

Rear Admiral Graeme Shirtley

RFD RANR MB BS (NSW), DDR (Syd), FRANZCR

Surgeon General Australian Defence Force 09 May 2005 – 03 July 2008. Patron of the Australian Military Medicine Association 09 May 2005 – 31 December 2008

Russ Schedlich, Neil Westphalen



Rear Admiral Graeme Shirtley RFD RANR served as the Surgeon General Australian Defence Force (SGADF) for just over three years. During that time he was Patron of the Australian Military Medicine Association and provided great support for its development, aims and objectives.

Graeme's clinical career has been as a radiologist. Subsequent to his graduation from the University of NSW in 1974, he was awarded a Diploma of Diagnostic Radiology from Sydney University in 1979 and his Fellowship from the Royal Australasian College of Radiologists (now the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists) in 1980.

Since then, Graeme has been active in private practice in Sydney developing his special interests in CT imaging, musculoskeletal imaging (particularly with ultrasound) and mammography. From 1989 to 2003 he was a senior visiting medical officer with the Central and Eastern Sydney Breast Screening Program at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. He has been chairman of the CT group of the RANZCR Accreditation and Quality Control Subcommittee, and the radiologist on the Professional Services Review Committee of the HIC

for the Federal Government. He was also Chairman of his Radiology group from 1995-9.

In 1992 Graeme was a Visiting Fellow in MRI at the Barrows Neurological Institute in Phoenix Arizona, and at the MRI Institute Presbyterian Hospital in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Radiological Society of North America.

Graeme Shirtley's naval career has been no less impressive. He joined the RAN as a reserve junior sailor in 1969, coming top of his recruit course and joining the Medical Branch as a Reserve Ordinary Sick Berth Attendant (ORD SBA, now SMNMED). Over the next six years he was promoted through the ranks to Leading Seaman in the Reserves during which time he continued to progress through medical school.

On completing his medical degree in 1975, Graeme was commissioned as a Lieutenant. He progressed to Lieutenant-Commander in 1981 and then to Commander RANR in 1987. From 1985 to 1987 he was Deputy Senior Medical Officer (SMO) of the Sydney Port Division, and in 1986 he completed and topped his Reserve Staff Acquaint Course. That year he was also awarded his Reserve Forces Decoration (RFD).

Following his promotion to Commander, Graeme became SMO of the Sydney Port Division and was the senior reserve Medical Officer for Exercise *Kangaroo 89*. From 1991 he was acting Executive Officer of the Sydney Port Division, and in 1992 was awarded a Flag Officer's Commendation from Rear Admiral David Holthouse (then Flag Officer Naval Support Command) for his work in developing a program for training of Reservists in military medicine.

Graeme's seagoing service includes the Navy's two aircraft carriers, HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Sydney*, HMA Ships *Vendetta*, *Torrens*, *Stuart*, *Brisbane*, *Stalwart*, *Supply* and *Darwin*. He has also served ashore in HMA Ships *Cerberus*, *Penguin*, *Kuttabul*, *Albatross*, and *Stirling*, and in recent years in Canberra.

Graeme was appointed consultant radiologist to the Director General Naval Health Service in 1985 and to SGADF in 1990. In 1986 he was appointed ADF representative to the radiology committee of The

Standards Association of Australia. He has been a member of the Radiology Steering Group for the SGADF from 1985, and when this became the Medical Imaging Consultative Group in 2000 he was appointed the inaugural chairman.

Overseas, Graeme has been a visiting lecturer to the Department of Radiology National Naval Medical Centre (NNMC) in Bethesda Maryland USA in 1994, 1998 and 1999, and for his efforts was awarded the US Navy and Marine Commendation Medal and the US Navy Achievement Medal. He was also a guest lecturer at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Washington DC in 1998, where he was appointed Adjunct Assistant Professor of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine in August 2002.

Graeme has also researched US military experience with computed and digital radiography systems with a view to their implementation into the ADF as part of Joint Project 2060. He is a member of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States and was appointed to its International Committee in March 2006.

Graeme was promoted to Captain RANR on 31 December 1998 and the following day was appointed Director Health Reserves-Navy (DHR-N). In July 2000 he was appointed the inaugural chairman of the National Reserve Health Triumvirate, with the role of advising the Director-General Defence Health Services (then Brigadier Wayne Ramsay RAAMC) on all reserve health matters, as well as coordinating reserve health service personnel training, recruiting and retention for all three Services.

Whilst DHR-N, Graeme worked to achieve rank equity for Navy health officers compared to their Army and Air Force counterparts. Other issues included training, age of retirement and a new scheme of complement for naval health specialist reservists. These initiatives were intended to allow the Navy Reserve Health Branch to enhance the capability of the ADF Health Service, and resulted in recruiting 12 additional health officers in the first year after the change.

As DHR-N, Graeme was also the Reserve representative on the Naval Health Board Advisory Council. This council provides advice on professional development, career management, recruiting retention and best practice benchmarks for the human resource management of Naval Health Branch personnel. He also had articles published in ADF Health and *Australian Military Medicine* on ultrasound and its role in the ADF, telemedicine, virtual endoscopy and restructuring of the Reserve Health Branch of the RAN.

On 27 September 2002 Graeme was promoted to Commodore and appointed Assistant Surgeon General Australian Defence Force – Navy. In this role he liaised with State Departments of Health to establish

strategic alliances with the teaching hospitals to increase the experience of Permanent Forces doctors, nurses and medics in trauma management. He also established 'mini-fellowships' in trauma management in South Africa for reserve surgeons, anaesthetists and intensivists. His most recent projects were the establishment of an affordable pilot e-health system for the ADF and investigating personal digital assistants as an aid in the delivery of health care in the ADF.

In October 2004 Commodore Shirtley became the first Reserve officer to undertake the Capstone program, a one-week live-in staff acquaint course for one-star officers.

On 09 May 2005 Graeme was promoted to Rear Admiral and appointed Surgeon General. During his tenure, Admiral Shirtley was the Chairman of the Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee. He has been an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Queensland in the Centre for Military and Veterans Health (CMVH) since January 2006, and is Chairman of the CMVH e-Health Committee. He also continued to conduct courses in ultrasound for trauma surgeons as part of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons teaching program.

On 04 July 2008, with the restructure of the senior ADF health leadership, Admiral Shirtley was appointed Surgeon General Defence Health Reserves, finishing up in that position on 31 December 2008. He is continuing his active work with the Reserves, soon to visit Bethesda Naval Medical Centre in Washington in a teaching rôle.

Graeme is married with three adult children. His sporting interests include golf, tennis, windsurfing and sailing. He is a member of the Concord Golf Club and the Ashfield RSL. In his spare time he is completing a Masters in Legal Medicine at Griffith University.

Graeme Shirtley is the first naval medical officer to become Surgeon General Australian Defence Force since that position was established in the early 1980's, the first to achieve the rank of Rear Admiral as a Reservist, and the first to achieve the rank of Rear Admiral since Geoff Bayliss (DGNHS 1987-1990).

During Graeme's time as Patron of AMMA, he strongly supported its activities, including the second AMMA/Defence Health Services conference in 2006 and the establishment of *The Journal of Military and Veterans' Health*, in addition to presenting papers at each of the last four conferences.

Graeme was proud to be Patron of the Association, and he is also proud to be Patron of the Navy Reserve Association, an honour formerly reserved for seaman officers. He can be justly proud also of his long, distinguished and continuing naval, military and clinical career.