

Keeping in Touch

WINTER EDITION 2024

VALE-"MITCHO"



**Official Newsletter of:
Toronto RSL sub-Branch
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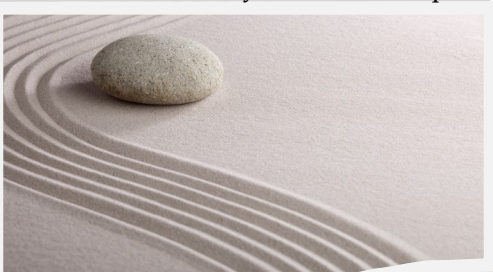
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Keeping in Touch

From the Presidents Desk



Hello again everyone. ..For the first time in 18 years Ron Mitcherson, Mitcho to all who knew him, will not have a say in the printing of this magazine. Ron passed away suddenly on the 16th June 2024. Ron's presence in the Sub –branch will be sadly missed, both as a good friend, Honorary Secretary, a job he took on and excelled at, and editor of this magazine. The Sub-branch will continue on it's way , however it will do so without its old friend and good mate.

This past month I have been having talks with our District President, Peter Stephenson and Representatives from Boolaroo/Speers Point RSL Sub-branch about a merger with our two Sub-branches. Like most branches old father time has taken it's toll on membership and those able to fill the executive rolls, making it difficult to continue the role as a working branch. After saying that, the merger is a voluntary move, as both our branches are financially secure and well respected within the community they operate, just age catching up.

Those of you who are members of Toronto Sub-branch, at the general meeting on Monday 8th July 2024 it was moved that our executive continue talks with Boolaroo/Speers point Sub-branch with the aim of a merger of the two branches. It does have some ramifications, one of which will require we change our name and several more that will be the subject of our discussions with the relevant parties. One new to us here is the likely introduction of Affiliates, a direction the modern RSL world appears to be heading to. If you would like to talk to me about the merger, you're welcome to call in to the Sub-branch or just give me a ring.

As I write this message the Government has announced it will cut back the number of organisations trading on ANZAC day.

I have no problem with this as this Nation of ours made a promise to our wartime veterans that their efforts would always be remembered. In earlier years it was never a problem because of the greater numbers of returned people in everyday society. As those numbers have reduced so too has the attitude of the modern people to events of 100 years plus. In saying that, the past couple of years we here at the Sub-branch and in other areas & districts have noticed the numbers attending ANZAC ceremonies has increased. People of our nation haven't really forgotten the price those veterans paid, they just need reminding occasionally to maintain that promise. One other point that could be raised is the fact our government is trying to increase the number of people being recruited into the services. To get people to join, the interest has to be in the public domain, so maybe this will help the recruitment process also.

This production of Kit will get to you just a little bit later than it would normally be. When I begin to get to the level of expertise Mitcho used to keep things, it may get back to normal. Until the next issue, keep safe and remain well.

*The Price of Liberty is Eternal
Vigilance*

*Bill Noble BEM
President*

PENSIONS REPORT

At present our Pension Officers and Advocates have been quite busy with 70 veterans submitting claims which in total relate to approximately 210 individual claims.

There is 1 matter that is currently under review by the Department.

The Pension officers are just about working at full capacity. There are several reasons for this, the main being the number of people pulling out of the operations because of the training required and the amount of time needed to complete the various courses. Like most volunteering organisations, with experienced people helping out, their expertise doesn't mean much.

However this does not mean you cannot come and talk to us if you need to make a claim or require assistance in doing so. You will never be turned away.

For a full list of any new conditions being investigated go to the RMA website at www.rma.gov.au and look under "What's New".

* * * * *

Our Advocate and Pension Officers are on duty in these sub-Branch offices each Wednesday between the hours of 9.30am and 12 midday.

Other times by appointment only:-

Phone 4959 3699

IRISH

Mick and Paddy were talking in the pub about computers. Paddy says to Mick my dad told me his password is: MickyMinnieGoofyDonaldPluto-HueyLouieDeweyDublin.

