



Dear Members

Acting President's Newsletter February 2019

Happy New Year to One and All!!! Here we are nearly mid-February and already it appears the year is moving quite quickly.

Beginning this year has once again see the State Branch and Board moving ahead at a fast pace. Our staff is limited with heavy workloads. This work may not be visible to all of you however, let me assure you, it is happening.

Our focus remains on our core pillars of Advocacy, Welfare, Mateship, Commemoration and Sustainability, whilst remedial work continues with compliance and the final stages of coming out of our Administration. This is also coupled with all the normal RSL functions that need to be sustained. Progress on all these fronts is being made however, not evident to all. Things may be slow in filtering down in a timeline that is suited to all and although we have the best intent, not all things can be carried out immediately.

Despite the challenges of the last 18 months, some good things are occurring and in most cases, a positive approach is being adopted by all in the organisation.

All Board Members have been out and about attending events and hopefully we can visit more Sub-Branches throughout 2019.

Australia Day Honours

We offer our sincere congratulations to the following current and former members of the RSL who were recognised on Australia Day. Letters of congratulations have been sent to all. You are all worthy recipients and your recognition not only enhances your image however, also that of the RSL.

- Mr Ronald Blood OAM
- Mr Howard Hendrick OAM
- Mr Geoffrey Hills OAM
- Mr Dinh Duy Ninh OAM

A letter of congratulations was also forwarded to Mr Viv Samuel MM on turning the magnificent milestone of 100 years on Australia Day.

Appointment of CEO

You are all aware now that Mr Kim Henshaw was appointed early last year as our State Branch CEO. Kim, although not a military veteran, is a veteran of the Corporate world. Since his appointment, he has hit the ground running and made some terrific inroads with our Governance and compliance with the ACNC. We have been very grateful for his efforts and his wise counsel. He has a never say die attitude and hits anything that comes his way with enthusiasm.



Annual Sub-Branch Conference

The 2019 Annual Sub-Branch Conference calendar for activities, in accordance with the Constitution, has been forwarded to Sub-Branches by the CEO. To reiterate, and to ensure there are no misunderstandings, they are:

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| • Date for Notice of State Branch Conference to be sent out | 8 th March |
| • Appointment of Returning Officer | 19 th March |
| • Call for nominations for vacant positions (Board and RC's) | 26 th March |
| • Closing date for nominations for vacant positions | 30 th April |
| • Ballot papers distributed (if required) | 17 th May |
| • Date for submission of details of proposed motions | 31 st May |
| • Date for agenda and papers to be distributed | 14 th June |
| • Voting closes | 21 st June |
| • Date for nomination of State Branch Delegates | 3 rd July |
| • Annual Sub-Branch Conference Date | 6 th July |

To be eligible to vote at the Annual Sub-Branch Conference, Sub-Branches are required to have their audited financial statements into the CEO in accordance with the Constitution. Those Sub-Branches eligible to vote are to also ensure that their Members representing are financial.

Avoca Hotel

You will all be aware and have read the media regarding hotels in South Australia taking a hard hit, some having to close their doors. While some hotels have fallen on hard times, the Avoca continues to trade. It hasn't been easy, however, the General Manager Ben and his wonderful team are working tirelessly to bring exciting events and happenings to the Hotel. Some work has been carried out to update and give the Hotel a bit of a facelift and a new menu is in place. Some Ex-Service Organisations continue to patronise the hotel with their Association gatherings on a regular basis. If you are in the area at any time, pay Ben and his crew a visit. RSL Members obtain a generous discount on meals and beverages.

Advocacy

Our Advocates right across the board continue to work tirelessly to meet the needs of our Veterans. The load is shared between too few however, training is in place for some more advocates and I trust when they have finished their formal training they will be out there in the space to relieve some of the workload of those currently carrying out this service.

Commemoration

Last year was a huge year for the RSL throughout Australia in the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Armistice, with just about everybody becoming involved in commemorating the event in some way. Our Armistice Breakfast attracted some sponsors and was well attended. For that, we sincerely thank the sponsors and all those who made the Breakfast the success it was. We had a huge gathering at the State War Memorial for the Commemoration Service with four Tiger Moth planes passing over the Cenotaph in formation, followed by a Cessna carrying tens of thousands of paper poppies, coloured red by schoolchildren. Many wreaths were placed by dignitaries present on the day.

Our ANZAC Commemorations Committee has been meeting and the planning for the ANZAC Day Commemorations is in train. Ian Smith and his team put in a fantastic effort with a great deal of hard work to ensure the day is commemorated as it should be, and they are commended for their efforts.

Governance

As I mentioned before the CEO has worked extremely hard with the ACNC to have our governance brought up to where it is expected. The ACNC has approved what we have achieved to date and has accepted our Strategic and Business Plans. We are still waiting on our Audited Financial Statements from 2016 and 2017 and our Annual Information Statement. The finances for those two years are with the Auditors and due to the lack of and misplaced documentation from the era, only qualified audited statements will be provided. Again, a mammoth task that the CEO has carried out to get this far.

