



**Australian Army**

Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

Dear Fellow Gunners,

Regrettably and reluctantly I will be relinquishing my role as Head of Regiment (HOR) of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery (RAA) on 4th December 2018. I therefore wanted to take the opportunity to write to you all one last time to make you aware of a few matters within the RAA that are currently being addressed and which my successor, Brigadier Richard Vagg, will continue to advance when he takes over the role in early December.

I would like to begin by expressing what a remarkable privilege it has been to have been able to serve you all as HOR and re-invest in the RAA - a Regiment that has given me so much in terms of opportunity, professional fulfilment and camaraderie. As some of you will be aware, my intent from the very start of my tenure has been to do whatever I can to invest more in supporting junior members of the Royal Regiment and expanding the opportunities available to them. At the same time, I have been cognisant of my responsibility to foster our Regimental identity, history and heritage, and ensure that the Regimental spirit remains vibrant and recognised as critical to Army. As such, there has been significant effort through the 100th Anniversary of WW1, 50th anniversaries of key Vietnam battles and the creation of awards, commendations and events to further strengthen the bridge connecting our past, our present and our future. Citizen soldiers and modern day Reserve Gunners and have been, and will continue to be, a fundamental part of this journey. As such, I was honoured to have been able to have played a small part in the raising of 9 Regiment and returning our Reserve Gunners to 'the Regimental Gun Position' – welcome home. I believe that we have made significant progress but there is still plenty to do. I am sure that my successor will take up the baton with new enthusiasm and continue this vital work.

In undertaking this endeavour the Royal Regiment is well supported by its national, state, regimental and battery associations who all do remarkable voluntary work across the country in sponsoring our identity and sense of community. The volunteers of the Regimental History Committee also provided excellent support to the Regimental Committee. Their expert research enabled the naming of 9 Regiment, the Ewen and Mattner Awards and the Urquhart Trophy, and ensured that our history has been correctly captured. I would also like to thank the RAA Historical Company (RAAHC) for its support to the Regimental Committee and its extraordinary work to publicly promote the significance of our history and heritage. In particular, over the Centenary of ANZAC, they have been highly active with the ANZAC Centennial Gun restoration project and its participation in over 35 events around the nation, and the conduct of the widely acclaimed Firepower Seminar Series that highlighted the critical importance of artillery in the Great War and captured the lessons for the future. As HOR I have appreciated the support and unique Gunner camaraderie of all these volunteers: their activities benefit both the Gunners of today and yesterday, and will benefit those that come after us, I encourage your membership and active participation.

Some of what we do, especially recognition of our excellent people, the displaying of our history and heritage, and some of the initiatives detailed below require funding. To that end I am encouraged by the increase in contributions to the Gunners' Fund. However we

cannot be complacent and I encourage you all to make a modest regular contribution. Every little bit helps.

Furthermore on relinquishing the appointment, although not the Regiment (*Once a Gunner; Always a Gunner*), I am buoyed by the fact that we are in great shape with excellent people who are well led by their Commanding Officers, Regimental Sergeant Majors and junior leaders, and who are leaning forward to embrace all the opportunities of an Army in motion in an increasingly complex world. They are well equipped and every day they strive to live-up to the Gunner mantra of *Accurate, Responsive, Dependable and Joint*. There are challenges ahead as we continue our modernisation journey towards integrated air and missile defence, long range fires and further embrace digitisation, but these are good challenges that the RAA is well placed to meet with the right people in the right positions across Defence to integrate all elements of capability. Furthermore, I am optimistic about the future because I, and other Gunner leaders, have not had to do much to initiate the conversation about fires and effects because the wider Army is now extolling the battle-winning virtues of fire support, air defence and the associated target acquisition and coordination capabilities: critical capabilities for an Army in a dynamic uncertain world.

So to the four matters of which I wish to make you aware. First is the structure of the Regimental Committee. To further build the solidarity of the Gunner community, the RAA State Associations will be invited to provide a non-voting and unfunded representative to participate in the Committee. This mitigates, to an extent, the lack of a Regular Artillery presence in many States. In addition, the Regimental Committee has recently agreed to a new approach for our Colonels Commandant (CC). All the current incumbents' tenures expire in December of this year and I have therefore used the opportunity to evolve our approach so that it becomes more applicable to the contemporary serving and retired communities. I have written to the Chief of Army (CA) seeking approval to the approach and also the appointment of the new CCs. I intend to use the Regimental Conference in February next year to mark the handover and as such CA has approved the extension of the current CCs until then.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the dedication of the current CCs and sincerely thank them for their loyal and invaluable service to the Royal Regiment over extended periods. They are:

- Representative Colonel Commandant and Colonel Commandant Western Region - Brigadier (Retired) AG Warner AM, LVO
- Colonel Commandant Southern Region – Brigadier (Retired) P Alkemade RFD
- Colonel Commandant Eastern Region – Colonel (Retired) IF Ahearn
- Colonel Commandant Tasmanian & Central Region – Colonel (Retired) SR Carey RFD

I would also like to thank Warrant Officer Class One David 'Paddy' McGarry who will be ending his three-year tenure as Regimental Master Gunner in December. You will not find a more genuine, energetic or dedicated Gunner who has done more to reach out, support and connect across all ranks and generations. I for one have totally relied upon his wise counsel – not just as the RMG but at other times including when he was an exceptional No. 10 and I was his brand new 'Seco' in 103rd Medium Battery.