He was told his password had to contain 8 characters and at least one Capital”

DATES TO REMEMBER

PLEASE NOTE NEXT MEETING:- Monday ~ 12/08/24 ~ 10am at Diggers Club

Monday ~ 09/09/24 ~ Monthly Meeting at 10.00am Diggers Club

Monday ~ 14/10/24 ~ Monthly Meeting at 10am Diggers Club


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Mother's Day, Father's Day or any other day as deemed by the Club.



CHAPLAINS CORNER



The heart of the chaplain's 'spiritual' role is assisting members to find congruence in their sense of self and the intersecting storylines of their lives, including their military service story. It is a journey of accompanying people or 'coming alongside' people. Whether you are a person of faith or not, Chaplains can still provide spiritual and emotional support. Spiritual support can be defined as connection, meaning and purpose. It does not require faith though it may be expressed through faith. My role is to simply accompany and provide support along the journey. We have 'pastoral addresses' at our ANZAC and Remembrance Day Services, they speak to the human story within us all. The shared story, the shared humanity, with reference to God and ending with a prayer.

This brings me to remembering our dear friend Ron 'Mitcho' Mitcherson. Ron will be deeply missed by everyone in the Toronto RSL Sub-branch, his family and friends. I know I will personally miss his phone calls to remind me when it was time to submit my Chaplain's Corner and around ANZAC and Remembrance Day Services. Ron had a strong sense of social justice, loved his family and was incredibly proud of his children and grandchildren. As your Chaplain, may you know that your feelings are valid and to reach out for support if you need it.

Peace be with you all.

Reverend Melanie Whalley

Toronto Anglican Church

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Email:-

parishpriest@torontoanglicans.org.au

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KEEPING IN TOUCH EDITORIAL STAFF

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J.P. Roger Priest

**The following members and comrades
have passed away since our last issue**

**Ronald John Mitcherson ~ RAR ~
17.02.2024**

Lest we forget

RSL Funeral ~ RAR
RONALD JOHN MITCHERSON
27 June 2024

Their Bodies are Buried in peace and their names liveth for evermore.

To Val, Rons daughter Karen, his son Steven and his immediate & extended family, we at Toronto RSL Sub-Branch, extend our hearts and thoughts for a man who was for an extended period, a very loyal RSL member and the backbone of the sub-branch.

He was known to many he has guided and helped in earlier times as a Pension Officer, now known as an Advocate, a friend and someone who achieved for them the benefits they deserved, from themselves being a veteran.

A Vietnam veteran himself, and not known to many, Ron was wounded in action during an ambush. Ron was a machine gunner, he loved his M60, always a prime target, and in this particular instance, he dove into a hollow as a projectile from an RPG he saw fired at him, hit a tree just in front of him. He received what is known as an "honourable wound" he had left his bum in the air and was rewarded with another hole after being hit with schrapnel. Ron also suffered badly with skin problems after being exposed to Agent Orange later in his tour and was unable to continue operations for the last month.

For me, he was a mate and mentor, who gave me a great deal of time in guiding (some might say bulldozing) me through the early stages when I joined him as Secretary. He was always there to give a shoulder, answer a question, help solve a problem, give me a name when needed or to just have a beer with. Ron keen to be active in the activities of the RSL took on the role as the Hon Secretary with the District Council. Added to his Presidency of Toronto Sub-branch, the time and effort took its toll and illness forced Ron to step down as president and District Secretary. He then encouraged me to take his place as Toronto President and offered his services as Secretary to take the burden of running the sub-branch, a position he held until his sudden death. Ron was the editor of our quarterly magazine, Keeping In Touch (KIT), something he recognised as being important to keep members and the local community informed and amused

at his Irish jokes. He put a lot of time and effort into producing this magazine he cherished. He will, in my time always remembered, missed for his work efforts and the enthusiasm he generated, a mate to us all.

Ron, born on the 25th October 1947 and joined the Royal Australian Army for National Service on the 01st May 1968 with the service No 2789868 and remained in the service classified as Rifleman until his discharge on the 30th April 1970 with the rank of Private.

