

**ADDRESS TO THE
NSAA TASMANIAN BRANCH COMMEMORATION DAY**

BY

Air Vice-Marshal Gavin Davies, CSC

Deputy Chief of Air Force

18 Mar 12

The Right Hon, the Lord Mayor of Launceston, Alderman Albert van Zettan, and Mrs Lyndle van Zettan

Mr Royce Close (State President NSAA), and Mrs Close

Ms Jan Hyde (Deputy Commissioner Department of Veterans Affairs Tasmania)

CMDR Richard Cowling (Commander Northern District Tasmania Police)

The Reverend, Canon Neville Newett (State Chaplain)

Rosemary Armitage MLC (Patron of Launceston Sub-branch)

Members of Parliament

Members of the Australian Defence Force (former and current)

Members of the Tasmania Police Services

Members of the Navy, Army and Air Force Cadets

Ladies and gentleman, thank you for the generous invitation to attend today's commemoration of the National Serviceman's Association of Australia Tasmania Branch. I would like to acknowledge in particular all of the NSAA veterans joining us here today, and their families.

As many of you will know, the NSAA was founded in 1987 to include all National Servicemen called up for duty between 1951 and 1972. Today we commemorate the 287,000 national servicemen ('Nashos') whose duty with the Navy, Army and Air Force formed the very core of Australia's defence preparedness for three decades. My father was a Nasho and often talks of his training days.

Our National Servicemen served with distinction in Australia, Malaya, Korea, Borneo, Vietnam, Malaysia and Papua-New Guinea. 212 young men were killed in Borneo and Vietnam, and more than 1,400 wounded during active service overseas. Today we give thanks for their service, dedication and courage.

One of the inevitable and valuable activities of any commemoration is that we take a look at our past, take stock of our present, and place an increased focus on what our future may hold. With that in mind, it is important to recognise the enduring legacy our National Servicemen unknowingly created for the Australian Defence Force of today.

Indeed, the professional attitudes and courageous actions of our past National Servicemen without doubt laid the foundations for what Defence now call our values and traditions. While the actions of some silly individuals bring Defence culture into question, during my career I have been privileged to witness first hand on any number of occasions just how Defence values positively influence our members during

the performance of their duties within Australia and on operations overseas. The professionalism, motivation and dedication displayed by all our servicemen and women have been, and remain, the true heart of the Australian Defence Force. A few newspaper articles paint a very inaccurate picture.

Servicemen and women are our past but they are also our future. They have shaped who we are and will be the key to the future effectiveness of the ADF and of air power. And what an exciting future we are facing. I will be a little air-centric now, but I am confident over three years you will receive the 'joint' picture as my Navy and Army colleagues visit and talk with you.

Over the next decade, the Air Force you see today will take on a dramatically different look. You will see aircraft come online that will change not just what Air Force does, but more significantly, how Air Force does it. To help fund this future capability, Air Force has been actively pursuing a reform program to build our new capabilities. Importantly, this program empowers Air Force members from our junior ranks through to our senior managers to seek efficiencies in all aspects of our work. Indeed, it is our positive, forward looking young members across Air Force that are generating cumulative savings and making the Reform Program a reality and a success.

Through innovation, the Air Force is changing and evolving – just as we have to. We recently introduced into service the Wedgetail AEW&C, the Super Hornet, the C-17, and the KC-30A multi-role tanker transport. Leading up to our centennial year, the Air Force will see further advancement in capability with the introduction of the Joint Strike Fighter, the next generation of Maritime Patrol capability, and remotely piloted ISR aircraft with unprecedented network integration. We will also have a stronger presence in the space and will be operating with greater finesse in the cyberspace domain. These may not appear ‘core’ to air power roles, but tomorrow we will need cyber and space security as much as we currently need a 500lb bomb or an air to air missile. But it is not just about aircraft – there are developments occurring within ATC, Air Defence, recruit training, messing, housing, officer training school, combat support for deployed Ops, and the recruitment and retention of women and indigenous personnel.

In short, Air Force has commenced a transition to a new era in Australian air power. Importantly, our ability to realise the potential of the new capability is not so dependent on technology alone, but on innovative and efficient work practices, and on having the right number of people with the right skills at the right time. We need also to stay locked with Navy and Army as the ADF’s amphibious operations mature. We are a joint outfit and we will need to work together.

This is not a new challenge for Air Force. With every generational change in aircraft has come a shift in the skill sets

we have needed. We saw this shift when the Air Force transitioned from the Mirage to the F/A-18, and from the C130H to the C17. We had to grow new types of technicians more attuned to electronics and avionics than clocks and dials.

Part of ensuring that Air Force continues to attract and retain highly skilled and dedicated people is to instil a common purpose and understanding across the workforce. It is for these reasons that acknowledging our Service history and the legacy created by all who have served before us - including the National Servicemen whose duty we commemorate today – is vitally important. These young men built a service with an outstanding record and a set of values and traditions second to none.

Ladies and gentleman, I now appear to have come full circle in my thoughts and observations. I would like to close by recognising once again the legacy our young 'Nashos' passed on to a new generation of soldiers, sailors and airmen. Many of these men were killed or wounded fighting for a cause they knew was important and honourable – the security and prosperity of our great nation. Today we give thanks for their service, their dedication and their unfailing courage and set our efforts to maintaining the legacy and growing the next generation of Australian servicemen and women.

Thank you.