



RSL

Returned & Services League of Australia
National Annual Report

2008



90th Anniversary of World War I Armistice



THE POPPY

On 11 November each year, Australians gather together to remember the sacrifice of those who served and died for their country during wars and conflict. This day was originally known as Armistice Day and marked the end of World War I, the 'war to end all wars'.

On and around 11 November, the Returned & Services League of Australia sells millions of red poppies to raise funds for its welfare work. Why a red poppy?

The red poppy, the Flanders poppy, was first described as the flower of remembrance by Colonel John McCrae, who was Professor of Medicine at McGill University of Canada before World War I. Colonel McCrae had served as a gunner in the Boer War, but went to France in World War I as a medical officer with the first Canadian contingent.

At the second battle of Ypres in 1915, when in charge of a small first-aid post, he wrote in pencil on a page torn from his dispatch book:

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' fields.



The verses were apparently sent anonymously to the English magazine, Punch, which published them under the title "In Flanders' Fields".

Front page:

Australian soldiers 'somewhere in France' - 25 February 1917

Inside front page:

Fundraising badge: Armistice Signed November 11 1918

(photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial)

Fundraising badge produced to celebrate the cessation of hostilities in 1918.

Such badges were sold in trams, buses, at railway stations and at rallies to raise money for the stated cause. This example is associated with the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 – a genuine cause for celebration.

(photo and text courtesy of the Australian War Memorial)

The significance of the Poppy.

2008 RSL National Annual Report

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National President's Report - 2008



It is a pleasure to be able to report to members and key stakeholders on some of the important activities of the League during 2008 from the National perspective.

Overview

2008 was the first full year of the incoming Labour Government elected in late 2007. The year has been dominated by a Government working through its Veterans' Affairs Policy Platform in a quite deliberate way while noting that this was a three year program. In our contributions and discussions with Government, we have ensured that we focus on where we can add substance to the intentions in the policy platform in the first instance. Pleasingly, our relationships with the new Government are already very strong.

The heart of the League is our Sub-Branches. It is gratifying to see that many Sub-Branches are now reaching their 90th Anniversary, particularly those borne out of the First World War. Our Sub-Branches provide a critical role in working with our communities and delivering direct support to veterans and widows in need. A good number of Sub-Branches have been particularly effective in recruiting younger members.

Commemoration

The most significant event in 2008 was the 90th Anniversary of the end of World War I. I had the privilege of participating in a commemorative mission to France in November 2008 and was invited to deliver the Commemorative Address at the Remembrance Day Service at the Australian Memorial at Villers Bretonneux. Clearly, Australians now have a renewed awareness of the tragedy of World War I: the loss of life on a massive scale and the impact on Australian families at that time. There is now a sense of balance in our focus between the Western Front engagements and that of the very significant initial assault at Gallipoli.

In late April, the 'Park of the Australian Soldier' in Beersheba, Israel was dedicated in a ceremony which involved Australia's Governor-General. The project was the initiative of the Pratt Foundation, and it was funded largely by them. The Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs provided advice

and support and conducted a Commemorative Mission of Servicemen having some direct linkage with the Light Horse Units which fought in that significant charge in October 1917. This event was regarded as Australia's major involvement in the 60th Anniversary of the Foundation of the State of Israel.

The Memorials Development Committee, a private 'not for profit' organisation established by a small group of largely ex-servicemen and women, progressed their proposal to establish in Canberra World War I and World War II Memorials to be located in the Rond Terraces off the southern end of Anzac Parade. Recognising that the Australian War Memorial represents and commemorates all conflicts in which Australians have been involved, it was seen as appropriate to explore memorials specifically to mark the huge losses in our major conflicts, World War I and World War II. The Memorials Development Committee developed a comprehensive Design Brief and conducted an International Design Competition. I was invited to Chair the Design Jury which arrived at a unanimous decision for the selected design. The challenge will be in establishing the funding base to allow this project to be brought to fruition.

The Government accepted the proposal to proclaim Battle for Australia Day, being the first Wednesday in September each year, so that Australians could properly reflect on the period in 1941 to 1943 when Australia was directly threatened with invasion. Further, the Government declared in response to representations, including from the RSL, that the Ballarat ex-POW Memorial would be a National POW Memorial. Some funding support was offered as part of that arrangement.

Our colleagues in New Zealand conducted 'Tribute 08' during 2008, the New Zealand equivalent of Australia's Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade of 1987. Tribute 08 was a substantial expression of both Government and community acceptance of the contribution of those who served in Vietnam and was part of the healing process for NZ Vietnam veterans. A number of Australian Vietnam veterans attended Tribute 08 and spoke positively of the activities at that time.

Against the background of debate about mining in the vicinity of the Kokoda Track, the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments developed and signed a Joint Understanding on the future of the Owen Stanley Ranges in PNG. Importantly, it has been the Australian Government's desire to support Papua New Guinea in seeking World

Heritage listing of this important area and the Joint Understanding is now the framework to do so. Of course, this is more about environmental and biodiversity issues than it is about its military significance but nonetheless, the military component will be appropriately preserved in this process. We had been consulted during the course of these developments and supported the Papua New Guinea Government's decision not to permit mining to be undertaken.

In March 2008, HMAS Sydney was found off the coast of Western Australia. This had been a long standing issue of quite some concern to the families of the 645 missing sailors from that naval tragedy. Appropriate commemorative services were subsequently conducted and well attended, and an enquiry was launched to endeavour to establish the background to the sinking of HMAS Sydney.

In May 08, the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral in Vietnam was commemorated. While not on the scale of the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan commemorated in 2006, this was still a significant event for those servicemen and women engaged in that particular operation.

Following some exploratory non-invasive testing of a suspected mass grave site at Fromelles in France, the Government, in conjunction with the British Government and the French Government, decided to conduct limited excavation of the site. Evidence has now been obtained that the site contains the remains of Australian and British Servicemen, many of whom have been missing in action since that time. The two governments have now decided to proceed to a full scale excavation and to re-inter the remains in an allocated site in the village of Fromelles being established as a Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery. While the League initially opposed extensive excavation once the presence of a mass grave was confirmed, it was considered by Government that the right thing to do on this occasion was to ensure that those remains were given an appropriate individual burial at a suitable site. The rationale was that the remains had been placed in a way that was hardly considered to be a final resting place. In the light of the Government's decision and broad public support for this move, the RSL accepted this outcome.

Veterans' Affairs

2008 marked the 90th Anniversary of the Repatriation Commission. This was a significant moment to recognise the considerable work undertaken by the Commission but also to appreciate the origins of this very important element of Government. We are grateful for the contribution made by the Repatriation Commission and its predecessors over the years.

The Nature of Service Review being conducted within Defence has continued to evolve, noting that their methodology for defining the nature of current operations has been broadly accepted. The Review Team under Brigadier Webster has wrestled with some of the legacy issues that have arisen during their deliberations. These include for example the status of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan, the status of the PMG Linesmen in Papua New Guinea in World War II, Submariners on Special Operations and the status of Operation Damask 6. It was particularly significant that in respect of BCOF, the Review obtained a copy of the Cabinet Decision of 1946 which is fundamental to the entitlement of members who served in BCOF until June 1947. We have progressed that issue in response to the Government's request for follow-on action on outstanding issues from the Clarke Review of 2002.

The Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters was finally convened late in the year, although at year's end there were very few outcomes from that Council. The RSL is determined to work with this entity on veterans' affairs issues while recognising that we retain our right to make direct individual representations to Government on any particular matters.

The Vietnam Veterans' Children's Health Study was launched during the year and up to 10,000 Vietnam veterans were invited to seek participation by their family members and siblings together with a representative sample of veterans of that era who had not served in Vietnam. At year's end the take up rate was below that required for an appropriate statistical sample. Notwithstanding, it was expected that the study would progress in 2009 and be the lead study of a number of others arising from the more substantial examination of intergenerational effects of service in the military.

A Parliamentary Inquiry was launched into the Management of the Deseal/Reseal Program in the RAAF. It was felt that there were some serious anomalies in this program and the Parliamentary Inquiry was determined to make recommendations to redress those inequities. At year's end the Inquiry had not reported because of the complexity of their investigation but we expect some positive outcomes early in 2009.

Mental Health remained a fundamental issue both within the Defence Force and the veteran community. In response to representations from the National Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum, a study into veterans suicide was undertaken by Professor David Dunt. The study concluded in late 2008 and it is expected that some fundamental recommendations will be made affecting not just the Departmental administrative arrangements, but importantly the way in which pension officers and advocates within the ex-

service organisations are managed, trained and accredited. This work was done in parallel with a proposal being advanced from the League to look for a more substantive accreditation program for our Pension and Welfare Officers and for seeking a better balance between paid and volunteer officers. The difficulty of encouraging an increased number of volunteers has been recognised and some action was required to ensure that those who practise in this field, in whatever capacity, are appropriately trained and can competently assist veterans needing help. This is perhaps one of the most fundamental issues arising from the Veterans' Suicide Study.

The Veterans' Affairs Budget offered enhanced funding for BEST and TIP. Importantly the Government made it clear that BEST funding should be provided primarily to areas where the 'heavy lifting' was being done. We have made the point on several occasions that it appears that too much of this funding has been dissipated to entities that are not actually delivering much support to veterans.

The Department continues to endure the 2% efficiency dividend imposed by the incoming Government as an inflation control measure. This is having some serious impacts on the ability of the Department to meet our claims processing expectations and in other administrative areas. The Government has been placed on notice that claims processing in particular, remains an outstanding concern.

While the Report of the Review into Military Superannuation was released by the incoming Government in 2007, throughout 2008 no decisions had been made on that report. The circumstances were compounded by the Government instituting yet another Review of Indexation of Commonwealth Superannuation payments, including military superannuation, and a separate review of Commonwealth Pensions. The layering of 'review on review' appears to be used as an excuse not to make a decision on any of the individual reports sought and presented to Government. The League, in conjunction with other ex-service organisations, has made strenuous representations about the failure to address the issue of indexation of military superannuation, but at year's end the Government remained unmoved.