During his service Ron was posted to the following locations;

3 Training Battalion 01st May 1968

3 Training Battalion (infantry Corps Wing) 11th July 1968

Infantry Centre (Reinforcement Wing) 23rd September 1968

1 Aust Reinforcement Unit 11th February 1969

Headquarters 1 Task Force 04th March 1969

Unallotted List East Comd Personell Depot 11th Feb 1970

Ron saw operational service in Vietnam from the 11th February 1969 to the 11th February 1970

For his service to his country Ron was awarded:

Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp Vietnam

Vietnam Medal

Australian Defence Medal

Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal

Vietnamese Campaign Medal

Infantry Combat Badge

Returned From Active Service Badge

Ghuznee Medal

During a local clean out in the offices here at the sub-branch sitting in the bottom of a drawer we found an old medal. How it arrived here and when we have no idea so just by chance I decided to find out what it was and where issued. The **Ghuznee Medal** is a British campaign medal awarded for participation in the storming of the fortress of Ghuznee in Afghanistan, on 21 to 23 July 1839 by troops of the British and Indian Armies. This action, the Battle of Ghazni took place during the First Anglo-Afghan War..This was the second medal awarded to all ranks of the British Army for a specific campaign, the Waterloo Medal being the first.. It was struck in 1839 on the orders of Shuja Shah Durrani, the Shah of Afghanistan, to show his appreciation to the British forces who had helped restore him to his throne by storming the fortress. As the Shah died before the medals could be distributed, it was finally bestowed by the Governor-General of India in the name of the Government of India..The medal was based on a design by John Luard, a British army officer and artist, and struck at the Calcutta Mint. It is silver and 37 millimetres (1.5 in) in diameter, with the following design:The obverse depicts the fortress of Ghuznee with the word 'GHUZNEE' below.

The reverse has a mural crown surrounded by a laurel wreath and the date '23d JULY 1839'.

The suspender is straight with a ring passing through a smaller loop soldered to the top of the medal.

The ribbon has two equal stripes of crimson and dark green. Originally the ribbon was to have been half green and half yellow.

The medal was issued unnamed, but many were later privately engraved or impressed in varying styles on the reverse or rim. Two separate dies exist for this medal with one having a wider border around the edge than the other. The second also has a narrower and taller fortress.

The medal will now have a home in the Australian Army military museum where it can be seen by many



Australian Government announces acquisition of precision loitering munition

Australian soldiers will be equipped with the Switchblade 300 precision loitering munition, providing a critical combat edge and adding to drone capabilities available to the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The acquisition of the Switchblade 300 boosts the ADF's arsenal of drones, including those capable of being armed.

The Switchblade 300 is a lightweight, portable precision loitering munition system with superior payload, range, time to target and operator functionality.

This acquisition underscores the Albanese Government's commitment to equipping ADF personnel with world leading lethality and protection to ensure they are capable of successfully conducting tasks and maintaining an advantage against potential adversaries.

The Switchblade 300 will add to the ADF's large array of drones, including models that can be armed. The ADF has several different types of non-armed drones and drones capable of being armed, including models that have been in service for more than a decade. Defence expects the first Switchblade 300 will be delivered to Australia later this year and introduced into service in 2025. "The delivery of this proven precision loitering munition demonstrates the speed at which we are introducing capabilities to the ADF. It shows the Australian Government is getting on with the job of providing the ADF with state-of-the-art technologies it needs to meet the threats we face."





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A BIT MORE

Police arrested two kids yesterday, one was drinking battery acid, the other was eating fireworks

They charged one and let the other one off.

I was having dinner with Garry Kasparov (World chess champion) and there happened to be a checkered tablecloth. It took him two hours to pass me the salt

Paddy was at the pub and Mick walks in with his daughters newborn twins in a pram.

Paddy has a look and asks if Mick has any trouble telling them apart

Paddy says, "No, this is Benjamin and this one is Elizabeth

"Paddy was taking a shortcut home after a heavy night at the pub and fell into a newly dug grave. He couldn't get out so he lay on the bottom and fell asleep. Early next morning, Mick, out looking for him, heard some moans and groans and found Paddy in the grave, curled up and shivering

Mick says "Whats wrong with you making all that noise"

"I'm bloody cold " replied Paddy

Mick "Well no wonder, you've kicked all the dirt off yourself"

Change of Command for the Chief of the Defence Force

Command of the Australian Defence Force has transferred from General Angus Campbell, AO, DSC, to Admiral David Johnston, AC, RAN, at a ceremonial parade in Canberra. General Campbell was appointed the Chief of the Australian Defence Force on 7 July 2018. During his tenure, General Campbell led the shift in operational emphasis towards the Indo-Pacific region and built individual and institutional relationships to enhance Australia's security cooperation with regional partners. General Campbell concludes his duties with the Australian Defence Force on 10 July 2024.

