



# THE BULLETIN

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## EDITORIAL

### LEGACY FOUNDATION ADDRESS

By Past President, Legatee Geoff Webb – 17 September 2013

Legatee President, fellow Legatees, Widows here today and other guests.

Comradeship has been the central theme of a number of Foundation Day Addresses.

In recent years, the late Legatee Lucky Luscombe in 2006, and Legatee David Grierson in 2010, based their addresses around the concept of comradeship and what it meant to them.

“I like to think of Comradeship as the Lifeblood of Legacy. And the glue that holds us together”, said Lucky. Lucky went on to argue that Comradeship is part of Australian folklore and history, and in the First World War reached new heights with so many men laying down their lives for their friends. As Lucky said, the quintessential Frank Doolan took Comradeship through the trenches and after into the post war years when he said to a number of his former soldier colleagues, “Have you fellows thought that the dying wish of any of our cobbers would be that we should look after his missus and kids”. Our reason d'être.

Lucky also talked of the comradeship that existed amongst the seven young crewmen, of which Lucky was one, of the Lancaster Bomber that would take to the air more than one hundred times on training and operations during the Second World War. Their lives dependent on the others' ability and training, and even more importantly, respect for one another.

David Grierson started his presentation by talking about Mateship which he argued was an underlying function of Comradeship. And I need to be careful here because David is very much alive and here with us today, as he is most Tuesdays – I dare not verbal him.

He pointed out that “Mate” was originally a term applied to those who shared a soldier tent and our fundamentals more or less equate Comrade with Mate. As he pointed out, there is little doubt that during the First World War the need for a Mate was paramount. The mate was not only a person with whom one shared one's feelings and took one's leave, but also someone who watched one's back, gave aid and comfort and, if necessary, dug one out of the mud after being buried by a shell.

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TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2013

MR JOHN DYER

AUSTRALIAN AIR ADVENTURE

“FLYING THE OUTBACK AND EARLY DAYS OF ELLENBRAE CATTLE STATION”

## FOUNDATION DAY ADDRESS (CONT.)

Those who served in conflicts since the First and Second World Wars, including Korea and Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, would all give testament to the wonderful mateship that is a defining characteristic of our Armed Forces. Comradeship and the underlying support, care and concern, and respect for one's fellow being has long been the hallmark of being a member of the Australian Defence Forces, right from the top.

Let us hear what Legatee Retired Major General John Cantwell had to say about this when he spoke at the Launch of Badge Week in Federation Square earlier this month.

"Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman and Friends of Legacy. Good morning it is a real privilege to be a part of this event today.

As you have just heard in that summary of my background, I have been very fortunate to have had a chance to lead Australian men and women, not just in peace time in a range of challenging and wonderful appointments, but also on combat operations most recently in 2010. Now if you will bear with me, I would like just to reflect on things I have learned, particularly from that last period of service because they are relevant. They are relevant to today and they are relevant to Legacy's mission. 2010, as I said, was a wonderful opportunity for me to lead some of the best Australian's you could ever want to meet. The young men and women who represent us do such difficult and dangerous work, as it was at that time for the Defence Force and particularly for those on combat duty. I was privileged to spend a great deal of time with Navy personnel on board the various frigates that rotated through the operational area where they did wonderful work, dangerous and difficult work of counter-terrorism and counter-piracy in troubled waters off Oman and Yemen and Somalia. And, I was so impressed by their discipline, endurance and skill. Likewise I spent so many hours indeed days cumulatively on board various air force transport aeroplanes and the like, spent time with the maintenance crews at airfields while they did their extraordinary important work to support the force, to move the force, sustain the force and came away with a great admiration for all of those wonderful men and women. But naturally my focus was on those troops on the ground in Afghanistan where I spent the majority of my time. I spent a lot of time out on patrol with the soldiers doing their difficult, complex and sometimes deadly duty, patrolling the desolate backwater valleys of Uruzgan Province of Southern Afghanistan. And, I learned a great deal about the Australian character. The character that we celebrate in the ANZAC tradition and who we continue to support through Legacy. I got to see young men, generally in their early 20's, day after day exhibit the most extraordinary quiet courage, as they strapped on 40 or 50 kilograms of equipment, weaponry, ammunition, grenades, water, first aid supplies, electronic devices, you name it, and step out of some tiny patrol base and walk down a dusty track that could very well contain a hidden bomb, an improvised explosive device designed to kill and maim, as they did so often with such terrible results, or confront an illusive enemy who would shoot and then disappear back into the community.

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## FOUNDATION DAY ADDRESS (CONT.)

