Council a pleasure to work with. David Dodd has been a most effective and efficient Secretary – which

duties include statutory obligations pursuant to the Act; Ian Toohill has given me considerable assistance as Vice-President; and Margaret Whitelaw and Denise Allen have been invaluable in their roles as Membership Officer and Social Secretary – these duties being in addition to their responsibilities as ordinary Councillors.

Sadly, we are losing two Councillors at the Annual General Meeting – Ralph Fletcher and Jan Adolph have both indicated that they are not seeking re-election due to personal reasons. Jan has been of great assistance to Council as he lives in Hobart and has been able to represent the Club, often at very short notice, to the AAD. He has also served as President of the Tasmanian Branch of the Club and will be missed at Council meetings. He has, however, consented still to do all that he can to represent us in Tasmania and at the AAD and this offer has been greatly appreciated. ‘Noddy’ has been a tireless advocate for Victorian members of the Club and has been a very dedicated member of Council and has always shown himself to be deeply concerned for the welfare of the Club. At times controversial and occasionally outspoken he has always added to the quality of debate at meetings. Although there were times we disagreed he has always had the interests of the Club foremost at heart and has always enjoyed my total respect. He, too, will be missed.

Finally, thank you all for your support to National Council during the past year

J V Johnson

President

31 July 2015.