"It has been an honour and privilege to be the Chief of the Defence Force. But I am even more proud of Defence – who we are and what we are achieving," said General Campbell.

"I wish to acknowledge the men and women of all ranks, musters and services who wear our nation's uniform.

"Whether for a year or half a century, your service is deeply appreciated and of consequence to the future security, wellbeing and prosperity of Australia and its people." Admiral Johnston becomes the Chief of the Australian Defence Force at a pivotal time as the ADF delivers objectives of the National Defence Strategy and ensures ADF's readiness now and into the future.

Admiral Johnston brings extensive experience from senior operational roles in the Joint Force as well as interagency appointments that have engaged the ADF at home and across the globe. As former Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral Johnston holds deep strategic awareness of Australia's national security challenges and the requirements to take the ADF forward.

"I pay tribute to General Campbell for his determined focus on building a better ADF, and his personal example and demonstration of leadership during a challenging period for the Australian Defence Force," said Admiral Johnston..

has been well stated that we find ourselves in increasingly challenging strategic circumstances. .

This places a great responsibility on Defence to be ready to meet our nation's security needs. This requires a force that is well equipped, trained, confident, strong and resilient

"I recognise that the ADF workforce is my priority. I am very conscious of the responsibility I have to the extraordinary men and women serving in the ADF, our veterans, and the families who support us. It is a great honour to be in your service and I commit to giving you my all, every day, as your



DISCLAIMER:

This newsletter is produced for the membership of the Toronto RSL Sub Branch and complimentary copies are also distributed to interested parties. It is written with care, in good faith and from sources believed to be accurate at the time of writing. However, readers should not act, nor refrain from acting, solely on the basis of information in this newsletter about financial, taxation or any other matter. Readers, having regard to their own particular circumstances, should consult the relevant authorities or other advisors with expertise in the particular field. Neither the Toronto RSL Sub Branch, nor the management committee nor editorial staff accept any responsibility for actions taken by readers.



Dan Repacholi MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUNTER



Standing up for Hunter

It is with great sadness that I am writing my first column for this newsletter since the passing of Ron Mitcherson. Ron was a true hero. He served our nation, and when his time was up in our defence force, he tirelessly served our community. His passing has left a hole in our community that will be hard to fill, but I have no doubt that we will be forever reminded of and grateful for the impact that he has made in this community and as a member of the RSL. As Remembrance Day approaches, it is the perfect time to reflect and pay our tributes to all who have served our nation. I'm sure this year will be even more meaningful, and feel a bit different without the involvement of Ron. But it also serves as the perfect chance to honour him and all that he has done for this RSL Sub-branch, and for our country. Rest in Peace, Ron. Lest We Forget. Recently our community lost Lance Corporal Jack Fitzgibbon who passed away after a training incident. Jack's family and friends are honouring him by running the City2Surf. The team 14 for Fitz already has an amazing 150 members. The team will be running to raise funds for the Commando Welfare Trust. The Commando Welfare Trust provides a safety net for Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) soldiers, veterans and family members. Although there are many services available, they do not provide the level of assistance required to overcome the emotional and financial hardships these Australians invariably face. Their mission is to provide immediate and ongoing financial support where the system is unable to

If you would like to donate, head to <https://city2surf24.grassrootz.com/commando-welfare-trust/14-for-fitz>, I also want to share some information about a recent announcement that may be helpful for Veterans. . The Minister for Veterans Affairs, Matt Keogh, has been working to improve access to Department of Veterans' Affairs services and supports through the myGov app.

Almost 300,000 Veteran Card holders can now easily add their veteran Gold or White card to the wallet in their myGov app. The digital wallet within the myGov app is a safe and secure way to store select government-issued cards and documents, with many other cards including Medicare cards already available in the myGov wallet.

Veterans with a MyService account can quickly and easily add their digital card to the wallet if they've linked their account to myGov. They can also save their card to the myGov app home screen for ease of access.

