

## **PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR THE 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION OF NSW**

### **Introduction**

This report covers the period from October 2018 until September 2019. During this period the Battle for Australia Association of New South Wales has been active with regular meetings of the Committee and arranged an event to commemorate the activities which constitute the Battle for Australia and has also conducted the 2019 Commemoration Service held on 4 September 2019.

### **The Committee**

The Committee has operated very effectively and efficiently since the last Annual Meeting in October 2018. The Office Bearers are

- ) President – Doug Roser
- ) Vice President – Vacant
- ) Secretary – Geoff Brown
- ) Treasurer – Ian Guild.

The other members of the Committee during the period of this report have been:

Bob Auston  
Chris Dawson – Public Relations/Media  
Warren Glenny  
Eileen Henderson OAM RFD  
John Howells OAM RFD – Website  
Dick Matthews –Australian Legion of Ex-Service Men & Women Rep  
Ted McKeown  
Darren Mitchell  
David Ross  
Geoff Usher – RAAF Association Rep  
Liz Watts  
Hadyn White, the Executive Officer to the Deputy Commissioner NSW & ACT, DVA, is an invited member of the Committee

Ian Kain has joined our Committee and attended our last meeting on May. Ian is a senior journalist and a former RAAF officer. Nick Young of the NSW Minister for Veterans' Affairs has also attended the Committee Meetings

3 meetings of the Committee were held during this period – 13 November 2018, 5 February 2019 and the 7 May 2019. Our Secretary, Geoff Brown, does a great job of organising the meetings, and they are easy to chair with all members making a contribution. Our thanks to Department of Veterans Affairs for hosting the meetings.

### **Financial Report**

A copy of the audited accounts including the Auditors Report is available on our website and they are also attached to this report. They show that we have cash assets of \$64,800.90 which,

given our limited expenditure requirements, is adequate to meet our expected expenses. A vote of thanks must go to Ian Guild who has done a great job as our Treasurer for many years. Ian is retiring and has arranged for this task to be taken over by John Butcher.

### **Membership**

Bob Auston has been looking after our Membership and has put significant effort into its management. Despite Bob's effort the membership of both individuals and organisations has declined slightly but Bob has plenty of ideas which can increase our membership. Bob is handing over the membership duties this year.

### **Other Battle for Australia Associations**

We have kept contact with the other Battle for Australia organisations in the other States ie Queensland, Victoria and the federal body in Canberra.

### **Website**

Our website has flourished during this period under the management of John Howells. A special vote of thanks to John for his efforts in arranging and managing our website.

### **Events**

During this period our Association has conducted two events:

- J The first event was held at the Anzac Memorial Auditorium, downstairs in the new south wing Anzac Memorial Hyde Park South from 10am to 12noon on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February. It included light refreshments and a Tribute to the sacrifices made by so many at that time. One of the objectives of our Association is to build goodwill between the people of Australia and the people of Papua New Guinea and to assist in this, we recognised a need to understand the Battle for Australia from the perspective of Papua New Guinea. We are therefore very pleased that we were able to arrange for this special presentation to be given by Dr Seumas Spark, the Dean of Arts Research Fellow, Monash University, Melbourne. Seumas has authored and edited a number of books, research papers, and articles on the Second World War and on Papua New Guinea. He has also been involved in a number of research projects in Papua New Guinea.

The title of Seumas's presentation was a "White Man's War": New Guineans' experiences of war, 1942-43'. The talk noted that John Waiko, an eminent Papua New Guinean historian, wrote that the people most affected by the war in New Guinea were New Guineans. While this statement seems an obvious one, but it is not often heard. Also, scholarship on the war routinely ignores New Guinean perspectives. This talk therefore discussed some of these perspectives, and their importance. It was an outstanding contribution to the event and is available on our website.

- J The second event was our Battle for Australia Commemorative Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place which was held this year on the 4<sup>th</sup> September with the keynote address given by Harry Allie BEM, Chair, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Committee. The Governor and her husband attended the event and

the school children who attended made the most worthwhile contribution. Many have commented on how well the event went. A few changes to the event were introduced under the guidance of David Ross and Darren Michell and the event was well organised and those who attended certainly enjoyed it.

