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

**Tradies Club, Badham Street, Dickson ACT 17 September 2019**

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

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

**Membership:**

The question of our membership numbers, is always a fraught question; we have reported to the Office of Regulatory services that we have 102 members. This number can be different to the number of membership forms we hold in our register; and the number we have on our electronic data base; or the number of our members on our email list. All of which proves that our association is a living organism!

**Vintage Reds Committee of Management:**

As the Convenor, I cannot thank our committee members enough for their work; I remain particularly grateful for their support and guidance to me throughout the year for their tireless efforts. Our office bearers, 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. This year we recruited two additional Committee Members, Jenny Nicholson and Bill Thompson to share the burden of work and to collaborate on the Committee with various matters that come to our attention.

**Meetings:**

We had yet another great year of inspiring speakers. Firstly, ACT & Australian Senior Citizen of the Year, Dr Graham Farquhar, had to cancel addressing our first scheduled meeting in September, but he did make it to our October meeting. Graham spoke of growing up in Burnie and ending up in Canberra (what could be better!). In November, VR member, John Rodrieguez gave a personal and emotional account of his family and childhood experiences in Spain under the fascist dictator, Franco. The 2019 calendar year started with Dr Ben Hillman who so clearly and concisely articulated “The troubles in China’s west” and in March ACTU Organiser Harry Wall spoke about the campaign to win the marginal seat of Gilmore. I will speak later about the campaign. Frances Crimmins from the YWCA spoke proudly of the “ACT leading the way in gender equity”. Local union identity, Greg McConville of the Fire Fighters’ Union spoke of their campaign to improve the work standards and conditions for ACT fire fighters who had resisted management gold carrots of more money instead demanding qualitative improvements to the brigade! It was with great humour that Dr Meredith Burgmann spoke to her slide show of the 1970s Protests of the Springbok tours. There are a number of VR members who were there and remember it very well. In July, the ACTU Organiser of the First Nation Workers’ Alliance, Lara Watson spoke about the problems of organising indigenous workers in the more remote parts of the country; and only last month, Dr John Warhurst spoke about those two very difficult subjects “Politics and Religion” especially in the light of our current sanctimonious Prime Minister.

**Involvement in Union Campaigns:**

Our involvement in union campaigns is probably our most valued contribution to the local union movement. Once again, I can report that United Voice, soon to be United Workers Union when their amalgamation with the NUW is completed, is our most active engagers at the local level. I suspect that many local affiliates are taking some time out to consolidate their organisations at this time of extremely anti-union rhetoric from our rancid Government.

We have all attended a number of union rallies and protests, but perhaps our best efforts were associated with the ACTU’s marginal seat campaign in Gilmore.

ACTU’s Change the Rules Campaign in Gilmore:

A number of Vintage Reds have been visiting Gilmore from approximately October last year starting with say just 4 of us, culminating in a total of approximately 20 members, on repeat visits. We worked the far southern end of the electorate (the last 50 kilometres) from Bateman’s Bay to Tuross Heads, and we won all those booths!

We were delighted that Fiona Phillips won Gilmore having wrestled it from the Liberals. This win was not ours alone. Fiona was a fabulous candidate, as was the Greens candidate and member of Unions Shoalhaven, Carmel McCallum. We were also blessed with the infighting of the Liberals, principally caused by ScoMo’s decision to parachute Warren Mundine into the seat. Mundine would have been lucky to win any votes from the indigenous community.

We were also honoured with access to two houses in Gilmore. Special thanks to Anne Gunn and Elizabeth Reid for their generosity in providing us with unlimited tenancy throughout the campaign.

Our thanks also go to the young, courageous and bold Harry Wall; to Unions Shoalhaven; to the South Coast Labour Council and to the delightful locals unionists from the area with whom many of us made great friends. I must also mention Fiona’s team of local ALP warriors of the Batemans Bay and Moruya branches who reflect the VR demographics.

Before the election, we worked on street stalls and market stalls, we walked around wearing sandwich boards, we doorknocked all of Tuross Heads and most of North Bateman’s Bay. Perhaps, the worst part of the campaign was the two weeks of Pre-Poll at Bateman’s Bay, and special thanks must be singled out to the indefatigable Janette and David Morgan and to David Perkins for their outstanding work and commitment throughout the campaign.

ACT Young Workers’ Centre: The Wage Theft Campaign:

Our next campaign has just begun. With the aid of a grant from the ACT Government, UnionsACT have established a “Young Workers’ Centre” and appointed Arian McVeigh as the first Director. In the first part of the campaign, the Vintage Reds have been asked to assist in raising money and awareness for the newly created Centre out on the streets.

Last Saturday, (14 September) we conducted out first “Sausage Sizzle” and/or “Veggie Pattie Sizzle” trial at Lyneham Shops and in a little over an hour we raised more than $350.00. We will hopefully be rolling out one BBQ a month over the next few months and assisting in the establishment of the centre and the recruitment of young workers into trade unions.

**Raising Our Profile:**

We do continue to grow and become better recognised by the rest of the union movement. We are slowly implementing a strategy to help formalise our position as the local retired unionists group with the local affiliates. Whilst the process is slow, it will hopefully be reasonably thorough. We are really starting with the two teachers’ unions.

Australian Education Union (ACT Branch): The AEU is a reasonably large organisation with a single vocation and they are well resourced. Their membership is more than 80% of their potential membership. Jude and I met with Secretary Glenn Fowler a few weeks ago and we are about to provide them with some pro-forma letters and material about the VRs.

Independent Education Union (NSW & ACT Branch): The local branch of the IEU covers all the non-government schools in the ACT. We have been invited to attend their next Council meeting, in November with a view to them carrying a resolution of support, and to encourage their retiring members in our region to join the Vintage Reds.

We will soon speak again to United Voice and to the CPSU (PSU Group) based in Canberra before we get around to the other affiliates.

**Other Matters:**

I can report that the rest of our usual subjects for the Annual Report remain firm but static. We continue to participate at UnionsACT Executive as active observers; we have our ephemera collection, our greatly enhanced website, and our twitter account, and we continue to receive excellent support from the CFMMEU for our meetings.

**Conclusions:**

In conclusion, I think this report highlights the depth of our still fledgling organisation. Our path is slow, but steady, and I am happy to repeat the rejoinder of 2018 that we continue to “Punch well above our Weight”! All power to our union!

Thank you everyone for making the Vintage Reds!!

In unity,

**Jane Timbrell**

**Convenor**

**Vintage Reds of the Canberra Region**