In addition to enabling storage of Veteran Cards, MyService can be accessed using the myGov app and used to submit claims, view the progress of claims, review accepted conditions, apply for treatment, book transport and more

For more information about digital Veteran Cards including how to add your digital Veteran Card so it is accessible in the myGov app, go to www.dva.gov.au/get-support/health-support/veteran-healthcare/cards/veteran-card.

Kind regards



Federal Member for Hunter
3 Edward Street
PO Box 526
Cessnock NSW 2325
Phone: 49911022

Dan Repacholi MP

Email: Dan.Repacholi.MP@aph.gov.au



Greg Piper MP

Member for Lake Macquarie



Our history of brave soldiers and Defence Force Personnel performing incredible feats of bravery and achieving tremendous victories dates back to the early 1900's. But we must also remember those who've fought in more recent battles to serve Australia and protect the innocent civilians that are unwilling participants of any war. This July marks 15 years since Australian troops ceased their operational role in Iraq. Deemed to be the 'Second Gulf War', Australian troops combined with American and British troops to locate and destroy suspected weapons of mass destruction. Seizing Bagdad, and overthrowing the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, was achieved within three weeks, however no weapons of mass destruction were found. Moving forward the coalition engaged in a 'nation building' and a counter-insurgency campaign to prevent civil war in Iraq. Tasked with training Iraqi soldiers, our troops also deployed to Southern Iraq to protect a Japanese engineer construction unit. While only two Australian service personnel lost their lives in the Iraq conflict, it is still tragic, and they paid the ultimate price in service to Australia. As usual, the local ANZAC day services drew huge crowds and it's wonderful our Australian Service men and women continue to be recognised. We must also remember those whose lives are lost on home soil and in training. They too, give their lives in preparation of defending our country. Seeing the Diggers, school students, and community come together to acknowledge our serving men and women is heartwarming. Welcoming our Māori friends at a number of local services highlights the strength of the ongoing partnership between Australia and New Zealand. Recently in State Parliament, action has been taken to address the surge in domestic violence and knife crime in our community. Several offences are included under the domestic violence umbrella, including coercive control. Bail laws have also been tightened with any domestic violence offender required to wear an electronic monitoring device. It is hoped the strengthening of these laws will protect those in the community at greatest risk of violence. I'm thrilled the process to improve traffic flow at Speers Point roundabout is under way. This, along with an initial 6-month coal deal between Eraring Power Station and Centennial Coal is very positive news for Lake Macquarie. I'm hopeful a longer-term deal will be struck so local collieries will supply coal to the power station for the remainder of its tenure. .

Vale Ron Mitcherson

I was saddened to hear of Ron's recent passing. He was a stalwart of the Toronto RSL Sub-Branch and his contribution in organising AN-ZAC and Remembrance Day services, as well as the preparation of this newsletter, and support of the community, were admirable. Ron will be missed by many. **LEST WE FORGET**

As always, I trust this finds you in good spirits and health. Don't hesitate to contact my office if you need any assistance with State government matters. You can call 4959 3200 or email lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Best regards,



☎ 4959 3200

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**217 ARMY CADET UNIT (ACU)
KEEPING IN TOUCH REPORT FOR
AUTUMN 2024**

Hello Readers!

As previously mentioned in our last report, NSW Brigade has been Directed by National that activities outside our Unit Locations will not be approved for the first six months of 2024. This may have an affect on our ability to support the community at this time, we express our apologies.

However, we have received approval for limited participation in ANZAC Services around the Lake Macquarie Area. You will find 217ACU at the Dora Creek's Dawn Service, Teralba's Morning Service and Toronto's March and Service. We encourage all members of the community to join a local service to commemorate our Service People and sacrifice they made for our Country.

Thank you for your continued support and patience.

Kind Regards,

Yvonne Fuller

CAPT (AAC)

217 Army Cadet Unit (ACU)

Unit email: 217acu@armycadets.gov.au



Nasho's News

Westlake Macquarie

National Servicemen's Association



Welcome to our busy winter program starting with our ANZAC service at the Lake Macquarie Masonic Lodge. This program was set up Bruce Robberds and Keven EshMan . Sargeant John Woodward had control of the colour party and Catafalque party to march into their places. Sqn Leader Paul Moro and 316 Airforce Cadets, Bill Noble BEM Toronto RSL Sub-branch President, Greg Mawson State Nasho President, Gordon Maxwell President Westlake Macquarie Nasho's. It was a very busy night, the crowd filled the hall where every one was served super and drinks.

