
ANI President's 2023 Annual Report



As this is my last report to you as President, I thought it may be useful to look not only over the past year but also survey our progress since I became President at the 2015 AGM. So here is a bit of a snap shot.

In 2015 we had about 240 members and 700 subscribers to our newsletter. Today our membership sits at 373 with over 1,500 subscribers.

Financially, in 2015 we had the second of three straight operating losses to the tune of \$4,144. Our income was \$60,000 and we had \$157,000 in the bank. This last year we had an unanticipated operating loss of \$34,000.

This was the first deficit since 2016 and the result of the uncertainty and stasis caused by the *Defence Strategic Review*. This led to even big Defence Primes tightening their belts and we lost at short notice three top tier sponsors.

The ANI Council in the face of this shortfall decided that it was important to continue our activities unamended so that we would be seen as an organisation worthwhile to support for other sponsors. This decision was influenced by the otherwise healthy state of our finances and recent modest operating surpluses.

That decision was vindicated and we were able to gain the new sponsorship of Serco, Luerksen, Kongsberg and Systematic. I would also like to note through all this the continued support of our other long term sponsors.

In 2015 we had nine companies providing sponsorship. Today we have 14. As of today they are:

- **Platinum**
 - BAE Systems – who sponsors the new *Saltwater Strategist* podcast series
 - Systematic Australia – an annual dinner sponsor
- **Gold**
 - Team Downer, the Sam Bateman Book Prize Sponsor.
 - Navantia Australia,

-
- Kongsberg Defence Australia, a Goldrick Seminar sponsor
 - Luerksen – podcast sponsor
 - **Silver**
 - Serco – Annual Dinner Sponsor
 - Adroit – a podcast sponsor
 - Austal
 - Australian Missile Corporation – Goldrick Seminar sponsor.
 - CAE
 - CEA
 - Qinetiq
 - Saab
 - **Bronze**
 - Boeing

In terms of our core activity of providing a forum for naval and maritime affairs, in 2015 we had recently ceased production of the *Headmark* journal and were shifting our emphasis to the our newsletter, website and social media. I would like to highlight the excellent work of Crispin Hull and his team of volunteer scourers of nautical information to produce our weekly email. This goes out to over 1,500 people and we have a very very low unsubscribe rate.

Another important aspect of our efforts was the rebuilding of our webpage into a first class vehicle for information access as well as an advertisement of our Institute. Over recent years we have expanded our activities. These include:

- From 2015 the Goldrick series of seminars & webinars
- From 2016 the publication of the peer-reviewed Australian Naval Review. The work of successive editors, Eamon O'Shea, Ben Page and now Sam Fairall Lee and their peer reviewers has been excellent
- From 2016 the award of the McNeil Prize.
- In 2017 the ANI signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Navy.
- From 2019 the publication of occasional papers.
- From 2019 the ANI has undertaken on behalf of CN the judging of the his Essay Competition. My thanks to Sue Hart for pulling this together and for the judges drawn from the ANI members to act as judges.
- From 2020 the introduction of webinars in the face of Covid.
- In 2021 the ANI became an Approved Defence Organisation (ADO) which means that membership can be used for professional development.

-
- From 2021 the award of the Sam Bateman Book Prize. Our outgoing Vice President Guy Blackburn has done much to raise the stature of this new book Prize and the support of Simon Bateman and the Bateman family has been much appreciated. The 2023 Book Prize winner has been decided and will be announced early next month.
 - From 2021 we have expanded the award of complimentary annual membership to the dux of various RAN courses. This now extends, in addition to the New Entry Officers Course to the Naval Intelligence Officers Basic Course, the Information Officer course and the Chief Petty Officer Leadership and Management Course.
 - From 2022 we introduced Themed Dinners to provide a forum for senior representatives of academia, Defence, the diplomatic corps, and industry. We also introduced the *Saltwater Strategist* podcast series. Under the leadership of Jen Parker, these podcasts are created by her dedicated team and they deserve our sincere thanks for developing a first class podcast series.

To undertake these growing activities the ANI has grown its Council to 19 people. It has, however, sought to use the talents of other people and to work collaboratively with other organisations such as the Seapower Centre Australia, ADFA, the Naval Studies Group at the University of NSW Canberra and the Australian National Centre for Oceans Research and Security and the WA Defence Review.

Internationally the ANI has collaborated with the British Naval Review, the US Naval Institute, the Naval Association of Canada, the US Naval War College, Kings College London and the Brian Mulroney Institute of Government at St Xavier University.

This output could also not be undertaken without the support of our corporate sponsors. Last year we sought our members' support for the concept of an ANI Scholar. This is still on the 'to do' list.

Vernon Parker Oration

As is traditional at AGMs, we hope to be able to inform members of the Vernon Parker Orator for the following year. I am delighted to announce the 2024 Vernon Parker Orator will be Professor Rory Medcalf. He is Head of the National Security College at the Australian National University. His career spans diplomacy, academia, intelligence analysis, journalism and think tanks, including with the Lowy Institute. Rory was a senior strategic analyst with the Office of National Assessments and a diplomat with service in India, Japan and Papua New Guinea. He has played a lead role in Australia's informal diplomacy with India and a range of other countries. Professor Medcalf is recognised globally as a thought leader on the Indo-Pacific strategic concept, as articulated in his book *Contest for the Indo-Pacific* (published internationally as *Indo-Pacific Empire*). In June 2022 he was appointed a Member of the Order of

Australia for significant service to international relations and tertiary education. I am sure he will give an outstanding oration on 15 May 2024 at Hotel Realm.

Council

I would like to thank all the members of the ANI Council for their contribution to the ANI's output.

I would like to also acknowledge the tireless 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. They have been of tremendous support to me over the years.

Conclusion

Finally, on a personal note, while not the end of my association with the ANI, it marks the end of my time as an office bearer. I joined the ANI in 1976. The ANI was just one year old it had just cracked 200 members. Classmate Cadet Midshipman James Goldrick had joined in March, fellow classmate Graeme Lunn in May and I was the 'slow boat' joining in October. Besides being the only cadet-midshipmen to have joined, there were no midshipmen and no sub-lieutenants.

The ANI opened my eyes to the intellectual side of the Navy and naval affairs. It encouraged even junior officers to write about naval matters and it was my first experience of doing so. I first joined the Council in 1989 and joined Tom Frame as one of the young turks. Indeed, we wrote a paper for the Council on the way ahead for the ANI. Suffice to say the ANI in the internet and social media age bears little resemblance to that vision. When I returned the Council as a Captain in 2000 I was Journal Editor and then Vice President. They were difficult financial times for the ANI and its future existence was in doubt. But the ANI is resilient, and this is in part due to a collective view by many serving and retired RAN officers that navies are as much an intellectual endeavour as anything else. The RAN is better for the existence of the ANI.

I therefore wish the new President, his Council and the ANI all the best as it nears its golden jubilee year.