

## [05/04/00 President's Report to AGM](#)

FESR Association (Australia)

(Far East Strategic Reserve)

"For Freedom We Served"

Korea-Malaya-Borneo-Malay Peninsula-Vietnam-Gulf-PNG-East Timor-Navy Post WWII

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### President's Report to AGM

April 2000

I have the honour to present my year 2000 Report to the membership on the occasion of the inaugural reunion of people who served in the Far East Strategic Reserve between 1955 and 1971. One section of our membership, the 1955 to 1960 - Malaya Emergency group, has had a particularly busy and rewarding year.

Our Association and its members participated in the Mohr/Kennedy Review, which delivered recommendations for full recognition of the Malaya Emergency group. Our Association played an important part in that Review.

I am not going to spend a lot of time on the Review. We all know what has happened. Those who are not up-to-speed, have been asleep for the last year or two.

Today we are joined by many of our interstate members and friends. We welcome you all to our city and our company. I am unable to recognise everyone in the confines of this Report. However, a few who deserve a special mention:

Our patron, Vice Admiral Sir Richard Peek has been a tireless and consistent worker for our cause. He first mentioned the injustice relating to navy service during the Malaya Emergency in a report to his Admiral in 1957. 43 years later he delivered the final submission to the Mohr/Kennedy Review at Canberra's Convention Centre. His dedication and loyalty to his men is, in my opinion, unequalled. Universal respect is enjoyed by only the very best naval officers, and, in my opinion, Admiral Peek is most deserving. It is a privilege to have him and Lady Peek with us here today.

Bob Gibbs joins us today from his new home in Tasmania. Bob has been the source of the majority of submitted material over the years. Bob's illumining intelligence and good sense has been a guiding light to many of us who played a supporting role. Bob's background is as a spy. Bob certainly used his investigative talents to uncover and correctly assess many documents and pieces of information. When justice is done in relation to recognition for the Navy in Malaya, no one can be more proud, or claim more credit for the outcome, than Bob Gibbs.

We are joined today by Pat Williams and her husband. Pat is Bob Spooner's sister and has been a constant inspiration to our cause. Pat, your brother lives in the memory and soul of every one here, and we thank you and your family for their sacrifice on behalf of us.

John (Shorty) Stevenson joins us. Shorty was in the Gunbay that day in April 1957 when Bob Spooner was killed. Shorty will carry the legacy of that event for the rest of his days. We welcome you here.

Some people worthy of very special mention who are not with us today: Admiral Mike Hudson, Commodore Nobby Clarke and Roger deLisle, who played a very important part in our campaign for justice. The Naval Association of Australia and the HMAS SYDNEY & VLSVA are groups who contributed greatly to our cause. It is difficult to single-out groups or individuals, someone will feel left out. However, Admiral Mike Hudson and the Naval Association deserve credit. Admiral Hudson bought the Naval Association full-on into the campaign, not always with the full support of his members. Admiral Hudson's efforts in setting up the Joint Consultative Group was the means by which the Review was set up.

I wish to pay special tribute to your Executive Committee. Ken and Shirley Staff have been tireless in their efforts with regard to the newsletter and fund raising. Ken and Shirley have passed the newsletter on to Ralph and Helen,

I wish them luck. Col and Maureen Wurtz have been a great steadying influence. Colin's logical advice has been a great help to me personally. John and Isobel Carlyon have taken on all manners of tasks in the previous year. Indeed, they have done too much, and they have paid a price in other areas for so doing. However, that is other's loss, and our gain. The organisation of this weekend is down to them. This Association would be not have advanced as it has; without John and Isobel.

The Committee; Joe Linaker, Ralph Spooner, Weed Smith, Alex Schultz, John Schultz and Jim Pavier have given great service to you all. I thank them for their support. There have been many tasks and discussions undertaken by your Committee. Many of these were not subject of great attention or publicity. Many involved personal cost and hours of work. We owe all of these individuals a great deal of thanks. Also our interstate delegates have been consistent workers and deserving of the thanks of everybody in the Association.

Things have not been all 'beer and skittles' for the Committee. We have had our share of disagreement and conflict. It would only be a group of idiots who agreed on everything. However, we have put these minor ructions behind us and moved on with the agreed positions and plans. In my view, 'we have done good'.

I cannot let this occasion pass without expressing my sincere thanks to my good friend Rod Nott. Rod, because of his employment with the Prime Minister in Cabinet, has not been able to attend many meetings or take a high profile within the Association. However, his good counsel has been a great influence on my work over the past years. I thank him publicly. – Of course, like Admiral Peek and myself, he is Gunnery.

We, here in Queensland, buried three of our mates in recent times. Max Humphreys, Kev Johnson and Lou LeBoydre. Lest We Forget.

It has been an honour to serve you over the past two years as President. I have made myself available for the coming year. As I am the only nomination, I look forward to serving again as your President. However, this will be my last year in that position. I am planning a few other things for the future, and these will require considerable time and effort. I think it is best to give this notice so as you can all look to finding a suitable replacement.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family for their dedication to the cause and myself. You certainly know what topic has been featuring in discussion around the 'family table', when your 6 year old grand-daughter tells her teacher that her 'grand-dad is fighting with the Government so as his friends can have a medal for fighting in the war'. When questioned, she said; 'I just don't know why they don't give it to them'. FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES. To my wife Margaret; "nothing is possible without you".

Yours aye..... Noel Payne – NATIONAL PRESIDENT