Anzac day we assisted with the Flag control at the Goffet Park memorial. We had a small group of Nashos marching (brave men). Once again it was a long procession down to Goffet Park from the Toronto Diggers for the ANZAC DAY service. It was a big rise in the Public numbers and children attending. Toronto RSL President Bill Noble BEM conducted the ceremony which was followed by the New Zealand part which was Maori groups singing, followed by the Haka and they put on a great show.

Des Gill celebrated his 70th birthday at Toronto Worker's Club and we had a very big rollup. This was arranged by his wife Kim and we all enjoyed the day.

The next week John Sterland's family arranged John's 90th birthday also at the Toronto Worker's Club, 58 in attendance a lot of interstate Relations. A lot of old friendships were renewed. A lot of decorations at both birthdays.

Our next outing was to Cameron Park to Harrigan's Hotel it is a very nice setting with plenty of room, we were down in numbers due to people in hospitals doctors appointments and sickness but a good day was had by those who attended.

The Combined National Servicemen's clubs was held at Toukley in the ARY club (rsl) Bruce Robberds and Des Gill represented Westlake Macquarie Sub-Branch , not much came out except old age and sickness. Alf Sulman is in John Hunter not doing very well.

VALE Ron Mitcherson Secretary of Toronto RSL. His passing was a big surprise even though we all knew that Ron had been sick for a long time.

Job well done RON.

Regards Gordon Maxwell
Westlake Macquarie National Service President

Gordon Maxwell

President

KOOKIES MORSELS

Stewed Beef Roman Style

(Stufatino Di Manzo Alla Romana)

Preparation time 15 minutes

Cooking time 2-3 hours

Serves 4

Ingredients

1.5 lb beef , 8oz belly pork cut into bite size pieces

Salt & black ground pepper, 1 clove of garlic

Pinch of dried marjoram, 6 tablespoons red wine

3 spikes rosemary, 1 onion sliced

1level tablespoon tomato puree

1oz lard

Dust beef with seasoning and herbs. Heat lard in a thick pan and over low heat fry onion, garlic and pork for 5 minutes. Add meat and cook, stirring now and then, until browned. Add wine and allow to bubble until mixture is half reduced . Stir in tomato puree and enough boiling water to just cover the meat. Put lid on pan and simmer very slowly for 2-3 hours. Serve with beans or peas and creamed potatoes.

Change of command for the Royal Australian Air Force

A changing of the Royal Australian Air Force guard was marked today as aviators and officials farewelled Air Marshal Robert Chipman, AO, CSC, and welcomed Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, DSC, CSC, OAM, as the new chief.

The official ceremonial parade to transfer command was held at Sir Thomas Blamey Square, in Canberra.

Air Marshal Chipman has served as the Chief of Air Force since 1 July 2022. During his tenure, he has led the Air Force response to the Defence Strategic Review and implemented the National Defence Strategy. Air Marshal Chipman will be appointed Vice Chief of the Defence Force on 9 July 2024.

“Today marks a transition in leadership. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have served as the 27th Chief of the Royal Australian Air Force,” Air Marshal Chipman said.

“I would like to thank the Secretary and Chief of the Defence Force, and my fellow senior Defence leaders. Thank you, colleagues, for your collaborative approach in developing integrated solutions to the extraordinarily complex challenges we face every single day, and for your friendship to Alyce and I. We look forward to continuing this work with you in the years ahead.”

Air Marshal Chappell becomes the 28th Chief of Air Force at a critical time for Air Force as it becomes a more integrated and focused force. Air Marshal Chappell has vast experience in strategic level management and situational awareness of current and potential ADF commitments.

“Australia faces its most challenging strategic environment since the Second World War. Our key to success is twofold — looking after each other through the embodiment of our Defence values, and doing the ordinary things extraordinarily well.

“My role as your Chief of Air Force is to serve you, our aviators and our nation in this noble endeavour. I am honoured to be your 28th Chief of Air Force and I look forward to repaying the trust placed in me.”



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