The Repatriation Medical Authority conducted a highly successful Forum during the year. The Forum is part of an on-going engagement program by the Authority and gave great confidence that the Authority was very much focussed on the emerging needs of the veteran community and those relying upon Statements of Principle for claims processing. For many attending the Forum it was a particularly enlightening experience to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the Authority.

One of the major concerns arising from the otherwise unspectacular Veterans' Affairs Budget in 2008 were the decisions relating to the Partner's Service Pension. These removed some of the entitlements to the Partner's Service Pension by raising the age from 50 to 58.5 years for access to the pension and to discontinue the availability of the pension for those separated or divorced for a period of 12 months or more. The League accepted the rationale for such a reduction in veteran entitlement but argued successfully to ensure that people who were separated as a result of the medical condition of a veteran should have their Service Pension retained in recognition of the disadvantage experienced. A subsequent Senate Inquiry into the legislation accepted that point and the Government agreed with the recommendation of the Senate Inquiry. We were pleased that this outcome made sure that those who were likely to suffer the greatest from the decisions on the Partner Service Pension were adequately protected.

Defence

The League was particularly pleased that the Prime Minister used his address at the National Congress Dinner in September to make a major policy statement on Australia's Defence Force structure. This created significant debate noting that the Defence White Paper was in the process of being formulated at that time. It did not escape attention that the Prime Minister recognised the importance of the subject to members of the League. There continues to be a feeling in some quarters that the League is not interested in Defence. This address and its reception put paid to that notion. The League indeed remains critically concerned about all aspects of our current serving men and women and our operational deployments, and our National Defence Committee and National Conditions of Service Committee monitor these issues very closely and make appropriate recommendations and representations accordingly.

We have been particularly engaged during 2008 in developing an approach to facilitate the transition to civilian life of those who are leaving the Service. This transition process has not been particularly well undertaken in the past, and many issues in the veteran community have their origins in the failure to properly separate from the Service. The Chief of the Defence Force has accepted the RSL's role as the co-ordinating ex-service organisation for this activity and we trust that in time we will provide an effective support service to servicemen and women leaving the Service who look beyond the Defence Department and Department of Veterans' Affairs for advice and support.

With great regret, Defence, at short notice, discontinued our planned overseas Cadet of the

Year Tour in 2008. The explanation given was that it was felt that the protocols were not in place to properly ensure the care and welfare of young people, even though Defence had taken over responsibility for these particular tours. As a consequence, the formal RSL ADF Cadet of the Year Program has been suspended, but our State Branches are now working directly with State based ADF Cadet Organisations to provide incentives for cadets who excel.

At both National and State level, the League continues to be engaged with the Defence Reserves Support Council. It is pleasing to see that these activities are placing greater emphasis on the important contribution made by Reserve Forces to Australia's Defence capability and most noteworthy in recent times, the increased number of Reservists who have been deployed on operations. In almost all cases, such Reservists have acquitted themselves exceptionally well. We have been pleased that the conditions now available to support Reservists released from civilian employment have been further developed and provide appropriate safeguards and financial recompense to employers.

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal was established during 2008, one of the incoming Government's policy proposals. This Tribunal endeavours to provide a non-political response to the many current and outstanding issues related to medallic recognition and has a full agenda. Submissions are invited on each of the individual issues the Tribunal is addressing, and the League will continue to make submissions where there is a standing policy position related to that issue.

The League continues to strongly support the Australian Defence Force men and women deployed on operations. We deeply regret the incidents of death and casualties arising from these deployments while noting the severity of the conditions under which our Forces operate. The League is occasionally invited to make comments about such operations and we value the separate advice given to us by senior Defence officials and the Service leadership which allows us to be better informed to respond to such media inquiry. Through such mechanisms we are able to directly support the Defence leadership position where such is warranted and contain any misinformation in the public arena. The League must separately consider its position in relation to the nature of deployments and to determine and offer advice to Government about whether we think such deployments are warranted or otherwise. At year's end, the issue of our engagement in Afghanistan remained a critical one. While the League supports the objectives in Afghanistan, we remain concerned at whether the strategy involved in the Afghanistan operation will meet with appropriate success in a reasonable period of time.

The League

Our National Congress in 2008 was conducted in Townsville. This move away from a capital city was the initiative of the Queensland State Branch and offered us a valuable opportunity to engage directly with a community where there is a high ADF presence. Congress Delegates also had the opportunity to visit 3rd Brigade at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville and gain a deeper understanding of the current thoughts of serving members of the Australian Defence Force. The Congress opening session was attended by the then Leader of the Opposition, and our Congress dinner was addressed by the Prime Minister. This political representation continued to reinforce our position within the Australian Parliament as an Ex-Service Organisation of substance.

The League awarded the 2008 ANZAC Peace Prize to Scouts Australia. 2008 was the 100th Anniversary of Scouting in Australia, and because of the significant contribution which Scouting has made to international understanding amongst young people, it was considered that this was an appropriate way for the League to pay its tribute to the work of the Scout Organisation in its Centenary. The award was warmly received by Scouts Australia and cemented an on-going relationship between our two organisations. We both have fundamental interests in ensuring that the youth of Australia understands its role and responsibilities as young citizens, and that the leadership abilities of young Australians are further enhanced.

The League's relationship with other ex-service organisations continues to improve. While there may be some individuals on the margins of the veteran community who continue to have issues with the League, we will continue to work effectively on major issues with all mainstream national ex-service organisations and our State Branches have further enhanced their Kindred Organisation Committees or ex-service forums for the common good. We have worked particularly closely with the Defence Force Welfare Association in respect of military superannuation issues in recognition of that organisation's expertise in that area.

Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League

The Triennial Conference of the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League was conducted in mid 2008 in Accra in Ghana. The National President and the National Secretary attended on behalf of the RSL as a founding member nation. This conference had been located in Ghana to reduce the cost on the League collectively and to ensure that as many member nations as possible were able to attend.

The conference was attended by the Grand President of the RCEL, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, who engaged actively with all concerned.

The Australian War Memorial

The major event in 2008 was the opening in February by the Prime Minister of the new galleries recording details of 'Conflicts 1945 to Today'. This opening followed an extensive period of consultation with stakeholders, exhibition preview, and modification. The galleries represent 'state of the art' practice and provide a balanced record of Australia's defence engagement over the period since WWII. They have been well-received and extensively visited.

My role as a member of the Council continues to be a most rewarding experience, and offers the opportunity for direct ESO engagement in the Council's deliberations.

Challenges

The League will continue to retain its pre-eminent position, and achieve resolution of its priority issues, if we can work closely within the framework of the Government's Veterans' Affairs Policy Platform. This platform offers substantial scope for resolution of some long-standing issues and anomalies.

Our engagement with the men and women of the Australian Defence Forces is critical. We have a splendid opportunity to facilitate effective separation from service through our direct

engagement in the Integrated People Support Strategy, backing up our on-going local co-operation between Sub-Branched and proximate ADF units. The League's membership will probably decline gradually as our veteran population contracts. This is not a matter for alarm and consternation. But it heightens our need to refine our membership value proposition and provide substance to it, so that the RSL remains the ESO of choice. Such approaches are not in contravention of our need for co-operative engagement with all other recognised ESOs. Indeed there is evidence of an increasing willingness for ESOs to work more co-operatively, and we are expected to retain a leadership role.

Conclusion

2008 has seen the League readily accepted by the incoming Government as a responsible and effective ESO. This directly reflects the incredible efforts of our many active members and office-bearers across Australia. For your continuing contribution in support of our objectives, I again record formally my heartfelt thanks. I add a special word of appreciation to the partners and families of our members for their substantial contributions, commitment and moral support. Finally, we remain indebted to the Secretary and members of the Department of Veterans' Affairs who continue to work assiduously in support of the interests of the veteran community.

BILL CREWS
National President

National Congress - 2008

The 93rd Annual National Congress of the Returned & Services League of Australia was officially opened by The Hon Allan Griffin MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, representing the Prime Minister. The Official Opening was held at the Townsville Civic Theatre.

The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, then Leader of the Opposition, also spoke during the Opening Ceremony.

Mr Ian Langford-Brown, representing Scouts Australia, was presented with the ANZAC Peace Prize by Minister Griffin. Scouts Australia was awarded this prestigious prize for their significant contribution to international goodwill and understanding, and to world peace.



Presentation of the ANZAC Peace Prize to Ian Langford-Brown by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon Alan Griffin MP.

The National President, in his Report to Congress, spoke on the many challenges facing the League in the future; including aged care, mental health issues, and support and assistance for serving and recently discharged servicemen and women. He also spoke on the importance of RSL Sub-Branch volunteers.

A wreath laying ceremony was held in ANZAC Park on The Strand, and the business sessions of the Congress were held in the Townsville RSL in Hermit Park.

During the Congress, the following national officers were returned:

National President:

Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd)

Deputy National President:

Mr Don Rowe OAM

National Treasurer:

Mr David Sinclair

Overseas Guests attending the Congress were:

- Mr John Farmer
National Vice Chairman, Royal British Legion
- LTGEN (Ret) H B L Mantiri
Vice President, Legion Veteran Republik Indonesia
- AVM Robin Klitscher CBE DFC AFC (Retd)
National President, Royal New Zealand Returned & Services Association
- Mr Gary Walker
Auckland District President, Royal New Zealand Returned & Services Association

Motions

108 Motions were tabled and debated, covering the following topics:

- Veterans' Affairs Matters
- Social Security and Tax
- Defence Services Homes
- The League
- ANZAC, Commemoration, Ceremonial and Memorials
- Defence and Foreign Affairs
- Conditions of Service
- Aged Care in the Veteran Community
- Constitution

Messages

Messages for a successful congress were received from the following overseas ex-service organisations:

- Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League
- The Royal British Legion
- The American Legion
- South African Legion of Military Veterans
- Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China, Taiwan
- Royal Canadian Legion
- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Functions

A Mayoral Reception, hosted by the Mayor of Townsville, Cr Les Tyrrell, was held during the Congress for RSL National Executive and Delegates.

