

ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTE QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 19 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fellow Members,

I would like to highlight in this President's Report for 2018 a commitment to the membership. Despite decreasing membership numbers and a growing average age, our collective efforts have sustained this institution and will, I'm certain, form the foundation stone for our future development.

It is my duty to report both our achievements and our challenges. Overall, we can recognise achievements for the last year. However, I believe we are at a crossroads and it is no use sugar-coating the fact that we must change to survive and prosper. This will require considerable thought and effort, but I am confident RUSI Queensland can make the necessary decisions and adapt to the new reality in which we now operate.

The efforts of our Treasurer and Secretary sustained a working Executive. Ian Willoughby and Dal Anderson continue to give selflessly to the organisation, and Major Robert O'Donnell has brought a new, youthful and modern approach to RUSI Queensland. Also, our library is in good hands.

RUSI Queensland maintains its support for the National Body. We have been able to discern the importance of the National Body and how to support it without compromising our independence. While there has been some consternation about the role of the National Body, these concerns have been mostly ill-informed, often self-serving, and counter-productive. It is my opinion that RUSI Queensland can only survive as part of a National federated body.

Staying on the plus side of the ledger we can count our monthly lunch time lecture series as a significant achievement. Speakers have been of the highest quality and most informative.

Notwithstanding, our achievements, we have not met all the objectives we set for the year. For the past four years we have not had financial support from the Federal Government, the Defence Department, or the broader community. This is because we have not been able to articulate a convincing value for

money proposition. In other words, we have added little or no value to the public discourse on Defence and national security.

The conclusion we need to accept is that we are not sustainable unless we adapt to a new practical and financial reality. The necessary change is fundamental in nature and will be challenging, but achievable. We need to focus our available capacities on common goals and set aside individual or special interest activities that drain resources.

Positioning the organisation for success will be disconcerting for some members. However, we have nominated new Executive members who have experience in change leadership. One of the first principles of managing change is good communications. Therefore, I will undertake to improve our internal dialogue on key aspects. Members' views on all change matters will be sought, and I will ensure Executive (and sub-Committee) deliberations are readily available to the membership. Success relies on the active participation of all members. I ask for the membership to support the Executive and get involved in its work. We need to set aside any personal interests in favour of what is in the organisation's interest and enable the Executive to get on with the job of steering us through the change.

A new Constitution will be drafted and presented to members for approval. This document will be preferred over the traditionally prescriptive one. Oversight will remain the responsibility of the members through the mechanism of the AGM and Executive selection procedures.

RUSI must reach out to a younger constituency. While our origins lie in the professional development military officers, this is not the most relevant driver of our future. We must commit to the organisation's primary interest being the defence and security of Australia. We must raise our sights to the strategic level and satisfy the interest of a far more sophisticated audience that demands highly credible research, public commentary and policy opinion.

In this vein, I can report that we have finalised negotiations through RUSI Australia to proceed with a new, future-focused seminar programme. The Department of Defence has provided a grant of \$11,700.00, and the first event in this new series is scheduled for 4 May 2019. The subject will be ***Indonesia's Political Trajectory and the Implications for Regional Security and Australia's National Interests***. Interest in this seminar topic has resonated within the community. Preparations are advanced with highly credible Australian and

Indonesian speakers already committed. There is a commercial risk, but I am confident we can replicate the success of PTSD seminar we conducted 4 years ago. It is important to appreciate that we have support from Canberra and that RUSI Australia has released funding to us.

We are on the cusp a resurgence. While we could fail, there is no reason to expect a negative outcome if we all work towards a common goal. What is needed is a concerted and coordinated effort to ensure we achieve relevance that satisfies a contemporary and discerning audience. There will be periods of uncertainty. However, I am confident for the future.

Thank you again for your support. I look forward to discussing these matters with you as we progress.

Peter Mapp