Second, the 1st of August 2021 will mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of a permanent Australian artillery capability that has evolved into and continues today as the



RAA. As most of you will know, one of the units from that era, 'A' Battery RAA, remains on Army's order of battle as its oldest continuously serving sub-unit. As such, this anniversary will be a significant milestone for the Nation, Army and the RAA and therefore it is the intent of the Regimental Committee to establish a Project sub-committee in January 2019 to develop options for a major commemoration. Central to the anniversary activities will be an 'event weekend' at an as yet to be identified location. Possible ideas for the weekend include: a salute, parade, inter-unit competitions (such as gun races and Rugby) and a National Gunner Dinner. In addition, other lower-profile events will likely occur across the year in various locations and a range of merchandise will be produced. In due course, the 150th Sub-Committee will be seeking ideas and perhaps volunteers to pull all aspects of the project together.

In 1970, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Captain-General of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, approved the presentation of a Banner to the Royal Regiment in honour of its Centenary on 1 August 1971. The Banner was formally presented by His Excellency Sir Paul Hasluck, the Governor General at the time. The Banner is therefore over 45 years old and, considering its age, looks in reasonable condition. However, in July 2017 the Banner underwent repairs due to damage sustained. Unfortunately, it cannot be repaired again with the specialist repair company stating that the base fabric is showing its age and that the Banner's usable time is past and that plans should be put in place for a replacement. The Regimental Committee has agreed to this course of action and the necessary formal request will be staffed in the second half of 2019 for a replacement Queen's Banner to be annotated 1871–2021 with the plan being to incorporate its formal presentation to the RAA as the highlight of the 150th Anniversary 'event weekend'. In the interim the parading of the current Banner will be restricted to only the most significant Regimental occasions.

Third, the RAA National Memorial on Mount Pleasant should be a location that makes all Gunners, regardless of the era, feel welcome and connected to the Gunner identity. Gunners, irrespective of whether they have deployed on operations or served without deploying, have all contributed to our history, identity and future. To that end, the Regimental Committee has unanimously agreed that the Memorial's purpose is to recognise the service of all Gunners, regardless of whether they paid the ultimate sacrifice. We believe that this accords with the intent of Major General John Whitelaw, the original champion of the Memorial. Herein lies the issue; the most recent campaign memorialised is Vietnam which excludes the service of our most recent serving and retired Gunners in places such as Somalia, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iraq, East Timor and many other locations where Batteries, Troops, Detachments, Teams and individuals have brought distinction to themselves, the RAA and the Nation. Consequently, the Committee also agreed that the Memorial needs to be updated. To progress this initiative, a project team will be established to determine which campaigns to include, develop options to best achieve the intent, identify funding requirements and propose a timeline for the Regimental Committee to consider. Ideally any changes can be implemented for unveiling during the 150th celebrations in 2021. As you will all know the original Memorial was fittingly funded by donations from the Gunner fraternity and it is likely that such an approach will be required for this project. Any Gunners (serving or retired) who have areas of expertise in architectural design, building or fundraising, and who might be willing to assist with this project should contact the HOR Cell at Puckapunyal:  
SO2 HOR MAJ Gary Down: Mob: 0407 140 036; Email [gary.down@defence.gov.au](mailto:gary.down@defence.gov.au)  
SO to HOR MAJ Terry Brennan: Mob: 0419 179 974; Email [terry.brennan@defence.gov.au](mailto:terry.brennan@defence.gov.au)



Finally a few words about the Australian Army Armour and Artillery Heritage and Learning Centre (The Museum). The current progress of this project is very positive and whilst there are still a number of hurdles to negotiate, I have every confidence that the museum will be established as planned at Puckapunyal around 2021. As you will all appreciate, due to the history invested in the collections of both the RAA and RAAC, the project has a very high profile within the serving and ex-serving communities, as well as the general community and multiple levels of Government. Therefore I, and the HOC RAAC, have requested that we be fully involved in the infrastructure project to ensure our interests are fully represented during development and delivery. Noting that hurdles still exist, it is imperative that the RAA speaks with one voice. Consequently the Regimental Committee (through the HOR Cell) must be the conduit through which all RAA stakeholders engage with the project.

To help govern the process, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been established between the RAA, RAAC and Australian Army History Unit (AAHU). Importantly, this MOU will ensure equal exhibit space within the museum for both the RAA and RAAC. Further, an AAHU chaired Museum Advisory Committee (MAC) will be established after the museum design has been finalised and planning for the exhibition space commences. To prepare for this, the Regimental Committee has approved the establishment of an RAA Museum Sub-Committee subordinate to the MAC. It will be chaired by the SO2 HOR with membership from across the retired and serving Gunner community. Its terms of reference are being developed but will, in essence, direct the sub-committee to provide recommendations on how best to tell our unique Gunners story, including advice on themes, the priority of equipment for display (noting we will not be able to display everything) and the balance of physical and multimedia/interactive displays.

In closing, I would reiterate some of my opening comments. As a Royal Regiment we are in great shape with excellent, well lead, highly motivated and professional people. The challenges we face are not only in the modernisation space, but also embrace vital matters relating to our heritage and traditions – some of which I have touched on in the above paragraphs. Do not underestimate the importance of these largely esoteric aspects to delivering our capability. They connect us to something bigger than self and the present: they inform and shape our very existence as Gunners.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as the HOR – ***Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner.***

Ubique,  


**Craig Furini AM, CSC**  
Brigadier  
Head of Regiment  
Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

29 November 2018

