PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc

PRESIDENT’S REPORT 63rd AGM – 4 May 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen – welcome to this AGM. I thank you all for coming, including our Co-Patron Fred Kaad, ex-President Harry West, President of the Chinese Catholic Association -Dr Dennis Chow, President of the PNGVR Association – Phil Ainsworth, and those who have made the effort to travel long distance.

2013 was a successful year for the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia. The year began with an event in Brisbane in January and through the year a number of events were held in Perth, Canberra, Adelaide, Blue Mountains and Sydney. We thank the organisers of those events for the time and effort that goes into creating these networking opportunities for our members, and to our members for their support. Our numbers today are lower than usual – age and fragility of many of our members are ‘catching up’.

Recognising our history ensures that the close connections between Australia and Papua New Guinea are not ignored or forgotten. Our association has its roots with the Kiaps and therefore it was fitting to see the great service of our Kiaps recognised in July 2013 when the Police Overseas Service Medal was awarded to those who served from 1949-1973. Congratulations to Chris Viner-Smith for his efforts over many years. A member in Canberra, Greg Harris, was inspired to record this event. He subsequently partnered with the PNGAA to produce a DVD to tell the Kiap story. The PNGAA is contributing up to $10000 towards this from our reserves. The DVD will be launched at the Symposium in September 2014 and will be sold to members and the public to recover costs.

Superannuation issues are regularly monitored and we are grateful to Tim Terrell for providing regular updates regarding the Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association (SCOA). There is ongoing work on the Audit Commission Report and updates on developments will be published in the June Una Voce.

Our 2013 Christmas Luncheon, with PNG High Commissioner to Australia, His Excellency Charles Lepani as guest speaker was another joyous and memorable occasion. The annual silent auction becomes increasingly popular and contributes worthwhile funds. A huge thank you to Juli Ross Allcorn's wonderful event organisation, greatly supported by Gima Crowdy, Ann Graham and Amanda Warhurst. Who could forget the spine tingling notes of Salote Temu, daughter of our committee member, Deveni Temu, who sang the national anthems and Raisi?

We were also grateful to His Excellency Charles Lepani and also to the Consul General, Sumasy Singin, for their support of filming at the Christmas Lunch for the Kiap DVD.

There is often much behind the scenes work carried out by the committee.

During the year members of the committee facilitated the supply of a number of boxes of books to PNG. Phil Ainsworth also secured a generous donation of a mammogram machine to Rabaul which was transported there by Tropicana, Rabaul.

Our Public Officer, Paul Munro, researched a new requirement legislated in December 2012 and on 26 September 2013 the association became registered as a fundraising authority under the Charitable Fundraising Act NSW with the federal agency, the Australian Charities and Not For Profit Commission (ACNC).

After several working group meetings between members of the PNGAA and the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society, the Society was integrated into the PNGAA. 176 members transferred in, in addition to those members who were already members of the PNGAA. I thank Phil Ainsworth and Nick Booth, particularly, for this smooth transition.
The RMvMS operates as a sub-committee of the PNGAA Management Committee with functions in conformity with RMvMS objectives eg for historical research, education and training purposes related to New Guinea islands which were affected by the events of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru tragedies in 1942. The annual commemoration in Canberra remains integral to the group and I thank Marg Curtis, Rebecca Mills and Frazer Harry for their wonderful organisation last June. This year, the 72nd anniversary, Dr Marian May will be speaking – I encourage members to attend.

Other activities: Patrick Bourke, a member of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru sub-committee, has compiled a wonderful document titled the *Teaching of the First and Second World War History* which includes some excellent resources and is a useful addition to schools for their history curriculum. A third DVD in a series by John Schindler, titled *Some Came Home*, has been supported by the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru group with $10000 and is expected to be completed this year.

It is now five years since a major review of our Rules was endorsed by our members. This review proposed recommendations that would broaden the scope of the association, making PNGAA a more sustainable, productive and relevant organisation. It is important that we focus on issues attracting new members.

Our PNGAA objectives include strengthening the civil relationship between the peoples of Australia and Papua New Guinea, and fostering and maintaining an interest in contemporary and historical events in Papua New Guinea.

2014 is the commencement of the five years of ANZAC Centenary Commemorations beginning with the small but vital battle at Bitapaka in September 1914 after which the former German colony of New Guinea became a Mandated Territory of Australia eventually resulting in an Independent nation.

As a pivotal event in our joint history the PNGAA decided to commemorate this important centenary with a dinner and symposium reflecting the past 100 years and considering our present and future relationships.

You will have read about this in both the December 2013 and March 2014 *Una Voces*. Considering the significance of the occasion, the financial strength of the association including that a surplus was built up in our reserves for 2013, and due to our limited resources, it has been agreed to appoint a conference organiser who has the necessary skill to ensure the Symposium is professionally supported. It has been agreed that up to $20000 will be set aside from reserves, as a resource, to fund the dinner and symposium to ensure its success. Regardless, all committee members will need to be greatly involved, contributing much time. We hope members will take the opportunity to attend.

In transitioning the PNGAA into activities that broaden our reach, consistent with the objectives, we are seeking to take a more prominent role in the Anzac Centenary period, creating an opportunity to focus greater attention on the PNGAA history. The Registration form is due out shortly and I encourage you to come along and to ask your friends and colleagues to participate also.