The National Congress Dinner was held at the Townsville RSL, Hermit Park where the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP took the opportunity to speak to the Congress delegates, observers and others attending the Dinner.

The general arrangements for the conduct of the National Congress are regularly organised by the National Headquarters staff in Canberra, but any successful Congress could not be achieved without the direct assistance of the host State and in this case, the Townsville RSL Sub-Branch and Club. Our sincere thanks go to all involved. Their efforts were very much appreciated.



The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Prime Minister of Australia, addresses delegates, observers and guests at the National Congress Dinner

2009 National Congress

This Congress resolved that the 2009 National Congress would be held in Adelaide, South Australia.

National Secretary's Report - 2008



The National Headquarters has persevered under some particularly trying conditions for the past few years. Initially, it was the physical poor state of the building and lately it has been due to the uncertainty of the move to allow for the building's redevelopment.

Planning for the redevelopment of the building has progressed well, albeit slowly. Funding issues between the Federal Government, the National Capitol Authority and the ACT Government, and particularly who should be responsible for funding of the main roads in the vicinity of the Headquarters building, have meant that the duplication of Constitution Avenue is now not even in the forward estimates. The Headquarters' Project Development Team has now had to re-justify how the traffic management in the general precinct might be achieved before the building has been allowed to proceed. The Plans for the building itself have already been approved and the developer has taken steps so that access to money will be made available for the project once a majority building tenant has been identified. The development will also require that separate planning approvals will be needed to upgrade the adjacent RSL Park and the realignment of Blamey Crescent. It is still intended that construction will take two years and the Headquarters' team will be accommodated in nearby office facilities during that period.



Artist's impression of the new RSL Headquarters.

In the end, the RSL will have possession of its own Headquarters built to an A Grade level and 5 Green Star outcome, with a separate entrance to the RSL-specific portion of the building. The remainder of this highly aesthetic landmark building will feature an active commercial frontage on the ground floor with large floor plates

for flexible commercial space and office accommodation. In this important address, nestled between Defence and the Parliament, the building has clearly been designed to suit a major Government Department or associated industry and it will be separately owned.

With the possibility of having to move at relatively short notice, the Headquarters staff has already packed up large quantities of records and this has caused us considerable difficulty at times when we need access to reference material. Throughout this process, the performance of the staff has been nothing short of amazing and particularly so when they still put up with the regular maintenance issues and the uncertainty of broadband and domestic services due to the state of the supply lines to the building. If ever a building can be considered to have reached its use-by-date, this one has.

The overall administration within the Headquarters is progressing well. The file management system is again under review and it is hoped that this will be finalised well before our move. The importance of capturing all of our corporate information into a single easily understood system is our clear priority if we are to retain our effectiveness in this area. There have been some changes to staff during the period caused by two retirements and our well performed Research Officer being elected to the State's legislature. The staff changes have allowed us to broaden our scope, enhance our effectiveness and ensure that we remain receptive to the ongoing requests for more information on our heritage and military history from students and the younger in our society and of course, our newer generation of member. The website is under constant review to ensure that it is relevant and it has provided us with the ability to quickly pass on a message and keep the veteran and broader community up-to-date.

The Headquarters hosted the regular meetings of the National Executive in March, June and November, while the September National Executive meeting was held in conjunction with the National Congress activities in Townsville. The business of the National Executive is conducted constructively with the intent that all areas of League activity are regularly reviewed and our available resources are best utilised. The Directors themselves have met separately to plan this activity and this has ensured that the important business is always at the forefront. This approach, along with regular planned meetings with our political leaders, ensures that we are as current as

practicable. The National Congress, which was held in and around the Townsville RSL premises, was the first real attempt the League has made to take the Congress to a Regional centre.

The Congress was very successful indeed and the Executive is hopeful of repeating the concept in two years time as the importance of the League hierarchy being in direct contact with its members is well noted and understood.

The support given to the National Executive by the National Advisory Committees for Veterans' Affairs, Defence, Youth Heritage and Citizenship and Defence Conditions of Service, along with the work undertaken by the National Tribunal, ANZAC Awards and National Finance Committees, National Marketing and Merchandise, the National Membership Forum, and the Aged Care Forum has been invaluable and has ensured that the Executive has the best available knowledge on which to base its decision making. The majority of these Committees are staffed in a voluntary capacity and the contribution made by so many very well respected and qualified members has been very much appreciated. The RSL National Annual Reception, held in conjunction with the November National Executive meeting, offered us

the opportunity to acknowledge and thank all of these Committee members for their considerable contribution, and also to similarly acknowledge many others in our community who have contributed to the business of the League during the year.

The Headquarters hosted several delegations from Australian and international ex-service bodies and was involved in the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League Conference during July in Accra, Ghana. Our ongoing association with all of these bodies is important and gives us all the opportunity to work for the common good and in the most appropriate way depending on how we are each resourced. Additionally, we are always ready to assist any related group through the provision of meeting places or the sharing of knowledge.

The Headquarters has achieved much during the year and similarly looks forward to servicing the needs of the League and its members in the coming year.

DEREK J ROBSON
National Secretary

National Treasurer's Report - 2008

The following Financial Report is the audited financial statements for the National Headquarters of the League for the year ended 30 June 2008.

The net result of the year's operations on an accrual basis was a surplus of \$68,381 compared with a surplus of \$149,018 for the previous year. This result was contributed to by movements in a number of income and expenditure headings, but particularly in expenses, which increased in total by \$98,577. The most noticeable movement on the income side was an increase in UNIBIC commissions due to a significant closing of the lag in receipts, largely offset by reductions in donations received in the financial year.

On the expenditure side, salaries and superannuation, together with provisions for long service leave and annual leave comprised 54% of total expenses, reflecting the higher level of Headquarters' activity and output. The net result benefitted from the delays occurring in the redevelopment of the Headquarters' site and, as a consequence, the transference of budgeted relocation cost expense to a later year.

Capitation fees, the main source of income for the National Headquarters, increased marginally by 3.7% or \$14,835, reflecting the increasing financial relevance of Affiliates as Service memberships decline in number. The Headquarters' budget continues to be heavily reliant on the good will of State Branches for their generous additional contributions, a situation that can only be addressed by development of an independent income generation capacity for the Headquarters.

There were no changes to the financial policies of the Headquarters during the period.

The notes to the audited statements also show the balances of the various Trust Funds managed by the National Trustees.

Finally, I would like to record my grateful appreciation to the Headquarters' staff, particularly Derek Robson and to our auditor, Kim Hanna, whose assistance, guidance and support make my own involvement a pleasure.

DAVID SINCLAIR
National Treasurer

HOUSTON & HANNA

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INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED

Scope

The financial report and directors' responsibility

The financial report comprises the statement of financial position, statement of financial performance, statement of cash flows, accompanying notes to the financial statements, and the directors' declaration for the Returned & Services League of Australia Limited, for the financial year ended 30 June 2009.

The directors of the company are responsible for the preparation and true and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001. This includes responsibility for the maintenance of adequate accounting records and internal controls that are designed to prevent and detect fraud and error, and for the accounting policies and accounting estimates inherent in the financial report.

Audit approach

I have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members of the company. My audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free of material misstatement. The nature of an audit is influenced by factors such as the use of professional judgement, selective testing, the inherent limitations of internal controls, and the availability of persuasive rather than conclusive evidence. Therefore, an audit cannot guarantee that all material misstatements have been detected.

I performed procedures to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001 and Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the company's financial position, and performance as represented by the results of its operations and its cash flows.

My procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates made by the directors.

While I considered the effectiveness of management's internal controls over financial reporting when determining the nature and extent of our procedures, our audit was not designed to provide assurance on internal controls.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Independence

In conducting my audit, I followed applicable independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements and the Corporations Act 2001.

In accordance with ASIC Class Order 05/83, I declare to the best of our knowledge and belief that the auditor's independence declaration set out on page 17 of the financial report has not changed as at the date of providing my audit report.

Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the financial report of the Returned & Services League of Australia Limited is in accordance with:

- (a) the Corporations Act 2001, including:
 - (i) giving a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2008 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
 - (ii) complying with Accounting Standards in Australia and the Corporations Regulations 2001; and
- (b) other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

.....
Kim D. Hanna
Registered Company Auditor

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The National Executive of The Returned & Services League ("RSL") of Australia Limited, submit herewith the annual financial report for the financial year ended 30 June 2008. In order to comply with the provisions of the Corporations Act 2001, the directors report as follows:

The names and particulars of the directors of the Company during or since the end of the financial year are:

NAME	EXPERIENCE	MEETINGS HELD	ATTENDED
W E Gaynor OAM RFD	Member National Executive - 6 years, 11 months	4	3
DJ McLachlan AO JP	Member National Executive - 6 years, 1 month	4	4
W J Crews AO	Member National Executive - 4 years, 9 months	4	4
D E J Rowe OAM	Member National Executive - 4 years, 7 months	4	3
G I Brodie OAM	Member National Executive - 4 years, 2 months	4	4
J H Stallton OAM	Member National Executive - 4 years	4	4
A J Scott OAM	Member National Executive - 2 years ,1 month	4	4
D A Formby	Member National Executive - 2 years ,1 month	4	3
J J Merrick	Member National Executive - 1 month	0	0

The following changes of Directors occurred during the financial year:

Nil

The RSL is a company established in Canberra to conduct the operations of the National Headquarters of the League.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The Principal activities of the National Headquarters during the course of the year were:

- (i) the continued care and welfare of ex-service personnel;
- (ii) representing the views and opinions of its members to governments, to the public generally and to organisations with interests similar to those of the RSL;
- (iii) the provision of representation before statutory Boards and Tribunals;
- (iv) the liaison with overseas ex-service organisation; and
- (v) overseeing the conditions of service of serving personnel in the Australian Defence Force.

