**Vintage Reds of the Canberra Region: Retired Progressive Trade Unionists**

**Dickson Tradies Club, Badham Street, Dickson ACT on 16 September 2014**

**Convenor’s Report to the First Annual General Meeting**

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It is my pleasure to present this report to the Vintage Reds, at our first Annual General Meeting.

**Membership:**

It has been quite a year! We held our first meeting on 12 August 2013 at the Labor Club in Civic. There were just ten of us (Ann Rocca, Barbara Phi, Brendan Morrison, David Perkins, Dennis Gazlay, Geoff Winter, Jane Timbrell, Sandy Thomas and Vic Adams). Since August last year, our membership has grown, now closer to seventy. We currently have sixty members on our Vintage Reds email list. There are about half a dozen names that have been removed as their emails continued to bounce and we have another half a dozen members without email but happily attending meetings and functions. On 17 February we lost our first Vintage Red with the death of Brendan (Brendo) Morrison. Brendo was a stalwart of the union movement and of the greater Canberra community, and will be missed by all who knew him.

**Meetings:**

Since September 2013, we have held our meetings at 11.00am on the third Tuesday of every month (except January) at the Dickson Tradies. Our meetings have been well attended with between ten and twenty members at each meeting. Most of our meetings have included a guest speaker from either a union or a community organisation with interests that overlap those of the Vintage Reds.

**Affiliations:**

We raised the $50.00 at our October 2013 meeting to affiliate with UnionsACT as a community organisation. We are the only organisation affiliated in this capacity. Our affiliation entitles us to attend the quarterly Council meetings; and to participate in meetings of interested affiliates in regards to various campaigns and activities. Our affiliation also provides us with our public liability insurance.

**Union Support:**

We were contacted by the CFMEU who were delighted that we had formed, who offered us a meeting room and shirts with a VR logo. The logo has quickly become our brand and adorns our ephemera. We are thankful to the CPSU who provide us with our large banner; the two pull-up banners were provided by the Nurses; our website has been provided by AEU; the NTEU has provided our brochure; and our business cards are provided by UnionsACT; Ann Rocca has kindly underwritten our lapel badges. UnionsACT have supported us at every event they attend, by distributing our cards and a temporary brochure to places such as the National Folk Festival and the Asbestos Awareness Campaign. We thank all the local affiliates for their generous support during our first year.

**Launch:**

The Vintage Reds were officially launched by Ged Kearney, President of the ACTU in a well attended ceremony hosted by UnionsACT on Friday 14 February 2014 and well reported in the Canberra Times the following day.

**Constitution:**

Our Constitution was drafted by a sub-committee of members lead by Doug Melvin and adopted at the August 2014 meeting. In discussions we firmed our decision not to have a bank account, nor have a membership fee; nor raise money. Our constitution provides for an AGM where we will elect our first Executive Committee.

**Creating Presence:**

I do not intend to list all of the events where the Vintage Reds have made our presence noticed. We have attended rallies and demonstrations on the lawns of Parliament House many times, possibly averaging once a month. We have also participated in the UnionsACT stalls at the National Folk Festival and at Floriade. We do of course attend other worthy campaign causes such as student demonstrations at the ANU, mass rallies in Garema Place be it about climate change or the attack on refugees, and other protests outside Canberra Embassies. There is a distinct possibly with such presence and a conservative government that a new ASIO file entitled the “Vintage Reds” exists!

**Involvement with Union Campaigns:**

Union Campaigns are a high priority for the Vintage Reds. We have been to building sites, to the Nurses Medicare Rally and to Bust the Budget Rallies. We are participating in the “Fair Go for Canberra” Unions Committee where momentum is evolving to defeat the Abbott Government at the next Federal Election in 2016. This is the source of the $7.00 note to pay the Medicare charge.

**Vintage Reds Campaigns:**

In the lead up to the NSW State Election in the seat of Monaro, (and with our eye on the marginal seat of Eden-Monaro) we have decided that we should visit Centrelink offices during the Spring starting with Queanbeyan and Cooma in Spring 2014 with the view to enrolling otherwise disenfranchised citizens. The response to us from Centrelink clients has been enthusiastic. We will also be visiting Centrelink offices in other parts of Eden-Monaro and in the seats of Canberra and Fraser in 2015 commencing in Autumn 2015.

**Retired Unionists’ Network**

The ACTU has established a Retired Unionist Network and are holding monthly teleconferences. The Vintage Reds are the only group of retired unionists built on a geographic or regional base rather than their traditional vocational base of their affiliated unions.

**Into the Future:**

With the election of our first Executive Committee, I trust that this group will develop a new plan of action for the next 12 months, and my hope is that we have sufficient members with the skills to perhaps start writing submissions to such august bodies as to Senate Inquiries!

**Conclusion:**

I think I can confidently say that our first year has been a great success, unfortunately enhanced by the excesses of the rancid Abbott Government. I would like to thank David Perkins and Dennis Gazlay who have acted as our Minutes Secretaries; and Anne Gunn and Dennis who will be managing our website; special thanks to those Vintage Reds who attend events when the word has gone out; and all those retired unionists who have joined the Vintage Reds and are proving to the Canberra Region that you never stop being a unionist after retirement. In unity,

**Jane Timbrell, Convenor**