

ANI President's Report to 2021 AGM

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for virtually attending the 2021 Annual General Meeting. Your support is greatly appreciated.

As the Treasurer will report, despite COVID-19 the financial position of the ANI remains solid. As we did in 2020, the Council has tried to keep apace with the COVID-19 restrictions. We were fortunate that the lull in COVID allowed us to have our Annual Dinner. This year the highlights have been:

- The continued growth in membership which now stands at 330 plus about 30 non-financial members which Sue Hart is chasing down. This is a significant growth over recent years. To give you a sense of our improvement we had 261 members in 2018. The increase has largely been built on our events and in particular our webinar program.
- We have also increased our corporate sponsors from 12 to 14. That gives us greater funding stability. I would like to acknowledge the strong support of our sponsors who have been very understanding as we have tried to deliver our activities despite COVID-19.

In terms of these activities:

- We had a very successful annual dinner with General Sir Peter Cosgrove delivering the Vernon Parker Oration.
- At the same event, Mr Ted Huber, the founder of Acacia Systems, became the 6th recipient of the McNeil Prize.
- In regard to other prizes we continue to give prizes to New Entry Officer graduates at the Naval College. We now give a complementary 1-year membership to the winner of the new Rupert Long Prize for Maritime Intelligence Officers.
- We have created the Commodore Sam Bateman Book Prize with the winner to be announced next month.
- As a result of COVID-19 the Goldrick Seminar on Future Maritime Operations was transitioned to eight Goldrick Webinars. This has been very successful and we estimate by its end we will have had ~1,000 views.
- The *Australian Naval Review* continues to grow in stature and we have two editions this year. My thanks to the editor Ben Page and his advisory panel.
- Our Website and newsletter continues to grow in subscribers, hits and articles that we originate. We have further tweaked the website this year, as some of you will have noticed. Some figures are:
 - The website has had 106,000 visits for the year.
 - In the past year, 630 articles were published, Our average 2014-2020 was 420.
 - The website attracts overseas attention, with 15% of hits coming from the US; 6% each coming from UK and India; and about 3% each from Canada and NZ.
- The revamped website is more easy to search and navigate. Since the AUKUS announcement some ANI content was quoted by some media organizations as they search

for information. At this point I would like to thank Crispin Hull for his work on our behalf on the newsletter.

- This year we introduced a Themed Dinner into our activities. The first one was attended by the Chief of Navy, the High Commissioner for New Zealand and senior representatives from Navy, industry and academia to discuss maritime trade. This small event format was very successful in progressing the understanding of this issue and we will possibly hold two a year.
- ANI has now become an Accredited Defence Organisation and this will be important in the future as the educational worth of the ANI's events are recognised for professional development.
- The objectives of the 2020-2023 ANI Strategy for membership and attendance at events have been essentially met. As a result we are bringing forward strategy development by one year and we will launch a new strategy in early 2022.

This leads me to our planned activities in 2022. They are:

- Following the success of the Goldrick webinar series over the last two years, we will introduce a separate regular webinar series.
- The 2022 Goldrick event will be a two-day international Conference which marks the centenary of the death of naval strategist Sir Julian Corbett. There will be similar events held by King's College, London and the US Naval War College. Our event will focus on *Maritime Strategy in the Indo-Pacific* and will be held 21-22 September 2022. This will be biggest event we have held for some decades and involve international and Australian speakers.
- One of the issues touched on by members in previous AGMs is the very healthy state of our bank balance and that in recent years we have had an operating surplus. The Council is investigating the creation of an ANI Scholarship to progress the study and understanding of Australian naval affairs. It would be funded by setting aside a portion of our savings in prudent investments and use the interest accrued to assist the study of an ANI Scholar. The United Services Institute in Canberra have has a similar scheme in operation and they have shared with us their administrative rules. Our thinking is that we would still keep the equivalent of two years of operating funds in liquid reserves. We would therefore anticipate placing investing \$90,000 to \$100,000 to be invested to fund the ANI Scholar. The timeframe is that we would further develop the proposal in the first half of 2022 and that includes providing opportunities in that time for members to provide input. The aim would be for the first ANI Scholar to be in 2025 to coincide with the ANI's 50th Anniversary.
- The Council will form a team to consider 50th Anniversary initiatives and will seek participation by members.
- For the second time running the ANI will administer, on CN's behalf, his Essay Competition. Once again we will be sourcing judges from our members.
- We will institute an ANI Prize to the Petty Officer's Leadership Course. This is one of our initiatives to reach out to our sailors.
- Finally, External Engagement. Commander Mike Collinson, the NZ Naval Advisor has been doing a lot of work on the Council in putting our engagement with kindred organizations both in Australia and overseas on a firmer footing. This work will bear much more tangible fruit in 2022.

Council

I would like to thank all the members of the ANI Council for their contribution to the ANI's output. As mentioned it has been a challenging year and required a degree of innovation. Each AGM is an opportunity to renew the Council. I would like to thank the outgoing members for their support to me and the ANI. Richard Hobbs is leaving the Council so some of the younger generation can join and I particularly thank him for his long service on the Council.

Our activities are underpinned in large measure by support from our sponsors and I thank them for their generous support.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of Sue Hart and Richard Hart at Commerce Management Services in ensuring the crucial administration and organisation is undertaken in a most professional way.