During the year there was no significant change in the nature of those activities.

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS

The net amount of surplus(loss) of the National Headquarters for the year was \$ 68,381 (2007: \$149,019).

DIVIDENDS

In accordance with the Constitution, the National Headquarters is a company limited by guarantee and accordingly no shares or debentures have been issued and no dividends have been recommended or paid.

CHANGES IN STATE OF AFFAIRS

During the financial year there was no significant change in the state of affairs of the National Headquarters, other than those referred to in the accounts or notes thereto.

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

There has not been any matter or circumstance, other than referred to in the accounts or notes thereto, that has arisen since the end of the financial year that has significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the National Headquarters, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the National Headquarters in financial years subsequent to this financial year.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

No significant future developments which may affect the operations or results of the National Headquarters, are envisaged.

INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS AND AUDITORS

During the financial year, the RSL paid a premium in respect of a contract insuring the directors of the company against a liability incurred as such a director to the extent permitted by the Corporations Act 2001. The contract of insurance prohibits disclosure of the nature of the liability and the amount of the premium.

The RSL has not otherwise, during or since the financial year, indemnified or agreed to indemnify an officer or auditor of the company or of any related body corporate against a liability incurred as such an officer or auditor.

AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

A copy of the Auditor's independence declaration as required under section 307C of the Corporations Act 2001 is attached to this report

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Directors

Director _____ Director

Date:
 Canberra, ACT

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

2007 \$	Notes	2008 \$
861,625	3a	879,564
86,193	Administration expenses	114,405
361,112	Employee benefits expense	435,767
25,796	Occupancy expenses	36,019
510	Borrowing costs	-
30,362	Depreciation	29,681
39,939	Meeting and conference expenses	24,796
21,211	Insurance costs	19,507
5,140	Accounting and auditing fees	9,445
9,591	Commissions - to States for UNIBIC sales	27,323
130,752	Other expenses from ordinary activities	114,240
712,606	Total Expenses	811,183
149,019	(Loss)Profit from ordinary activities before income tax	66,381
-	Income tax expense relating to ordinary activities	-
149,019	Total changes in equity other than those resulting from transactions with owners as owners	66,381

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 JUNE 2008

2007 \$	Notes	2008 \$
356,626	4	329,376
10,215	5	74,923
-	6	18,059
21,475	7	24,561
162,342		355,161
550,658		802,080
843,674	8	828,042
843,674		828,042
1,394,332		1,630,122
42,518	9	23,244
87,360	10	113,587
-		150,000
129,878		286,831
-		10,456
-		10,456
129,878		297,287
1,264,454		1,332,835
1,264,454	13	1,332,835
1,264,454		1,332,835

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

2007	Notes	2008
\$		\$
Cash Flows From Operating Activities		
857,509	Receipts from customers	1,002,963
(650,717)	Payments to employees and suppliers	(842,160)
4,116	Interest received	25,228
(510)	Interest paid	
<u>210,398</u>	Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	<u>186,031</u>
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
(34,038)	Payments for property, vehicle & equipment	(35,326)
18,250	Proceeds from sale of vehicle, plant & equipment	14,864
<u>(15,788)</u>	Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(20,462)</u>
Cash Flows from Financing Activities		
(48,000)	Repayments of borrowings	-
<u>(48,000)</u>	Net cash used in financing activities	<u>-</u>
146,610	Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash Held	165,569
<u>372,358</u>	Cash At The Beginning Of The Financial Year	<u>518,968</u>
<u>518,968</u>	Cash At The End Of The Financial Year	<u>684,537</u>

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

NOTE 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

The financial report is a general purpose financial report which has been prepared in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001, Accounting Standards and Urgent Issues Group Consensus Views, and complies with other requirements of the law.

The financial report covers The Returned & Services League of Australia Limited as an individual entity. The Returned & Services League of Australia is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated and domiciled in Australia.

The financial report of the Company complies with all Australian equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards (AIFRS) in their entirety.

The following is a summary of the material accounting policies adopted by the economic entity in the preparation of the financial report. The accounting policies have been consistently applied, unless otherwise stated.

Basis of Preparation

Reporting Basis and Conventions

The financial report has been prepared on an accruals basis and is based on historical costs modified by the revaluation of selected non-current assets, and financial assets and financial liabilities for which the fair value basis of accounting has been applied.

Accounting Policies

a. Income tax

No provision has been made for income tax as the Company is exempt from taxation under Section 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

b. Inventories

Inventories are valued at the lower of cost and current replacement cost in accordance with *Aus9.1 of AASB 102: Inventories* as the Company is a not-for-profit entity. Costs are assigned to inventory on hand based on the first in first out method.

c. Property, Plant and Equipment

Each class of property, plant and equipment is carried at cost or fair value less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation and impairment losses.

Where an asset is acquired at no cost, the cost is its fair value as at the date of acquisition

The carrying amount of the assets is reviewed annually by directors to ensure it is not in excess of the recoverable amount from these assets. The recoverable amount is assessed on the basis of the expected net cash flows that will be received from the assets employment and subsequent disposal. The expected net cash flows is discounted to their present values in determining recoverable amounts.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

Depreciation

The depreciable amount of all fixed assets is depreciated on a diminishing value basis over its useful lives to the Company commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

The estimated useful lives used for each class are:

Class of Fixed Asset	Useful Lives
Buildings	77 years
Plant and Equipment	5-13 years

d.

Leases

Leases of fixed assets where substantially all the risks and benefits incidental to the ownership of the asset, but not the legal ownership that are transferred to the Company is classified as finance leases.

Finance leases are capitalised by recording an asset and a liability at the lower of the amounts equal to the fair value of the leased property or the present value of the minimum lease payments, including any guaranteed residual values. Lease payments are allocated between the reduction of the lease liability and the lease interest expense for the period.

Leased assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives where it is likely that the Company will obtain ownership of the asset or over the term of the lease.

Lease payments for operating leases, where substantially all the risks and benefits remain with the lessor, are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

Lease incentives under operating leases are recognised as a liability and amortised on a straight-line basis over the life of the lease term.

e. Financial instruments

Recognition

Financial instruments are initially measured at cost on trade date, which includes transaction costs, when the related contractual rights or obligations exist. Subsequent to initial recognition these instruments are measured as set out below and details have been disclosed in Note 18 to this report.

Financial assets at fair value through profit and loss

A financial asset is classified in this category if acquired principally for the purpose of selling in the short term or if so designated by management. Derivatives are also categorised as held for trading unless they are designated as hedges. Realised and unrealised gains and losses arising from changes in the fair value of these assets are included in the income statement in the period in which they arise.

Loans and receivables

Loans and receivables are non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market and are stated at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

Held-to-maturity investments

These investments have fixed maturities, and it is the group's intention to hold these investments to maturity. Any held-to-maturity investments held by the group are stated at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

Available-for-sale financial assets

Available-for-sale financial assets include any financial assets not included in the above categories. Available-for-sale financial assets are reflected at fair value. Unrealised gains and losses arising from changes in fair value are taken directly to equity.

Financial liabilities

Non-derivative financial liabilities are recognised at amortised cost, comprising original debt less principal payments and amortisation.

Derivative instruments

Derivative instruments are measured at fair value. Gains and losses arising from changes in fair value are taken to the income statement unless they are designated as hedges.

Impairment

At each reporting date, the Company assesses whether there is objective evidence that a financial instrument has been impaired. In the case of available-for-sale financial instruments, a prolonged decline in the value of the instrument is considered to determine whether an impairment has arisen. Impairment losses are recognised in the income statement.

f. Impairment of Assets.

At each reporting date, the Company reviews the carrying values of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying value. Any excess of the asset's carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the income statement.

Where it is not possible to estimate the recoverable amount of an individual asset, the group estimates the recoverable amount of the cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs.

g. Employee Benefits

Provision is made for the Company's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to balance date. Employee benefits that are expected to be settled within one year have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled, plus related on-costs. Employee benefits payable later than one

Year have been measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made for those benefits.

h. Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Company has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured.

i. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities on the balance sheet.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

Cash flows are included in the statement of cash flows on a gross basis. The GST component of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities which is recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is classified as operating cash flows.

m. **Comparative Figures**
When required by accounting Standards, comparative figures have been adjusted to conform to changes in presentation for the current financial year.

j. **Revenue**

Capitations

RSL has an ongoing agreement with the State Chapters in regard to Capitation Revenue. Revenue is recognised on notification from the States as to the number of new memberships, or membership renewals, for a financial period.

Government Grants

Government grants are recognised as income on a systematic and rational basis over the periods necessary to match them with the related costs.

Commissions and Donations

Commissions and donations revenues are recognised when they are received.

Sale of Goods and Disposal of Assets

Revenue from the sale of goods and disposal of other assets is recognised when the entity has passed control of the goods or other assets to the buyer.

Interest revenue

Interest is recognised on an accrual basis.

k. **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amounts of goods and services tax (GST), except:

- where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the taxation authority, it is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of an asset or as part of an item of expense, or
- for receivables and payables which are recognised inclusive of GST.

The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included as part of receivables or payables.

l. **Trust Funds**

The financial transactions of the Company are recorded in thirteen separate funds, each being represented by separate net assets and shown either in the balance sheet or notes to the financial statements as follows:

- General Fund (Statement of Financial Performance – Cash)
- Special Funds
- Jubilee Commemorative Fund

NOTE 2: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

On transition to AIFRS, there are no adjustments to equity or profit or loss between previous Australian GAAP and AIFRS.

