



LUNCHEON SEMINAR AND AGM

Thursday 28 November 2024

at the National Press Club

16 National Circuit, Barton

October 2024

Speaker: AIR CHIEF MARSHAL (RET'D) MARK BINSKIN AC

***'Retired' Chief of the Defence Force
and RAAFSCA Co-Patron***

"The Life and Times of a 'retired' CDF"



**Newsletter
of the
RAAF
STAFF COLLEGE
ASSOCIATION Inc**

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From the President

Last year I wrote that 'We are living in a distracted world, ripe for opportunists to create mischief.' If true then, it is likely more so now. Given the continuing war in Ukraine, unfolding developments in the Middle East, North Korea continuing to rattle its sabre (or more accurately, its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles), and the backdrop of the uncertainties associated with the current US presidential election campaign and subsequent new administration, those with mischievous intent might not have a better opportunity to progress their agendas.

As your committee, our intent is to continue to provide informed speakers relevant to our contemporary circumstances. Mind you, as good as our speakers might be, they need an audience if our lunch speaker format is to operate successfully. To that end, the marginal attendance we had for our mid-year lunch this year is troublesome, calling into question the viability of having that particular meeting. I know many travel to warmer places at that time of the year. On the other hand, having a lunch at that time provides a welcome social opportunity for those braving Canberra's winter. I would be interested in your views either way, noting that our July lunch this year barely achieved critical mass. In such circumstances it becomes difficult to attract the high profile speakers that RAAFSCA members would wish to have presenting at our lunches.

Following the excellent presentation we received in November 2022 from the Australian War Memorial Director, Matt Anderson, another issue I raised this time last year was progress with the AWM's upgrade. As members who visit our website will already know, much progress has been made. Adding to the greatly improved forecourt and parade ground area in front of the AWM that was a feature of this year's Anzac Day services, the AWM's front 'Commemorative Entrance' was reopened last month, and the new greatly enhanced front entrance is due to open this summer. A preview of these developments, and the new Anzac Hall, on track to open in 2026, is contained in the AWM's recently released updated [computer-animated video](#).

For my President's Report, I acknowledge the three speakers over the past year who have kept us in touch with what our Air Force is doing now, and its future plans, and the highly topical subject of nuclear energy. Last December, [Air Commodore James Badgery AM](#), Chief of Staff, Air Force Headquarters spoke about 'Air Force in the Defence Strategic Review Era', while in July [Air Commodore Ben Sleeman CSC, DSM](#), Director-General Integrated Air and Missile Defence stood in at short notice for AVM Wendy Blyth (Head Air Force Capability) to address us on 'The Air Domain and the National Defence Strategy'. While we appreciate being kept in touch with what is happening in the Air Force since we left uniformed service, I know, from correspondence recently received from Air Force Headquarters, that the Air Force hierarchy appreciates our efforts, as informed and committed advocates for Air Force - a true symbiotic relationship! In that vein, I am very pleased to record our appreciation for the current [Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, DSC, CSC, OAM](#) having agreed to be our co-patron, along with former CAF and CDF (and our next speaker), [Air Chief Marshal \(Ret'd\) Mark Binskin AC](#).

Meanwhile, between the Air Force presentations, in March this year [Robert Parker, B Eng Civil, M Eng Sci Nuclear](#), Founder - Nuclear for Climate Australia, provided an entertaining and informative address on '[Avoiding an energy blunder down under](#)'. Along with traditional national security issues, Australia's use (or otherwise) of nuclear energy is likely to become a hot button issue, particularly in the forthcoming federal election campaign. Better informed by Robert's presentation, our members are more able to contribute to the debate.

I conclude my President's Report by thanking most sincerely my fellow committee members, and our honorary auditor, LTCOL Maurice Gault (Ret'd) for ensuring the good governance of our Association. It is however, with great sadness that I report that as a result of a very serious illness, it is likely that Maurice will be unable to continue in this role. Accordingly, we expect to be on the lookout to recruit a new reviewer for our financial records to ensure that, as always, your association will continue to operate in full compliance with ACT Government regulations.

I also acknowledge the continuing efforts by the management and staff of the National Press Club to ensure that our lunches are pleasurable outings for us. To that end I am very pleased to report that after much negotiation, the Press Club has put in place arrangements for a lapel microphone to be used by our speaker. This is a very happy outcome for all (most?) who

found hearing some of our speakers to be very challenging. We successfully tested the arrangement at the September meeting of the Aviation Club and look forward to the improved sound system continuing to enhance our meetings. While on the subject of the Aviation Club, I am happy to report that the reciprocal access we provide to the Aviation Club, and vice-versa has worked well. While many of us are members of both the RAAFSCA and Aviation Club, every meeting of the Aviation Club this year has seen attendance by RAAFSCA members who aren't Aviation Club members. Swelling the numbers has had the beneficial effect of helping cover the venue hire charge introduced this year. I expect non-RAAFSCA members of the Aviation Club will return the favour at our November lunch. On this topic, members will be acutely aware of cost of living pressures, directly impacting on us in terms the venue hire charge and the increasing cost of catering at the Press Club. On your behalf I have applied for a grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs to offset the impact of rising charges. I hope to be able to report to you on the success of that application when we meet next month, or very shortly thereafter.

Looking ahead to our next lunch, we are very fortunate to have secured 'retired' Chief of the Defence Force Mark Binskin as our guest speaker, and notwithstanding the next meeting will also be our AGM, (which will be as brief and painless as possible, noting you will have all read my report and the accompanying AGM papers), I expect that we will have a very healthy attendance. 'Binny' is responsible for adding the quotation marks around 'retired'. As anyone following the news and the airshow scene in particular will know, Binny is anything but retired. No doubt his chosen topic "The Life and Times of a 'retired' CDF" will open many lines of inquiry which, if not covered by his presentation, will leave open many opportunities for 'interesting' questions from you.

I look forward to seeing those of you who can attend on Thursday 28 November, and as always, encourage you to monitor our website for earliest advice of any changes to the program, and other news.

Stay well,

Ian

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