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

**Tradies Club, Badham Street, Dickson ACT 18 September 2018**

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

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It is my pleasure to present this report to our fifth Annual General Meeting.

**Membership:**

We continue to sit at about 100 members on our various mailing lists which is being downscaled to just one. In our annual return to the Office of Regulatory Services we report our “official” membership at 30 June 2017 as 50; this year it is 78 that being those who have filled in the membership form, since then we have recruited a further two members. We remain delighted that we usually have 20 members or more to each of our meetings. This is a very healthy and respectable level of activity.

**Meetings:**

 It is our practice to always have a guest speaker at each meeting. This year we have maintained the tradition with a continuous stream of interesting local and visiting speakers.

As many of you may recall, it was in September last year, after the last of the Vintage Reds who walked the Camino returned to Australia, that the group presented a report with photos and maps about our wonderful time walking for 3 weeks in France and a week in Spain. And in an act of solidarity, what happened on the Camino, has stayed on the Camino.

October last year was our best ever attended meeting because we all expecting Senator Jacqi Lambie to join us for morning tea. Jacqi was held up, and our meeting turned into an event with three wonderful speakers. The other two were Dr Patricia Ranald from AFTINET about the TPP and Peter Murphy from PAUL (Philippines Australia Union Link) who spoke about political life in the Philippines. Normality resumed in November and we had the incredible Emma Davidson from the Women’s Centre for Health Matters as the final speaker for the calendar year.

2018 began with English academic Tony Payne and “Civil Capitalism”; and followed by Merryl Jackson, on Refugees and a meeting that gave very generously to assist detainees. In April, Penny Lockwood’s long time friend Tony Stevens spoke to his new book which truly reflected his continued love of Russia. The next month we invited Richard Tanter visiting from Melbourne to discuss some of the background and the need for a nuclear weapons ban. Our June meeting was addressed by Melanie Nolan, editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography; and in June, Roxley Foley spoke passionately about the Uluru statement and indigenous recognition; and only last month, Deborah Venness came to speak about the Ramsay Foundation and our shared concerns of about the strings tied to some potential funding donations.

**UnionACT:**

As everyone is probably aware, we are affiliated with UnionsACT as a community based organisation. There have been changes to UnionsACT Constitution which means that their Council meetings (where the VR normally attend) are no longer being held on a quarterly basis and most of the decision making issues are dealt with at the Executive meetings. We wrote to UnionsACT in August last year and requested that UnionsACT change their rules to allow the Vintage Reds to have a seat on the Executive. In September we received a positive reply however this has not yet been acted upon. There is good news, as UnionsACT Executive is meeting on Thursday 20 September to consider a rule change for the Vintage Reds to formally sit on the Executive.

**ACTU & the Retired Unionists Network**

The Vintage Reds continue to participate in the teleconference hosted by the ACTU with the other retired unionists groups from around the country.

This year, the ACTU Congress was held in Brisbane (16-18 July) and the Vintage Reds represented the RUN Group at the Congress and made a presentation to one of the workshops. The session ran for an hour and consisted of slides of many different groups from around the country, participating in their local endeavours. As a result of this session, a new political group of retired unionists is in its formative stages in Brisbane, and we wish them well.

The most important initiative coming out of our RUN connections has been our discussions with “Fair Go For Pensioners” in Victoria. An initiative coming out of this will be dealt with at our regular September meeting.

**Vintage Reds Committee of Management:**

As the Convenor, I cannot thank our committee members enough for their work; I am particularly grateful for their support and guidance to me throughout the year. Jude Dodd has been deputy Convenor; Helen Sutherland, our Minutes Secretary, Adrian Cameron our Treasurer, Janice Flaherty our Public Officer, Anne Gunn our Web-Mistress, Pauline Westwood and Pam Blakeley our Research Officers.

It is these folk who share the core of the work, writing submissions on Housing or the TPP, and to whom I turn first for their assistance and support. We would be nothing without them.

**Vintage Reds Promotional Material**

This year, we have ordered more merchandise and spread our wings a little further with our business cards. These are deliberately generic, all VR members are invited to take the cards and to pass them onto their family and friends and help us grow our organisation. There are cards available today.

**Vintage Reds Flag Makers**

Earlier this year, a group of Vintage Reds spent some time making generic signs and sewing Vintage Reds flags that could be taken to demonstrations or celebrations. A sample of the work is adorning the meeting room today.

**Involvement in Union Campaigns:**

We continue to support all the local industrial campaigns as much as possible, from the UnionsACT Campaign about Penalty Rates outside of various Southern Cross Clubs around Canberra, to United Voice and the hardship brought upon cleaners by cruel companies exacting their revenue with wage theft from migrant women workers! For some of us, the irony of being a customer and having to support Centrelink workers and their union the CPSU against jobs being outsourced to multinationals is still an on-going campaign.

It has been a reasonably light year with union political campaigns, as we have been in that “calm before the storm” which is likely to change in the next few months. We have been part of the preparatory work around “Change the Rules” in the lead-up to the next Federal election and only last weekend four of us worked on markets at Moruya and Batehaven in the marginal seat of Gilmore. Canberra is blessed with the four seats in our catchment all likely to be Labor held seats at the next election, hence our trip to the south coast!

There will also be an election in NSW on 21 March 2019. We will again be giving our attention to the seat of Monaro based in Queanbeyan in the hope of removing the NSW Liberal Government.

**Conclusion:**

Our year has been a little quieter than other years, but as a small group of retired unionists, the Vintage Reds continue to punch above our weight! 2019 will be a big year!!

I commend the report to the meeting.

**Jane Timbrell,**

**Convenor**

**Vintage Reds of the Canberra Region**