I must express my appreciation for the support and efforts of all Committee Members who assisted with the planning and arrangements of our 2 events. We are fortunate to have Committee Members who work so well together as a team.

### **The profile of the Association and Publicity**

At last year's meeting the Committee expressed its concern that the Association and the Battle for Australia is not well known and does not receive very much general publicity. It has therefore taken the following steps to change this situation.

- J) Development of material to be used to publicise the Battle for Australia and our Association The Committee considered the objectives of the Association and noted that we really did not have much material which could be used to publicise its objectives and established a project to consider the development of new material. Ted McKeown agreed to head up this project and proposed that the material should be developed to be used to introduce and educate school children of the Battle for Australia and should be web-based. His strategy is to have short descriptions of the operations which comprise the Battle for Australia which are linked to material with greater detail. The Committee has developed a relationship with the Hyde Park Memorial which has a Schools Learning Program for 2018 – 2019 and Ted will liaise with the Memorial in the development of the material
- J) Contact with the RSL We have developed a good understanding with the Returned Services Association of New South Wales and will be holding the AGM at their offices in Sydney. Our Committee intends to follow up this contact and reply with further updates on our activities and suggestions to increase the awareness of the Battle for Australia and the need to commemorate it.
- J) Increased contact with like-minded organisations We have attended a number of events of like-minded Associations and will continue to develop this relationship further. We have been fortunate to have Nick Young of the NSW Minister for Veterans' Affairs who has been attended out meetings and to have Ian Kain who has joined our Committee.

### **Publicity**

The Committee understands the need to improve our Associations publicity and will use the actions we are taking, as described in this report, in an attempt to gain more publicity. The efforts of Chris Dawson in developing our newsletter and in issuing our public notices is deeply appreciated and we are hoping we can give him more material with which to work.

### **Sick Parade**

Last October saw the passing of one of stalwarts of the Battle for Australia Association, Major General Gordon Lindsay Maitland AO OBE RFD ED. Gordon was born in Rockdale on 25

August 1926. He was aged just 17 when he enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF during the Second World War; as an enlisted man he was identified as intelligent, sent to the Army school of languages. 1947 saw him commissioned, serving in the allied translator and interpreter section. He was fluent in Japanese, he translated at the trials of Japanese war criminals in Indonesia.

After the war he continued to serve and rose through the ranks earning the OBE as a battalion commander and the AO as the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. When his army career ended he was Chief of Reserves at Army Headquarters and a member of the Chief of Army's Advisory Council. His civil life was also distinguished; CEO of The Royal Agricultural Society; member of NSW Government Committees; Chief Manager of the Commonwealth Bank.

For the last 30 odd years he has devoted his life to commemorative and community activities, particularly assisting veterans and their organisations a number of which he has led. He has also had a lifelong dedication to military history and has had 6 books published.

Gordon Maitland was a long time champion and supporter of the Battle for Australia Association and although he could not attend our recent events due to health reasons, we remember his great contribution to our nation.

General Maitland passed away on the evening of 17/18 October 2018.

### **Conclusion**

The period of this report has been busy for our Association and in addition to our normal Commemoration Service we have successfully continued the annual Special Presentation in February. We are managing financially through the excellent support given to our Membership Program. However, we need to attract new members annually, both individual and associations to enable us to continue to conduct key events. Interested parties should contact Geoff Brown at [brownfamily@bigpond.com](mailto:brownfamily@bigpond.com)

We are very grateful for the general support we receive from DVA and from so many individuals, schools, other ESO associations and other organisations for our special commemorative events. We are reaching out to increase the awareness of the Battle for Australia. We are hopeful that this will increase the awareness of the Battle for Australia and the work of our Association, but particularly with the younger generation and schools.

Given my age it is important that I relinquish roles so that the younger generation can take over, so I advise that this will be the last AGM that I will nominate as the President of the Association.

Group Captain Doug Roser RAAF (Ret'd)  
President Battle for Australia Association of NSW

8<sup>th</sup> September 2019