As an additional resource, the PNGAA will again be joining the PNGVR in a raffle of two air tickets from Sydney, Brisbane or Cairns to Rabaul and three nights’ accommodation in Rabaul to be drawn in time for the winner to have the opportunity to attend the 2014 WW1 centenary events in Rabaul. The PNGAA is contributing one ticket to the dinner and symposium in Sydney as a second prize. Funds from the raffle will support the symposium and also the PNGVR Military Museum in Brisbane. We look forward to your support.

At the end of 2013, and with the impending ANZAC Centenary, the Management Committee decided it would be appropriate to have an electronic exhibition related to WW1 on its website. I thank Paul Munro for his considerable research, Kieran Nelson, Peter Richardson and our webmaster, Nick Booth, for their assistance. Whilst it will continue to have additions through the year, and we’re
particularly looking for photographs related to WW1 in PNG if you can assist, the initial exhibit went live early April 2014.

Our website is now over 10 years old and it has been decided that it is timely to give it a fresh look. The website is our face to the world and it is important that if we are to present as a vital, engaging organisation, attracting more members, we have a more contemporary website. This is particularly relevant with us holding the dinner and symposium this year. We all know how technology keeps updating – almost daily! – and due to the skill and time involved, we have again decided to allocate funds so that a web designer can put professional magic on the website. Initially we will spend $3000 to have the framework built. We understand that once this is completed it should be possible for a volunteer(s) to transfer the current information over.

Our Facebook group continues to attract new members, from one to six each day! I encourage you to join and contribute to photos, stories and conversation. Many thanks to Kieran Nelson for his role in monitoring this for us.

Una Voce, our quarterly journal, continues to be the backbone of the association. I thank our Editor, Keith Wall, for his excellent contribution. I also thank our regular and much valued contributors, Jim Toner in Darwin and Dr Peter Cahill, Brisbane.

Speaking of Dr Peter Cahill and Fryer Library. It has been 22 years since the PNGAA Collection was formed in the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland. It’s been a considerable commitment by Peter and we are grateful that this history has not simply been lost but has become the fastest growing collection in the Fryer Library. It is an extraordinary resource donated, in the main, by PNGAA members. Over the years, governance, processes and privacy issues have changed. Digitisation has become a major element of our lives and therefore a necessary focus with the PNGAA Collection. In considering this, it became obvious that the issue was much wider – that digitisation of historical PNG material located all over Australia in various archives and libraries was a valuable resource.

It is proposed that a steering committee, with PNGAA member Michael Waterhouse as Chair, will implement a scoping study which will identify what material there is, where it’s held and its importance. Once the scoping study has been completed, collections identified will be prioritized and the cost of digitizing the more significant ones assessed. Initial steps have been taken with this.

Since the end of 2013 there has been a considerable changing of the guard within the Management Committee. Our Treasurer, Nick Booth, has stepped back from his role of Treasurer after four years but continues as our Webmaster. We have been fortunate that Doug Wood and Roy Ranney have come in to assist with finances and membership. The role has become considerable for one person to do and splitting it is in the best interests of the association. Amanda Warhurst also had to step back from her role as Secretary and we are grateful that Rebecca Hopper has accepted this role. You might recall Rebecca who was on the committee some years ago.

These changes reflect the strength of the association and the talented people who are available and respond to the call when needed. Despite the disrupted year with changes on the committee, this has enabled the intensity of the many projects to continue.

There are many members who help the association on and off the Management Committee. Recently I added them up – including those who assist pack Una Voce into envelopes, there were 40! I thank Pamela Foley for her continuing role in sending birthday cards to our members who are over 80 years. We all like to be remembered, and this role in our association is very special.

Various members of the committee are supported by our ‘mail collector’. This role not only covers collecting, sorting and on-sending the mail in various directions, but works in tandem with the Membership Officer to record cheques, to list attendees to our events, and to check on any small, but significant, details such as changes to members’ addresses (which may be on the back of an
envelope and the person has forgotten to let us know), phone contact, email etc. The recording system is a vital, ongoing and important cross check for the treasurer/membership officer. It needs an organised person and Ann Graham set a high standard, carrying it out brilliantly, making many of our roles much easier! Early in 2014 Ann handed it over to Murrough and Joy Benson. We are delighted to have their assistance.

Ann has happily and graciously held this important supportive role for over five years in addition to her other role on our Social and Caring sub-committee. Previously Ann has held other roles on the Management Committee, including Secretary. The beautiful notes our members have received in the event of ill health or a death in the family have been penned by Ann. Her empathy with our members is extraordinary.

Ross Johnson continues to happily support members of the committee where needed. Any time! His input to our association in a number of areas is remarkable. I am personally very grateful for the stability he brings our association with the knowledge from his many years’ experience. Another who contributes behind the scenes from time to time is Jeff Baldwin and we thank him too – again, it’s the attention to the fine detail that makes the difference! I also acknowledge the much appreciated assistance, on a regular basis, of ex-President Harry West. Today, we have had our Treasurer’s Report presented by Ross Johnson who has given considerable support to Nick Booth in their preparation. We thank Nick, Ross and our auditor, Len Bailey, for their efforts. I’m sure you’ll agree with me that our financial standing is sound.

Today too, we are voting on a rule change for the association. Increasing our general committee members from six to eight will assist the large workload of this voluntary non-profit association. I thank Paul Munro for his great assistance with this.

We are especially fortunate to have a hardworking, interested and cohesive team on our PNGAA Management Committee, supported by many proactive members who help with many aspects to ensure the PNGAA remains relevant to those with a contemporary interest in the two countries. I know you will join me in thanking them all.

Andrea Williams
President