

ANI President's Report to the 2024 AGM

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for attending the 2024 Annual General Meeting. Your support is greatly appreciated.

As the Treasurer will report shortly, the financial position of the ANI remains solid. After a few years of COVID disruption, we have effectively returned to the full suite of events and are looking for new ways to stay relevant and appeal to younger members.

This year, the highlights have been:

Our two Traditional Events

- We held a very successful Vernon Parker Oration and dinner in May. Professor Rory Medcalf AM, head of the National Security College at ANU, gave the Oration, and Mr Craig Lockhart from BAE System won the McNeil Prize. We filled the room at the Hotel Realm for the VPO, so I thank all those who attended for your support.
- Our 2024 Goldrick seminar, held earlier this month, was also very successful, with over 200 registrations. We explored the theme: "The importance of the maritime domain to Australia's economic well-being and security". We had a fantastic scene-setting presentation by Professor Ross Babbage AM, which covered global economic trends and how Australia is impacted. Our patron, CN, gave his views on the "now what" for the Navy after the Defence Strategic Review; plus we had an international panel, industry perspectives, a forum on mobilisation issues, and an AUKUS panel. Over the day, all of the Navy's Vice Admirals attended (VADM's Hammond, Jones and Mead), which was a sign of the Navy's senior leadership's support of the ANI. We want to evolve the Goldrick Seminar next year, but I will return to that later.
- The Commodore Sam Bateman Book Prize continues to gather steam. In December, we announced that Professor Geoffrey Till was the 2023 winner for his book "How to Build a Navy". Given he is in the UK, rather than the traditional lecture at ADFA, Professor Till did a fantastic podcast for the *Saltwater Strategist*. The good news is we have had 11 entries for this year's Sam Bateman Book Prize, so the prize profile is increasing. In fact, we may struggle to get a judging panel in the future – although that is a pretty good problem to have!
- We continue to give prizes to New Entry Officer graduates at the Naval College and have expanded to provide a range of officer and sailor prizes across many other PQs to broaden the appeal of the Institute across all areas of the Navy.
- The *Saltwater Strategist* podcast series has continued to flourish under the leadership of Council member Jen Parker. We just released the 9th episode of Series 3, and the series is proving very popular. It is available on most podcast apps, and I commend it to you.
- The *Australian Naval Review* also continues to grow in stature, now publishing two editions a year in a regular drumbeat. Sam Fairall-Lee has taken on the editor role, so thanks to him and his advisory panel. To commemorate the 50th anniversary next year, we have asked the new CDF, ADML Johnston and many former CNs to contribute and re-publish some articles from the very early editions of our journal.
- Our themed dinners have also proven to be valuable events for our industry partners, academia, the attaché corps, and senior defence leaders. The last two have been themed

around surface ships and the changes that are underway in that area. Our next one, due for November but postponed until the new year, will focus on amphibious warfare and littoral manoeuvre, given the Army's increasing involvement in the maritime domain.

- I'd also like to highlight the tremendous success of the ANI website and weekly newsletter. The work of Richard Hart in updating the website and Crispin Hull, who compiles the newsletter and articles, is most praiseworthy. Crispin is ably supported by Desmond Woods, Peter Jones and other councillors in sourcing and writing articles of interest. Some figures are:
 - Over the past year, the ANI website has published 781 articles, and the usual e-newsletter each week has summaries and links to all the new articles published in the previous week.
 - The newsletter reaches 1400 website subscribers, with only one person unsubscribing last year. I was asked by the Williams Foundation how we run the weekly newsletter as they are keen to do something similar. I take this as a sign that we have the formula about right.
 - The newsletter generates, on average, 3000 hits a week and is designed to draw people to the website.
 - The website is now a substantial repository of maritime and naval works and is proving very valuable for researchers. With over 6000 articles – 4 million words – it is vital to our mission of promoting debate and discussion on maritime and naval affairs.
 - 85% of our website hits are from Australia, with just over 10% from the US, UK, Canada and New Zealand, and the remaining 5% from the rest of the world, with readers from India increasing.
- Over the past year, much has happened in the military, Defence and security fields. While the ANI website has concentrated on maritime and naval issues, articles on the overall security environment have also appeared. The main themes have been:
 - AUKUS and the development of a nuclear submarine capability for Australia.
 - Surface ships, including the Hunter Class and the frigates announced in the surface ship review earlier this year
 - The Russian invasion of Ukraine, especially the maritime and naval aspects.
 - The rise of Chinese maritime influence and the democracies' response to it. This includes discussion on Chinese actions in the South China and West Philippines Seas
 - Australian defence posture, especially the National Defence Strategy and the shipbuilding program.
 - Weapons and technology advances.
 - Naval history and book reviews.
- Work is also underway on our next five-year ANI strategy. The current one covers 2022-2026, but as next year is our 50th anniversary, I wanted to do an update to present to this AGM. However, we have yet to complete it due to the competing requirements of those involved and the advancement of the AGM, of which I am to blame!