The State Branch now has in place a Governance Package Framework that has been approved by our regulator, the ACNC. It is a comprehensive package and includes a Board/Committee Charter, a suite of policies and a series of registers. Implementation in your Sub-Branch will entail your committee members reading them in detail and formally adopting the package at a monthly meeting. The CEO has sent a Memorandum to all Sub-Branches advising what is required and requesting those who are not registered to contact him if they wish to take advantage of the initiative to enable him to prepare the package for you.

Deeds of Company Arrangement (DOCA's)

Although we have come out of Administration and all but a couple of creditors have been completely paid, we are still awaiting final payment from the Administrators. They have assured us that they will meet this within the next couple of weeks. This has been a very long and drawn out process and remains to be seen.

Constitution

Last year a rewrite of the RSL SA/NT State Branch Constitution, Model Rules and By-Laws were sent out to Sub-Branches for comment. I thank those Sub-Branches who forwarded in their comments. It was intended to conduct a Constitutional Forum to involve all Sub-Branches however, that has had to go on hold as in the meantime, the National Headquarters came out with the commencement of a draft of their revised Constitution. We are unable to proceed any further until National's is complete. We have not forgotten as our Constitution requires modification to bring it in line with up to date legislation.

Alice Springs RSL Sub-Branch

Alice Springs RSL Sub-Branch is still operating, although at present they do not have premises to operate from. Questions have been asked about all the memorabilia because some Sub-Branches would like to obtain pieces for their use and display. The memorabilia is in storage and any requests regarding this matter should be directed to the Alice Springs RSL Sub-Branch itself.

Darwin RSL Sub-Branch

You are all aware of the recent fire at the Darwin RSL Sub-Branch and Club. State Branch is working with them to try and get things resolved. The Northern Territory Government have given them a place to operate out of and at this point, it will take some time to have all the issues surrounding the incident to be sorted out.

RSL Art Union

The RSL Art Union Lottery operated by the QLD RSL State Branch still operates in this State and every other State. Actions are in train and our CEO is working with QLD to organise how SA can become a part of this lottery in our own right. These actions have slowed down once again, due to the DOCA's and funding that is required to progress it to SA's advantage.

Productivity Commission into Rehabilitation and Compensation

In early 2018 the then Treasurer commissioned the Productivity Commission to investigate the system of rehabilitation and compensation which supports all our service personnel past and present.

Its Draft Report was released on the 14th December 2018 where several recommendations were made that dramatically alter the focus and capacity of the current system that delivers rehabilitation and compensation support to those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation.

This Report was reviewed by eight of South Australian Ex-Service Organisation (ESO's). These ESO's included the RSL, the Vietnam Veterans Association, the Vietnam Federation, RAAF Association, Korea Veterans Association, Malaya/Borneo Veterans Association, National Servicemen's Association and the Military Brotherhood. This was a mammoth effort by these ESO's and gratifying to see that they all came together to for the very first time and worked throughout the Christmas period to present their Report to the first Hearing in Adelaide on 4th February.

Their submission recognised the admirable focus the Commission had on the 'lifetime wellbeing' of veterans and saw merit in the suggestion that the Joint Transition Command be created to better assist veterans when they separate from the Defence Forces. However, the combined ESO's have grave concerns about the nature and potential impact of other Commission recommendations in particular:

- The recommendation to abolish the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Loss of single Minister representation for the veteran community
- Transferring veteran policy development to the Department of Defence
- The review of Gold Card eligibility and a potential restructure of the Veterans Review Board.

Their Report was delivered by Bill Denny, Bill Hignet and Robert Barham Black. These three gentlemen articulated to the Commissioners all the concerns that were expressed in that submission and I thank and commend them and those who worked with them for their efforts.

ANZAC Ball

RSL SA/NT is delighted to announce the launch of the annual ANZAC Ball. This fundraising event will mark the beginning of a new era in fundraising for the RSL SA/NT.

The ANZAC Ball is a Black-Tie event and will offer a three-course dinner and beverages for 250 guests, prepared by some of Adelaide's finest chefs in the premium corporate venue of the Adelaide Town Hall Auditorium, followed by high-end entertainment to dance the night away on Friday 26th April.

The RSL SA/NT gala event is designed to remind modern day Australians of the service and sacrifice of generations of our service men and women. With the passing of time we share our experiences and knowledge to each generation, with the purpose to recognise our current Australian Defence Force and ex-service personnel.

Funds raised from this event will provide ongoing support for veterans and their families who find it difficult to cope and manage their day to day lives, through RSL SA/NT Advocacy and Welfare.

Tickets for this gala event may be purchased through Eventbrite.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the hard-working staff and volunteers at the State Branch. It hasn't been an easy road over the last 18 months, and they have all pitched in and stepped up to the mark to assist in any way. This goes without saying for all our Regional Coordinators and Sub-Branch Volunteers who put in many a long hour to keep what has been built up by our forebears going.

I also ask that we all continue to assist in restoring the image of the RSL. We have all done and continue to do many wonderful things. Now that our governance is in place and with continued hard work, we can all make a huge difference.

Cheryl Cates
Acting President
RSL SA/NT