

**RNZN COMMUNICATORS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025
PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

I have pleasure in presenting my President's Report on the business and activities of the Association over the last year.

The 2024 Reunion held in New Plymouth in October last year was a success judging by feedback received. Acknowledgement and thanks must be paid to those involved in its organisation: Sandy Watson, Alan Padgett and Dale Leggett. Also, Dave Wistrand for taking charge of the reunion golf tournament, which was marked by the inaugural award of the Bob Ohlson Trophy. Additionally, a special mention and thanks must be made to Chris Bond for his work and efforts in being the local liaison person, providing boots on the ground support in New Plymouth.

In January this year a delegation from the Association (Jim Blackburn, Sandy Watson, Alan Padgett and me) visited the Maritime Warfare Training Centre at Devonport Naval Base to present the Communicator of The Year award to the 2024 winner, LCWS Samantha Hardy. The presentation was made in conjunction with the CWS Forum 2025, so there was a reasonable attendance of currently serving personnel to watch the ceremony. Presentation of the award was made by the association's founding member and current Patron, ex-CRSI Jim Blackburn.

Those attending the ceremony were most impressed by a brief on Jim's service history and experiences, and the CWS members were reminded in addresses by both Jim and me that they were considered as Communicators by the Association, but our visit and talks did not elicit any interest from any of them in joining the Association. It has been well reported previously that the Association's committees have tried different tactics and ideas to get CWS personnel to join, without success. This lack of interest by the serving personnel reflects the different attitudes and interests of younger generations, and other similar clubs and associations have experienced similar problems in attracting new members. The committee has decided that we should no longer spend time and effort in continuing to try and get CWS personnel to join but instead look after the members that we have.

In May, the new constitution of the RNZRSA was passed at a Special General Meeting. As many of you will know, given all the reports in the news media, the reorganisation of the RNZRSA, the revised constitution and the conduct of the SGM have been controversial to say the least. The latter point is the subject of ongoing legal action. As far as the Association is concerned, the new constitution means that the RNZRSA is now involved with the management and administration of Affiliate

Members. This includes, amongst other things, the requirement that Affiliates will permit an RNZRSA representative to attend and speak at their meetings. The new requirements are considered inappropriate for the way that the Association is structured and run, and an unnecessary administrative burden. Moreover, becoming an Affiliate Member has not met the original purpose of taking up such membership, namely to get support and backing from the RSA organisation in our efforts for: recognition of service in the Far East Strategic Reserve; entitlement for ex-Service personnel to be buried in the Service section of cemeteries; action on the recommendations of the Patterson Review; and acceptance of the Veterans Advisory Board report of 2019. The RNZRSA responses to approaches from the Association over the years were, to say the least, disappointing; there was no support given to the Association's submissions on the Burial Act or the Patterson Report. The Committee therefore decided that there was little point in the Association remaining as an Affiliate of the RNZRSA and we did not renew our membership this year.

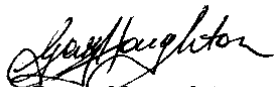
Frank Lewis has continued leading the project for the establishment of an HMNZS Irirangi memorial. Progress has been made with a design for the plaque being completed and accepted, and a visit conducted to determine a location for the memorial. The next step is to finalise a suitable and appropriate mounting for the plaque and then arrange for the memorial to be installed. An application will be made to Chief of Navy seeking a contribution from Navy towards the cost of the memorial. Details of an unveiling ceremony for the memorial will be put out when finalised.

After considering a couple of options it has been decided to hold the Association's next reunion in Taupō on 15-17 October 2027. Three possible venues were considered and the Wairakei Resort, the venue for the 2018 Reunion, selected as the most suitable. Negotiations with the establishment to finalise indicative costings for the reunion are ongoing and details will be promulgated as soon as available.

As mentioned in my report last year, it would be good to get some of the younger members of the Association involved with its management. A trawl email was sent out to all members this month calling for volunteers to join the committee. We certainly did not get trampled in the rush. In fact, we got more response from the West Island (2) than we did from both the North and South Islands combined (0). So, I would repeat my call for the younger members to step forward to help with the Association.

With the increasing median age of our members there has been a considerable number who have crossed the bar in the last year. Some well-known, others notorious and some not known to many. Regardless, each did their duty and contributed to the ships they served in, the Branch, the Navy and the country. To them we say - Thank you for your service. Rest in eternal peace.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have served on the Committee for the past 12 months, particularly Dave Wistrand, who is stepping down as Vice-President, and our Patron, Jim Blackburn, who has provided wise counsel and kept us on the straight and narrow.



Gary Houghton
President

27 September 2025