- It is also great to see the wider community drawing on the ANI to participate in maritime-related events. In addition to our regular events over the last 12 months, we have been involved in the following:
 - In April, the ANI was invited to participate in the 50th Australian/ASEAN Dialogue in Melbourne. This dialogue had several events, one of which was focused on maritime security, and I'd like to thank both the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet for their support in having the ANI represented and my predecessor, Peter Jones, for establishing the links that led to the ANI's participation.
 - We have participated in several ANU and UNSW workshops.
 - With the support of ANU and the Navy, we brought CDRE Jay Tarriela from the Philippines Coast Guard to Australia for the Goldrick Seminar. Jay was here for a week doing events with ANU, DFAT, and - within Defence - with Navy, IP Div and HQJOC. He also did a fantastic National Press Club speech which may – I stress *may* – result in a 60 Minutes story on the challenges the Philippines face in the West Philippine Sea. This is an excellent example of our Institute facilitating debate beyond those already involved in maritime and security affairs.
 - We have also been asked to participate in an upcoming Manila Dialogue on the SCS. I even managed to get the Philippines Ambassador interested in joining the ANI – one I will have to chase up...
- We have continued exploiting social media's power to provide a forum for maritime matters. As you know, the platforms attract different demographic groups, and we have councillors who are active in the major ones. Of note, some of our younger Council members have developed a new Instagram profile as a way to try and reach the younger members of the Navy.
- Membership continues to grow, although that growth has plateaued recently. We currently have 377 members, which is only a slight increase over the year. We aim for 500, and our membership team is developing some targeted strategies to increase numbers, especially amongst more junior officers and sailors.
- Our corporate sponsors continue to grow. In the last financial year, we welcomed Omni Executive and Synergy Group as new sponsors – with the complete list now:
 - Platinum – BAE Systems Australia, (ASC Shipbuilding), Luerksen Australia
 - Gold – Kongsberg Defence Australia, Navantia Australia, Omni Executive (NEW),
 - Silver – Adroit, CEA Technologies, CAE Australia, QinetiQ Australia, Saab Australia
 - Bronze – Boeing Defence Limited, Serco Defence (DMS Australia)

We also had the Australian Missile Corporation sponsor the Goldrick Seminar at the Silver level, and the Synergy Group sponsor the Vernon Parker Oration, also at the Silver level.

Can I take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors again for your ongoing support of the ANI. We simply could not do the things we do without our sponsors, so thank you one and all.

This leads me to our other planned activities in 2025 for our 50th anniversary year. They are:

- ANI Scholar.
 - As mentioned at last year's AGM, the Council is investigating the creation of an ANI Scholarship to advance the study and understanding of Australian naval affairs. For a variety of reasons, this initiative has not progressed as far as we would have liked this year, but it will be reinvigorated in 2025.
 - The ANI Scholar is envisaged to be given a grant to study at the Australian National Centre for Oceans Resources and Security at the University of Wollongong.
- Reception in June to make the actual date of establishment of the Institute.
- Expanded role of Goldrick Seminar– move to a commercial premises and bring in a greater range of external speakers to raise the profile and move to the next level of the Goldrick Seminar.
- Events – perhaps starting with a themed dinner – in Sydney and Perth to expand our in-person exposure to our members.

Council

I would like to thank all the members of the ANI Council for their contribution to the ANI's output. Each AGM is an opportunity to renew the Council and I would like to thank the outgoing members for supporting me and the ANI. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the service of Nick Tate, who has been the Treasurer for over a decade. Mike Collinson, Craig Powell and Ben Piggot are also retiring from the Council.

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.

Peter J Leavy
ANI President

31 October 2024