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

2007 \$	NOTE	2008 \$
	3	
	PROFIT FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	
	Profit from ordinary activities before income tax includes the following items of revenue and expenses	
	(a)	
400,040	Operating revenue	414,875
107,471	Capitation fees	292,466
40,589	Commission - UNIBIC	40,000
265,067	Grants	63,588
27,031	Donations	20,457
4,116	Royalties	25,228
17,311	Interest	22,951
	Other revenue from ordinary activities	879,564
861,625		
	(b)	
	Expenses	
	Depreciation of Non Current Assets:	
11,129	Buildings	10,615
10,560	Equipment, furniture and fixtures	14,579
7,603	Motor vehicles	3,463
870	Computer hardware and software	2,445
200	Library, plaques & RSL march	355
30,362		31,457
	Net transfers to/(from) provisions:	
2,896	Employee entitlements	13,097
10,285	Annual leave	23,586
13,151	Long service leave	36,682
	Borrowing Costs:	
510	Interest - Loans	-
12,527	Operating lease rental expenses	16,911
	Government Grant - Contributions towards:	
3,000	- National Executive	3,000
6,000	- National Congress	6,000
13,000	- National President's Expenses	13,000
12,000	- National Headquarters Travel	12,000
6,000	- Community Consultation	6,000
40,000		40,000

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

2007 \$	NOTE	2008 \$
	4	
	CASH ASSETS	
500	Cash on hand	500
356,126	Cash at bank	328,876
356,626		329,376
	5	
	CURRENT RECEIVABLES	
1,981	Trade receivables	28,582
8,234	GST receivable/sundry debtors	46,341
10,215		74,923
	6	
	OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	
-	Prepayments	18,059
	7	
	INVESTMENTS	
162,342	Current	355,161
	Term deposit	

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

NOTE 8	PROPERTY PLANT AND EQUIPMENT						TOTAL
	Buildings at cost	Equipment, Furniture & Fixtures at cost	Motor Vehicles at cost	Computer Hardware & Software at cost	Library, Plaques & RSL March at cost		
Gross Carrying Amount	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Balance start of year	822,896	197,960	52,620	16,558	21,260	1,111,294	
Additions	-	7,394	20,606	7,326	-	35,326	
Disposals	-	(422)	(20,879)	(5,170)	(7,882)	(34,353)	
Balance at end of year	822,896	204,931	52,347	18,714	13,378	1,112,266	

Accumulated Depreciation and Amortisation

Balance at start of year	(101,922)	(123,405)	(8,676)	(15,238)	(18,379)	(267,620)
Depreciation	(10,615)	(14,579)	(9,895)	(2,445)	(355)	(37,889)
Disposals	-	-	6,432	5,170	9,483	21,086
Balance at end of year	(112,537)	(137,984)	(12,139)	(12,513)	(9,051)	(284,224)

Net Book Value
As at 30 June 2007
As at 30 June 2008

720,974	74,555	43,944	1,320	2,861	843,674
710,359	66,948	40,208	6,201	4,327	828,043

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.C.N. 008 488 097

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

2007	NOTE	2008
\$	9	\$
4,589		12,381
20,434		10,863
17,495		-
42,518		23,244
	10	
41,272		54,369
46,088		59,218
87,360		113,587
	11	
		10,456
	12	

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The aggregate employee entitlement liability recognised and included in the financial statements is as follows:

Provisions for employee entitlements	
Current (note 10.)	113,587
Non-current	10,456
	124,043

Number of employees (on a full-time equivalent basis) at the end of the financial year

7

CHANGE IN EQUITY

RETAINED EARNINGS

Balance at the beginning of financial year	1,264,454
Net Profit/(loss) attributable to members	68,381
Balance at the end of the financial year	1,332,835

REMUNERATION OF AUDITORS

Remuneration of the auditor for:

Auditing the financial report	3,800
General accounting services	1,400
FBT return	300
	5,500

National Membership Report

As at December 2008 the membership of the League stood at:

- Service & Life Members 154,352
- Affiliates 34,998

The accompanying table breaks this down in State/Territory Branch figures. Our number of Womens' Auxiliaries, and member numbers are also shown, as a reflection of the important support they continue to provide to many Sub-Branches and of course there are many Auxiliary members who are also Service members or Affiliates.

Membership Statistics

State	Service Members	Life, Hon Life/Life Subscribers	Affiliates	Total Members (incl. Affiliates)	% of RSL	Womens' Auxiliary Members
ACT	1,432	189	268	1,899	1.00	Nil
NSW	45,905	9,152	Nil	55,057	29.08	4,226
QLD	32,126	7,099	Nil	39,225	20.72	983
SA/NT	8,297	1,178	5296	14,771	7.80	607
TAS	4,019	130	889	5,038	2.66	352
VIC	33,587	1,683	26,862	62,132	32.81	1,800
WA	9,286	269	1,683	11,238	5.93	195
TOTAL	134,652	19,700	34,998	189,350	100%	8,163

The major change in driving our Membership forward at the National level in 2008 was the creation of a National Membership Forum, to replace the previous Membership Committee. While the Forum continues to report to, and provide recommendations for the National Executive, the Forum is now composed of State Branch State Secretaries/CEOs and the National Secretary. The Forum is an outcome focussed group whose key objective is the retention of existing members and re-invigorating the membership "offer" to younger ex-serving and currently serving ADF personnel.

The time for reflecting on our ageing membership demographic and the challenges this presents is now past. Action is required and this is the focus of the Membership Forum, which first met in Melbourne in April 2008 and has subsequently met in Adelaide, Canberra and Townsville. The progress to date of a common format for a truly national RSL Member Card, and the take-up by most Branches of the Ambassador discount scheme as a positive benefit to members and an incentive to join, are immediate positive steps. The adoption of a simpler Application Form with an embedded promotional brochure about the League and a redraft of a simpler Membership By-Law in the National Rules to accommodate this are well advanced.

In 2009 further advancement of national reciprocal arrangements based on a common format card is

a priority, as is the ability for State Branches to share core member data in the way that a national organisation should be able to.

In addition, the creation of a "virtual" electronic sub-branch that serving personnel can belong to, and access by e-mail and text while they are constantly being posted and deployed, will be pursued. The importance of having the ability to carry a national card and access RSL sub-branches nationwide while belonging to a "Defence Sub-Branch" of this kind will be understood by all. The gradual increase of an RSL presence on ADF bases and our involvement in Defence Transition Seminars as people discharge and move to civilian life will also assist in boosting younger Service Member numbers.

The National Executive has been most supportive of the initiatives taken to date and the proposed next steps. As Chairman of the Forum, I am very confident we can sell the message of the unique position of the League as the oldest, most influential and most encompassing of the ex-service organisations, and therefore the natural choice of all those who have served the nation. We all need to play our part in making sure we are also the most inclusive and welcoming at the sub-branch level when a new member, or potential member, makes an approach or seeks our support.

MICHAEL ANNETT
Chairman, National Membership Forum

Queensland Branch Report - 2008



Doug Formby
State President

2008 was a year of real progress for the RSL in Queensland following the construction of a sound base in 2007. Success in some specific areas of activity is clearly outlined in this report.

The restructure of our decision making bodies and processes has already delivered great benefit for our administration and delivery of welfare. We are holding the line on our membership levels; we have decentralised and delegated much decision making out to district and Sub-Branch leadership and at all levels we have re-energised our engagement with other veteran organisations and the wider community.

Our focus now is squarely upon welfare, commemoration and youth development.

RSL Youth Development Program



2008 saw the second successful year of the Queensland RSL's largest and most successful youth program. 128 high achieving Queensland senior school students were awarded \$500,000 worth of RSL Youth Development Program grants for excelling in their academic, sporting and community related fields. Winners' projects ranged from mercy missions to Africa, World and Olympic sporting competitions and representing the country at the United Nations Conference in Russia.

The program has given invaluable support to Queensland's most talented students, providing them with the opportunity to achieve their long term goals. The Queensland RSL acknowledges the importance of educating and nurturing Australia's youth as the future of our nation and will therefore continue to run the program into 2009 and beyond.

In April 2008 the Queensland RSL and the programs partner, Bond University, hosted a one day leadership forum for the 2008 grant winners and their families. The Forum focused on motivating and educating students on change, leadership and teamwork and included leadership and team building activities as well as motivational guest speakers. Addressing the students was Australia's

first and only female to command a Royal Australian Air Force flying squadron, Wing Commander Linda Corbould and Indigenous founder of the Rosemary Bishop Indigenous Education Scholarship Program, Mr Waverley Stanley.



A selection of 2008/2009 RSL Youth Development Program grant winners

State Congress

2008 saw another successful annual State Congress. This year Congress was held in Rockhampton in North Queensland and was attended by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs the Hon Alan Griffin MP, Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP and National RSL President Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd).



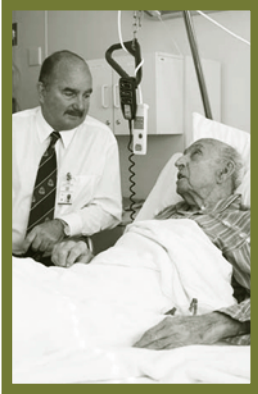
L-R RSL National Secretary Mr Derek Robson AM, RSL National President Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd) and RSL QLD CEO Mr Chris McHugh CSC

State Congress saw the League in Queensland make many forward-moving and positive changes. The State Council was reduced to 10 (District Presidents); Terry Meehan was appointed as Deputy President; Ray Townsend was re-elected as our Vice President and Doug Formby as State President.

The State Congress was widely supported and welcomed by the Rockhampton Community with over \$12,000 worth of donations and sponsorship to support the event.

Welfare and Pensions

A major task is to expand and develop our pensions and welfare services across Queensland in the face of growing difficulties in maintaining volunteers to undertake and continue this essential work. We have implemented many initiatives in 2008 to ensure this occurs including plans to establish and operate full-time offices on Defence facilities in Townsville, Brisbane and Amberley. The PAWS team has employed and trained Pension Officers and Advocates to manage and operate these Defence based offices.



