President’s Address to 5th AMMA Conference

Nader Abou-Seif

I would like to welcome you all to the 5th National Conference of the Australian Military Medicine Association.

The skills and lessons of the broader disciplines of military medicine have been seen on our own shores this year in dealing with the tragedies of Port Arthur and the Blackhawk accident. We have also seen our members involved in theatres of conflict such as the Gulf, peace keeping efforts such as Rwanda, and in providing humanitarian aid to the South Pacific.

Our Association was founded at a time when many of the facets of military medicine have had a higher profile that at any time since the time of the Vietnam War and Cyclone Tracy.

AMMA has provided a forum to discuss, learn and exchange experiences in a spirit of fellowship among the wider health community than has previously been possible.

Our membership covers many of the disciplines of military medicine, including those often in the background of health operations, whose contribution is often unfortunately overlooked. No operation could succeed without those who ensure the fitness of the participants, without those plan and prepare for such activities or without those who ensure adequate safety and hygiene. A well prepared organisation which can operate in an environment which allows them to carry out their tasks without additional concerns of falling victim to disease or disaster is achievable only with the involvement of all these disciplines.

From a personal viewpoint, I have seen in our meetings a reflection of the quality of the human side of military medicine in Australia. We are a small nation operating within Budget constraints. This situation is unlikely to change in the near future. We have, however, always responded selflessly and effectively when asked.

It is appropriate now, during Legacy Week, to remember that all of our work, in whichever discipline and from whatever background we come, has a very human face. The soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians for whom we care rely on both our humanity and capabilities.

The year’s meeting promises to build on a growing tradition of excellence. The standard and variety of presentations in the past has always been of the highest quality and this year’s programme looks like being one of the best.

I welcome your attendance and participation both at this year’s meeting and in the continuing growth and development of AMMA.

Thank you