I watched our Australian service men and women do this in ways that were extraordinarily encouraging and inspiring. These are people that we can be so so proud of. They perform their duty with discipline and compassion. And, every Australian, like I was, would have been buoyed just to be around them and to see them do their duties so well. But sadly there is a price. In 2010, ten of the soldiers for whom I was responsible were killed in action. Over 60 were wounded, many of them grievously in life-changing ways and the struggle of those wounded and their families goes on. The struggle of those who are bereaved having lost husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, mates. Their endurance continues to be tested today and will be forever. And, there is another group who will continue to bear the scars of their service. Those, like myself, who will come home with emotional damage. I am not ashamed to admit that I was deeply personally, emotionally hurt by those losses and by my experiences in other conflicts that I have been apart of. And, I paid a price for that. My family has paid a price for that, as do so many of our veterans. It is for that reason that I am so pleased, so encouraged by the expansion, the recent expansion, of Legacy's charter not to just do their tremendous work to support widows, as they done for so many decades, but now broadened into the realm of those who are incapacitated, damaged physically or emotionally by their service for our nation. And, what a wonderful calling that is, what an important calling. It is a vital part of what we do, because Governments alone cannot answer the needs of our veterans nor their families. Communities at the end are those who can make a difference, make it work for them and help them through their difficult struggles. For, after all, they have given everything in some cases in the service of our country and we owe it to them and their families to honour that service, to revere their sacrifice and to now look after and help mend those who are damaged by the duty they have undertaken. And, so today, I am extraordinarily proud to stand here. I stand here as a Legatee, proud of what Legacy does and has done for so long. I stand here as an Australian swelled with pride at the things I have seen young Australians and not so young Australians do in the service of their nation. And, I am very, very pleased to know that communities here in Melbourne and right across Australia support Legacy and those other institutions whose sole purpose, sole purpose is to support Veterans and Veterans' families. And, I encourage you all to applaud this duty, to support it, spread the word and, as all of us do, look after our Veterans the best way we can. Thank you"

A very powerful address, I am sure you will agree. The respect, admiration and concern for those he led comes through strong and loud.

He also provided a great segue from the Comradeship that exists within the Defence Force to that which exists, and which we are part of within Legacy.

He talked of Legacy being a community within a community. Not a bad description. We are a community drawn together through a shared commitment to voluntary service.

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## FOUNDATION DAY ADDRESS (CONT.)

The Comradeship we share and cherish is based on a strong shared commitment to care for the families of deceased and incapacitated veterans.

For Comradeship to really breathe, flourish and truly be the glue that holds us together, I believe implies some general principles and as to how we behave and interact with one another. And it is this focus that I wish to place on Comradeship, a slightly different focus from that of previous Foundation Day Addresses where the concept of Comradeship has been the theme.

The Legacy Principles and Rules for Guidance (the PRG's) – David Grierson can recite these for you if you like, state,

“Members and staff of Legacy Clubs and Legacy auxiliary workforces shall act honestly, fairly and with courtesy, competence, diligence and reasonable promptness and shall not act prejudicial to the interests of the Legacy movement,”

And then go on to expand on this, in further particulars.

I repeat – act honestly,

Fairly

With courtesy

Competence

Diligence

Reasonable promptness

And shall not act prejudicial to the interests of the Legacy movement.

Pretty hard to argue with any of that.

The Melbourne Legacy Code of Conduct, developed primarily for staff but which I think is equally relevant to Legatees, puts some flesh and meaning to this:

“All individuals that commit to this Code do so from the starting point of recognising that they place a high value on there being a strong shared commitment by everyone with whom they work to maintain respectful behaviour, including personal politeness, friendliness, courtesy, compassion, fairness, justice and equality.

I repeat:      Personal politeness  
                    Friendliness  
                    Courtesy  
                    Compassion  
                    Fairness  
                    Justice and equality

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## FOUNDATION DAY ADDRESS (CONT.)

In signing up to this, we would do so in the knowledge as the Code says,

“this requires us to make an effort to be aware of other people’s feelings and do whatever we can to acknowledge and value the opinions and ideas of others”.

This would require us to, I repeat

“... to make an effort to be aware of other people’s feelings and to do whatever we can to acknowledge and value the opinions and ideas of others”.

A little introspection I think would lead many of us to admit to ourselves that we have failed this test from time to time. I know I have.

We are all individuals and I know we are going to have the snitch with one another from time to time, but we must avoid allowing this to fester and affect our ongoing relationship with a fellow Legatee.

I don’t wish to paint too negative a picture as to how we tread with one another, and I believe that within Melbourne Legacy we get a high level pass in the way we tread with one another, but I don’t think we would get a distinction.

I will say it is a far better grade of pass than I would award to a small number of Legatees in a small number of Clubs for the way they interface with their fellow Legatees on the Legacy Australia Council where their behaviour seems to reflect a complete lack of trust and respect.

It is certainly not characterised by

Personal politeness

Friendliness

Courtesy

Compassion

Fairness

Justice and equality

As individuals we would expect to be treated in a manner consistent with the principles detailed in the Melbourne Legacy Code of Conduct outside Legacy, so why not in house.

If Comradeship is to continue to be the glue that holds us together, this code and the behaviours it implies, must be genuinely lived by each and every one of us. Otherwise, the glue will lose its adhesive qualities and Legacy will be the poorer.

**Legatee Geoff Webb**