In 2008 the Queensland RSL launched a new initiative called the Plus One Program to recruit new members to the League. The Plus One Program encouraged current RSL members to refer new and eligible members to join the League. The program offered fantastic prizes and incentives for current members to participate in the program including a \$3000 travel voucher and life memberships. 2008 also saw the development of a new TV, radio and print marketing campaign to boost RSL membership and attract younger members to the League. The print campaign has now been recognised and implemented by the majority of States to promote the RSL around Australia.

Poppy Appeal Launch

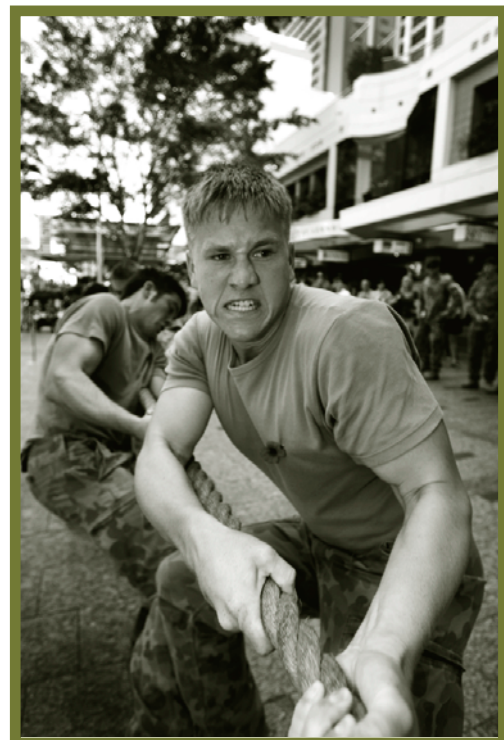
The 2008 Queensland RSL Poppy Appeal was launched with a fierce tug-of-war competition between the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Australian Navy. Local radio celebrity Campo from 97.3 FM hosted the event in Brisbane's Queen Street Mall. Treasurer Andrew Fraser made a \$25,000 donation to the Poppy Appeal on behalf of the Queensland Government. Overall the Queensland RSL Poppy Appeal raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Veteran community.

Membership

2008 has been a busy time for the membership team at State Branch. Decreasing and aging membership is a concern for the RSL nationally and new initiatives are being taken to address this problem by the Queensland Branch.



One initiative employed is the engagement with the Australian Defence Force as a source of future membership and is a project we have been pursuing for some time. We are doing so at the higher levels of the Australian Defence Force leadership, however it is the initiatives of some of our Sub-Branches who have adopted units, and in some cases individuals, before and during deployments that have had great success.



Tug-Of-War competition



RSL QLD Deputy President Mr Terry Meehan accepts a \$25,000 cheque presented by Treasurer Andrew Fraser



The Triple Treat Winner

Art Union



2008 began with a flying start for the RSL Art Union as we continue to surprise supporters with new Prize Packages of unprecedented value and variety. 2008 saw the RSL Art Union offer a prize package never seen

before in Art Union history - 'The Triple Treat' which offered punters the chance to win the combination of a riverfront home in Oxenford, a Southport unit and his and hers Audi cars.



The year also saw the RSL Art Union's biggest prize in its history - the \$3,889,129 Golden Treasure apartment complex containing six contemporary apartments plus a lavish penthouse at Mermaid Beach on the Gold Coast.

Following Remembrance Day, a long-time supporter of the RSL Art Union and ex-serviceman, John Glaister who had just lost his job and his home won a \$1.8 million Art Union prize home at Hope Island on the Gold Coast. John's story attracted nation-wide media attention and changed his life forever.

In its history the RSL Art Union has given away \$80 million in prizes and has contributed over \$90 million for RSL nursing homes, hospitals and centres.

Girl in a Million



2008 celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the RSL Girl in a Million Quest. Since its conception the Quest has raised over \$12 million for the veteran

community. The 50th anniversary celebrations were launched all over Queensland with both past and present RSL Girl in a Million and Golden Girl winners in attendance.

Maia Keerie of Rockhampton was crowned 2008 RSL Girl in a Million and Melissa Raitelli of Ayr was crowned 2008 RSL Golden Girl. State Finals week saw finalists from across Queensland participate in many memorable activities including lunch with the Brisbane Broncos, an adventure to Australia Zoo and a trip to Canberra to meet with the Minister for Veteran's Affairs and tour Parliament House and the Australian War Memorial.



2008 RSL Girl in a Million State Finalists

New South Wales Branch Report - 2008

Annual State Congress

The 92nd Annual State Congress was opened by the Governor of NSW, Prof. Marie Bashir, at Rooty Hill RSL Club on May 27, to begin two days of debate and discussion.



(From left) Governor Prof. Marie Bashir, Don Rowe, Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin and Bill Crews at the opening of the NSW Branch 92nd Annual State Congress.

Veterans' Affairs Minister, the Hon Alan Griffin MP told the Congress that his Department would need to cut \$50m from its budget this financial year, and would cut staff numbers by 200. The Minister blamed it on the funding model, claiming it was "flawed" and was "starting to bite" as the number of veterans fell. Nevertheless, he said he was confident DVA could maintain its service delivery levels.

Shadow Minister, the Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP flagged the concept of legislation to create a maritime war grave, pointing out that while the wreckage of HMAS Sydney is protected by the Shipwrecks Act, there is no specific law that allows the Government to declare the site a War Grave.

In his report, State Branch Treasurer, Rod White, pointed out that there were substantial investments by Sub-Branches in NSW, mostly in term deposits. He also praised the successful management of the Hyde Park Inn, telling Congress it is now valued at almost \$24m, an increase of \$2.5m since the last valuation in 2006.

The Congress re-elected Don Rowe as the State President for the next three years. Mr Rowe has been State President since 2003 and leads a State Council of only 14 members, a drastic reduction from the previous 29. Following the decision of the Extraordinary State Congress held in late 2007, the number of State Councillors and committees has been slashed. John Haines, Bob Crosthwaite and

Rod Bain topped the polls for Metropolitan, Northern Country and Southern Country State Councillors respectively, and became the three Vice Presidents.

Membership

Once again membership declined, from 57,760 at the end of 2007 to 55,057 a year later. Membership has halved in the past 20 years and will continue to fall as the WWII veteran population dwindles.

As of December 2008 there were 132 by Sub-Branches in the Metropolitan area with 26,505 members, and 281 Country by Sub-Branches with 27,337 members. Another 1215 members were listed as unattached.

The Branch continued to recruit new members vigorously and successfully. The League was represented by a recruiting stand at numerous shows and regional markets throughout the State in a drive to sign up new members from the large population of eligible veterans who have never joined. Retiring ADF personnel were also the target of a recruitment campaign.

Commemorations

ANZAC Day

On ANZAC Day, around 12,000 people crowded into Martin Place for a rain-soaked Dawn Service at the Cenotaph. The rain then stayed away as 20,000 veterans and descendants took part in the March along George Street. They were cheered on by an estimated 200,000 spectators. More than 60 bands took part.

At the Commemoration Service at the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park, Premier Morris Iemma reminded those assembled that in the previous 12 months three Australian servicemen had died in Afghanistan and two civilian police trainers had been killed in Iraq.

Almost 1000 people attended the Sunset Service at the Cenotaph, a record number, demonstrating yet again how strong the interest is in understanding and acknowledging the service of previous generations.

The highlight of ANZAC Day commemorations was the dedication of the Kiwi Digger on the ANZAC Bridge, on Sunday April 27. The service was attended by NSW Premier Morris Iemma and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.



NSW State President Don Rowe speaking at the ceremony to dedicate the statue of the New Zealand WWI soldier on the ANZAC Bridge in Sydney on April 27th.

The two Diggers now guard the western end of the bridge, facing each other. Following the tradition set by former State President Rusty Priest in 2000, when the Australian Digger was unveiled, current president Mr Don Rowe placed a vial of sand from Gallipoli under the feet of the Kiwi soldier.

Schools Remember

The annual RSL Schools Remember ANZAC Service was held in Hyde Park on April 10, just prior to the start of school holidays. Pupils from more than 70 schools laid wreaths. The service is organised and run by school students and is growing in popularity every year.

Remembrance Day

This was a significant anniversary, marking 90 years since the end of the First World War. The RSL made representations to the NSW State Government to have the Opera House bathed in red light to signify how important Remembrance Day was in 2008. This was well received and the Government has undertaken to continue the idea in future years.

RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution

The Trustees oversee the administration of the principal element of the welfare work for the RSL. Through the WBI Information Section, assistance is provided to ex-service and serving Defence personnel, widows, their dependants and others. A specialised service is also offered relating to pension claims and entitlements from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

2008 saw a significant increase in WBI support across its various activities. Primary areas of support included financial assistance for funerals, payment towards utility accounts, rent, medical expenses, repair costs and the issue of vouchers towards the purchase of essential goods and services. Grants were made to those in necessitous circumstances.

The Trustees wish to extend their appreciation to all who provide support to the Institution in many ways. The RSL Womens Auxiliaries and RSL Sub-Branched are at the forefront, more so in these difficult economic times, in raising funds for the League's diverse work in welfare. The continuing support from these in our community, is critical to the effective delivery of our services.

Retirement Villages

The past year has been noteworthy for RSL LifeCare, which is an established leader in senior living, from the 1200 resident ANZAC Village at Narrabeen on Sydney's northern beaches, to Myall Lodge at Hawks Nest, where 24 people live in an intimate and comfortable home.

Highlights include:

- The opening of the expanded Myall Lodge.
- The ANZAC march and service at Narrabeen, with Rear Admiral Nigel Coates, Commander Australian Fleet, as guest speaker.
- The expansion of Linton Home at Yass, with 32 new nursing home beds and 18 new retirement living apartments.
- A 20th anniversary luncheon at Rowland Village, Galston.
- The purchase of Remembrance Village, Wagga Wagga, from the local Sub-Branch.
- A Remembrance Day service and the opening of two new developments at Narrabeen - the Dardanelles on Narrabeen Lake, and ANZAC Apartments.

