



## Media Release - 10 March 2016

### *New daughter joins the RSL family*

This Friday (March 11) sees the arrival of an addition to the RSL's South Australian family – one with a distinctly female emphasis. In a ceremony at Torrens Parade Ground, RSL management will launch its Women's Sub-branch.

**WHAT:** Launch of RSL Women's Sub-branch  
**WHEN:** 9.30am, Friday 11 March  
**WHERE:** Memorial Hall, Torrens Parade Ground, Victoria Drive, Adelaide  
**CONTACT:** Darren Adamson (RSL Adelaide): tel. 8100 7310; m. 0404 077 634

Announcing the initiative today, RSL (SA/NT) chief executive officer Julia Langrehr said: "The RSL is refocusing on the needs of all veterans – and this move is part of that process. It gives women an opportunity to raise issues that they regard as important." The RSL, she said, could then supply follow-up action at national level and through its liaison with government authorities.

Jennifer Dowling, of Two Wells, will become interim president until an election is held later this year. A nursing sister, she served in the RAAF for 24 years, attaining the rank of Squadron Leader and being deployed to Timor. Her husband, Gerry Dowling, also ex-RAAF, is a Vietnam veteran.

Her immediate family has a strong military tradition: both grandfathers fought at Gallipoli, her father was a radio operator in World War 1, and her mother served as a bombing range marker. The founding president herself recalls going to an air show in 1966, when she was 16, and asking about prospects of becoming a pilot. "That didn't go down well," Mrs Dowling says. "I was told to 'go away and do nursing, dearie, and then re-apply'." Now, through the new RSL sub-branch, she hopes to "develop advocacy, support networks, and advice mechanisms – all with a female emphasis".

One woman who did succeed in winning her wings, in a more enlightened era, is Major Genevieve Rueger – a veteran of the Australian Army's special operations and counter-terrorism helicopter squadron, now serving as a recruiting officer in Adelaide. She will be at the new sub-branch launch and hopes to guide its development subsequently as an office-holder.



Maj. Rueger is from an Adelaide Hills family. Attending Seymour College on a music scholarship, she found her ambitions changed dramatically the day that a rescue helicopter landed on the school oval. From that time on, she wanted to fly. Graduating as a military pilot in 2006, she has flown Black Hawk helicopters and seen active service in Afghanistan.

Her husband, Michael Rueger, is also an army officer; they have two young children. Although now on a ground posting, she maintains that fascination with flight. "I fly a little R44 helicopter now and then," Maj. Rueger says. This motivation, she says, is inspired by the Leonardo da Vinci maxim that: 'Once you have tasted flight, you will walk the Earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return.'

Mental Health Minister Leesa Vlahos welcomed the announcement, saying it is vital that the sacrifice of service women recognised.

"More and more women are sharing their experiences of active service and I'm really pleased the RSL, at a state and national level, are supporting them to do this.

"I'm pleased to support this new initiative and look forward to seeing it grow."

**FOOTNOTE:** The RSL will permit men to join the new sub-branch, but its deliberations will – by definition – be directed at matters identified as of particular significance to women.