New residential care homes are planned for Rowland village, Ex-Services Home at Ballina, Bayside @ Byron, and Remembrance Village at Wagga Wagga.

Day Clubs

There are now 69 RSL Day Clubs in NSW, each sponsored by a Sub-Branch, and each a joint venture between the League and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Day Clubs began in 1977 in NSW and in the past year three new ventures commenced.

RSL Day Clubs are a program of activities run by volunteers, for socially isolated older members of the community. Each is autonomous in its operation.

Mr Ted Richards stepped down on June 30 as the RSL State Coordinator, a position he had held for 23 years. Ted has been dedicated to Day Clubs for more than 30 years and, in recognition of his service, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal at the NSW State Congress. During his time as State Coordinator the number of Day Clubs grew from 29 to 68.

Tom Barnsley has been appointed by State Council to fill the position vacated by Ted Richards.

Scholarships and Awards

Sir William Yeo Scholarship

The 32nd award of the Sir William Yeo Scholarship was granted to Jessica Dalton, from Binya. Jessica will study for a Bachelor of Veterinary Science/Veterinary Biology degree at Charles Sturt University.

This award encourages students to enrol in courses within the rural Science, Veterinary and Agriculture fields and to further their studies at tertiary level. It carries an allowance of \$600 per year.

Sir Colin Hines Scholarship

This award assists the children of Vietnam Veterans in their tertiary education. Six scholarships were awarded and each winner received a certificate and a cheque for \$1200.

The recipients were: Quan Nguyen, Emily Pham, Haylea Bridle, Alexander Le, Aaron Shiels and Alexander Cadger.

F S Maher Memorial Scholarship

This honours the memory of a former state president and assists in nurse training and education for those involved with nursing ex-servicemen and women and their spouses. Four scholarships of \$500 and one of \$1000 are awarded.

The 2008 winners were Kim Kerrin-Ayres and Kimberley Griffin (Concord Hospital), Julie-Anne Clarke (Lady Davidson Private Hospital), and Carrie Spinks (RSL LifeCare).

George Quinsey RSL Trust Fund

George Quinsey was a former State Councillor who left a bequest to assist dependents, descendants or family members of anyone who served in the Australian Armed Forces. Applicants have to be enrolled in a tertiary course in the fields of accountancy, commerce or economics.

Six scholarships to cover enrolment or tuition fees were awarded in 2008.

ANZAC Peace Prize/ANZAC Of The Year

The Peace Prize is given for outstanding efforts in promoting world understanding and peace. The 2008 Peace Prize was awarded to Scouts Australia.

The NSW recipient of the 29th ANZAC of the Year award was Mrs Carolyn McColl of Pambula Beach.

Australia My Country

The 14 categories cover essays, poetry, artwork and electronic media, in a competition open to pupils from Years 3 to 10.

The 2008 winners were Chloe McCrabb (St Marys Primary, Hay); Tiarne Hely (Bonville PS); Annabel Paul (PLC Armidale); Sarah Langley (Hay War Memorial HS); Eliza Falkenmire (Tamworth PS); Alia Sharp (Katoomba North PS); Rachael Koch (Manly Selective); Rachel Colbran (PLC Armidale); Carina Sirolli (Samuel Gilbert PS); Lachlan Dodd (Young PS); Hannah Wykes (Yeoval Central); Phillip Austin (Killarney Heights HS); Andrew Zhou (St Ives North PS); and Sarah Pickford (Yeoval Central).



The winners of the Australia My Country award received their certificates from NSW Governor Prof. Marie Bashir.

Cadet of the Year

This competition is conducted by the RSL in conjunction with the ADF and the National RSL to find the top cadet in each of the three services. This year's winners will be given a berth on the "Young Endeavour".

Winners were CDTAB Emma-Jane Schoer (Australian Navy Cadets) and CDTWO2 Kyle Cartner (Australian Army Cadets). Air Force Cadets did not participate.

Community Issues

Graythwaite

The NSW Branch was involved in legal action in the Supreme Court over the future of the Graythwaite property in North Sydney. It was left to the people of NSW in 1915 by Sir Thomas Dibbs to be used for the convalescence and welfare of distressed veterans, but in recent years had fallen into disrepair.

The NSW Health Department wanted the Trust dissolved, and the property sold with proceeds going towards a convalescent rehabilitation centre at Ryde Hospital. The NSW State Branch opposed this, along with the Federal Government, the Mater Hospital, St Vincent's Sisters of Charity and the North Sydney Council.

Our legal team put a great deal of effort into the court case and it was extremely disappointing when the Supreme Court ruled against us.

Muswellbrook Memorial Initiative

An initiative by the Muswellbrook Sub-Branch culminated in the dedication on December 6 of a Vietnam Memorial in a prominent position on the town's northern outskirts beside the New England Highway.

It was unveiled by the Governor of NSW, Prof Marie Bashir, accompanied by New Zealand High Commissioner, Dr John Larkindale and the State MP for Upper Hunter, George Souris.

The names of all 521 Australians killed in Vietnam have been engraved in gold on black granite without rank or number. Another tablet bears the names of the 36 New Zealanders who were killed.

About 400 people gathered for the ceremony, including many Vietnam veterans. The memorial will be visible to the thousands of motorists who travel on the New England highway every day.



The Vietnam Memorial at Muswellbrook, engraved with the names of all 521 Australian and 36 New Zealand Service personnel who died in that conflict.

Victorian Branch Report - 2008

2008 has been a year of continued enhancement of the delivery of our welfare and veteran support services, combined with ongoing support from the public for our commemorative and educational objectives. At the same time we have looked to future challenges - structurally, demographically and in respect to our commercial activities. The Branch also released a revamped version of our Corporate Plan to reflect this longer term focus through till 2015.

Veterans and Dependent Support Services

We continue to be well served by Jeff Jackson and his team of professional advocates who assist veterans and dependents throughout the State with DVA related claims and entitlements. Jeff also works very closely with our Aged and Health Support team at ANZAC House and mentors our volunteer pensions and welfare officers in Sub-Branches. The TIP trained personnel here, and in the Veteran Centres that are run as a partnership between the RSL and VVAA, are always in a position to refer cases of need back to Jeff at ANZAC House if extra resources are required to assist.

The Aged and Health Support team underwent a transition mid-year with Wendy Bateman, who had worked for some time as Information Officer, taking over from Robyn Pritchard as Manager when Robyn retired. Robyn established the Aged Care Co-ordinator network and the expertise on these matters in ANZAC House. Her farewell was testament to all the Veterans and families she has helped over 30 years in one form or other of aged care management, advice and administration. Wendy has settled into the new role well and gradually taken over from Robyn on the many representative bodies on aged care and wellness that the RSL has a voice at. The year has witnessed the steady transition of Aged Care Co-ordinators to the employ of larger licensed Sub-Branches, rather than ANZAC House, and the overall extension of the network. Volunteer management in terms of handbooks, protocols, ID cards and the inevitable Government regulation have been streamlined and simplified wherever possible by Jane Goninon as we work hard to recruit and retain our most valuable asset in welfare work - our volunteers. Our dispatch of Christmas Parcels to those in hospital, aged care facilities or at home alone over Christmas gets more popular each year, with many rural and regional Sub-Branches now involved. The most important part of this is of course the personal visit,

delivering the parcel, by someone from a Sub-Branch. The doubling of this scheme in terms of parcels requested in the space of two years shows we are meeting a need. Erica D'Iasselle, Wendy's PA, does great work in co-ordinating this effort.

Our relationship with Vasey RSL Care continues to be a constructive and practical one in meeting Veteran's needs in terms of aged care accommodation and services. At the other end of the spectrum, we are seeking to have "shopfront" facilities on all our major ADF bases in Victoria, where suitably qualified younger RSL veterans can be available to assist serving men and women with the range of services and support the League provides. This demonstrates the ongoing commitment and relevance we have to all generations of serving and ex-serving people.

Appeals

Our Appeals underpin much of this commitment, with resources generously donated by the Victorian public and 2008 was another excellent year with new records being set for both the ANZAC and Poppy/Remembrance Day Appeals.

A highlight was the launch of our 2008 Poppy Appeals with Les Carlyon, author of *The Great War*, speaking at Federation Square, a good example of using the 90th Anniversary of the Armistice, to both promote the Appeal and educate the wider community about the significance of the day and what we do. The success of our special Villers-Brettonneux 90th Anniversary ANZAC Day Badge was also worthy of note.



Les Carlyon speaking at the Poppy Appeal Launch in Federation Square, October 2008. Seated at left Mike Brady, and at right is State CEO Michael Annett.

The retirement of Clive DeJussing in early 2008 was not unexpected and after many years of fine work as Director of Appeals we know Clive will remain active as a volunteer at Sub-Branch level. Peter Smith, a Vietnam Veteran with both

a successful Regular Army and commercial career behind him, has brought fresh ideas and energy to the role and has begun a thorough review of how we promote our Appeals and who we partner with - both to sustain Clive's achievement in Appeals results in tougher economic conditions, but also to understand and exploit the opportunity to promote the RSL and our work when we interact with the wider public during our two major appeals.

Commercial and Financial Affairs

Though the economic conditions have worsened during 2008, our financial affairs remain well managed through the efforts of the Chief Financial Officer Mark Sherlock and his staff. In Victoria the stewardship of Patriotic Funds, both Building and Welfare is actively reviewed and checked by State Branch, to ensure Sub-Branches are in accord with the Veterans Act. The Branch staff actively assist Sub-Branches, especially those licensed Sub-Branches with commercial activities, in their financial management and during 2008 the need for a pro-active approach in regard to this has become evident. A small number have encountered significant cash flow, liquidity or commercial operational viability issues. In the main this has stemmed from a lack of relevant skills on committees or a systemic problem between management and the committee. One of our major challenges for the future is ensuring the right skills are present on committees and they work effectively with the manager in allowing him to get the business right in operational matters.

During 2008 the Victorian Government announced major changes in licensed gaming due to occur in 2012 that will end the duopoly of Tattersalls and Tabcorp and place gaming in the hands of community clubs and hotels. In essence this will shift much of the monitoring and management responsibility onto the venue operators, singly or collectively, and they will need to find sufficient funds to bid for entitlements to gaming machines in 2010. There is the potential for this to give the Victorian network of RSL licensed Sub-Branches more control over future earnings and therefore put more resources into Veterans welfare and other worthy community objectives but the preparation for this major change and providing well argued RSL input to various Government policy papers in the lead up to 2012 is vital. To that end in the latter part of 2008 Mark Johnson, our Chief Operations Officer assumed responsibility for the planning and preparation for 2012, as a Branch Project.

It is particularly pleasing to report that the Victorian Government has listened carefully to our submissions and clearly recognises the significant role the RSL plays in delivering vital services. The fact that our commercial operations are simply a means to an end and revenue is generated

responsibly and ultimately goes back to members and the community is well understood. The former Chairman of our Licensed Sub-Branch Association, and Manager of our Ararat Sub-Branch Brian Cairns, became the Licensed Sub-Branch Executive Officer. In this role, Brian will focus on monitoring and enhancing the operational/commercial performance of all our current licensed Sub-Branches, as Mark Johnson prepares the ground work for moving to new arrangements which promise greater autonomy for our network and sustainable viability beyond 2012. With these changes, continuity has been maintained by one of our Senior Club Managers, John Mackay stepping into the role of Chairman of the Licensed Sub-Branch Association. The Association continues to act as a cohesive body to assist all members of the group operationally and to recognise Sub-Branch and individual achievement through the Hall of Fame awards, which were again presented at a Gala Dinner at the Melbourne Sofitel in November.

The focus on volunteers and meeting our welfare objectives was again to the fore and this was also reflected in the second edition of our Community Benefits Booklet which goes to all local government areas and our community and corporate partners, telling of the work of Sub-Branches and individuals in delivering over one million volunteer hours in support of the League's objectives across Victoria in the past year. This booklet, launched by the Minister assisting the Premier on Veterans Affairs, Tony Robinson was accompanied by a DVD presentation and is a great tool in explaining and promoting the work of the RSL throughout the Community.

Membership

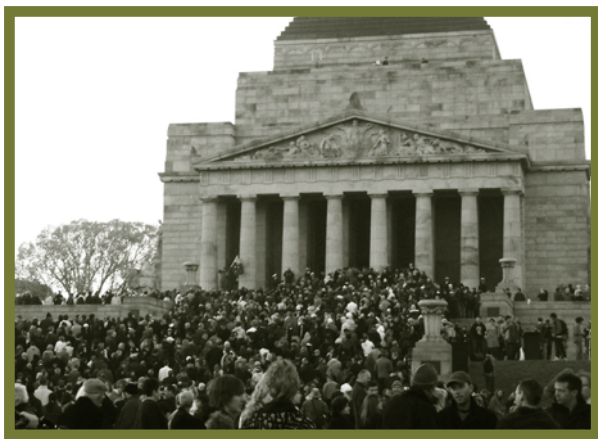
The membership focus for 2008 has been on building Service member numbers, culminating in an incentive campaign to retain existing members and attract new ones. Early indications were that this, together with the introduction of the Ambassador discount scheme has resulted in many new members and importantly a significant number of previously social members becoming Affiliates. As Affiliates their direct financial support of the Branch is welcomed, as well as their ability to serve on Sub-Branch committees and other important League forums and committees. The increased priority given to boosting Service Membership was reflected in Membership staff coming directly under the control of the CEO and the adoption of a single Membership Application Form which was integrated into an RSL promotional leaflet. Progress towards a single national membership card format and the extension of reciprocal rights at Victorian Sub-Branches for all interstate Service Members and

Affiliates are also positive steps to boost the attractiveness and utility of RSL membership. At December 2008, membership of the Victorian Branch stood at:

Service Members	35,270
Affiliates	26,862
Total	62,132

Commemorative Activities

ANZAC Day 2008 continued the trend of recent years with strong and growing attendances at the Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance and several major suburban and regional centres. Indeed the Shrine Service was estimated at between 30-35,000 and strong attendances also supported the March and the Official Commemoration Service that follows. A number of mobility aids and increased free public parking close to the route assisted marchers and, despite the increasing age and gaps in the ranks of Second World War veterans, many descendants and younger veterans took part, some 11,000 in all.



Some of the massive crowd entering the Shrine after the 2008 Dawn Service.

The AFL's Essendon vs Collingwood ANZAC Day game was again a sell out crowd of almost 100,000, with the State President presenting the winning trophy to Collingwood.

A respectful tribute to our war dead and strong crowd support to the Veteran motorcade again characterised the lead up to the game at the MCG. An excellent historical overview of the 90th Anniversary of the Armistice and the fighting at Villers Bretonneux on ANZAC Day 1918 was done by the event organisers with RSL assistance.

The RSL again conducted the Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service at the Springvale War Cemetery with the Vice CDF, LTGEN David Hurley as Guest Speaker. The official Commemorative Service at the Shrine on 11th November, presided over by the State Governor, Professor David de Kretser was the best attended for many years.

Womens' Auxiliaries

Our Womens' Council and the 115 Auxiliaries across the State have had a successful and progressive year with changes being agreed to at the Annual Conference which will result in a more representative, but less formal, Council composition. The future focus of the annual gathering will be fellowship and comparing support activities/outcomes rather than procedural process. The results achieved by the Auxiliaries in support of their respective Sub-Branches continue to give great support to the League. At the State level, the ability of the Council to purchase two vital heart defibrillators for East Timor and materially assist the Bandiana Everyman's in purchasing a new field catering vehicle shows the on-going relevance and ability of this longstanding and vital arm of the "RSL family".

State Conference and Future of the League Forum

The 2008 State Conference was held at Caulfield Racecourse on 3/4 July and was officially opened by the Premier, Mr John Brumby. As the Minister for Veterans Matters in the Victorian Government, the Premier took the opportunity to overview the Veterans Sector Study which was strongly supported by the RSL as a landmark study of the Veteran community in Victoria. The Study was promoted by the Premier as a first at State Government level and a document which will guide future Victorian Government planning in developing services and programs that will help the changing Veteran community demographic and complement the services already provided through DVA. Key remits passed by the Conference included greater flexibility in filling Sub-Branch committee positions with Affiliates and to standardise disciplinary procedures between Affiliates and Social members of the Branch. A total of 90 remits were discussed, ranging from Veterans Affairs and welfare matters to medal entitlements and municipal concessions on rates and utilities for veterans and widows. The Conference was fortunate in having a number of high profile guests including The Honourable Alan Griffin MP, Minister for Veterans Affairs, Mr Mark Sullivan, the outgoing Secretary of DVA, Professor Ken Donald, and the NSW and Tasmanian State Presidents, together with the National President.

A new feature of this year's Conference was the inclusion of an Open Forum session in the last two hours of Conference where delegates were able to raise any issues of concern or propose new initiatives for feedback that may assist the League in the future. The ability to interact directly with the leadership of the Branch in a free ranging way, without the constraints of the formal agenda was

welcomed by delegates, and while unfamiliar territory to those accustomed to the traditional format, it will be retained for next year with perhaps a particular theme being added as a refinement.

Government funded initiatives to protect veterans heritage in Victoria, in the form of a consolidated Memorials, Honour Boards and Avenues of Honour data base was also previewed. The Conference, from both an Agenda and social perspective was a harmonious and positive gathering for the League in Victoria.



Delegates and invited guests at the State Conference opening.

A Future of the League Forum was held in Melbourne in November with over 150 Sub-Branch representatives, regional committee members and State Executive members attending. The focus for the discussions, facilitated by the State President, were the challenges facing the Branch in the ageing demography of our membership, and corporate governance and commercial skills in our larger licensed Sub-Branch committees. The need to effectively respond to 2012 licensed gaming changes and reforming Branch structures to balance grassroots representation with a wieldy and effective State Executive and other Branch level representation was also considered. Recommendations endorsed by the Forum would give Sub-Branch committees more flexibility in finding experienced people to fill positions, retaining and revitalising Regions and their Committees while removing some superfluous bodies that are increasingly hard to find members to serve on. State Executive would be a body more efficient in size but maintaining a mix of city and country views. All these will be debated and voted on at the 2009 State Conference.

Community Engagement

Two great examples of our delivery of RSL community objectives during the year have been in our Cadet Achievement Awards and our Branch wide sponsorship of needy children at a Portsea Summer Camp.



One of our Cadet Achievement Award Winners with the Governor, Professor David deKrestser and the State President.

The Cadet services each identify their most outstanding Cadet and they are then formally recognized in the presence of the State Governor at our Remembrance Day Reception. The event is a great thrill for the young people involved and the Cadet staff and parents who attend. A further selection interview with the State President sees one of the three awarded a berth on the Young Endeavour training ship and the other two attend a leadership and teamwork activity week at the Lord Somers Camp on the Mornington Peninsula.

This year over 70 children from around the State, from generally disadvantaged or needy backgrounds have been sponsored by local Sub-Branches to attend a summer holiday camp at Portsea. This is a great opportunity to promote the role of the RSL as a vital part of local communities and strengthen the existing links with schools and youth groups around the State.

The Victorian Branch looks forward to 2009 with confidence, having identified the key areas where we need to focus our effort in 2009/2010 while maintaining our core welfare, commemorative and education objectives in a contemporary way.

South Australian Branch Report - 2008

A significant focus of our activities in 2008 was the 90th Anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended the Great War.

The Red For Remembrance concept saw the parkland entrances to the Adelaide CBD, State National War Memorial, Cross of Sacrifice, Parliament House, Victoria Square Fountain, Torrens Training Depot and King William Road Bridge bathed in red light during Remembrance Week. This would not have been possible without the generous support of the State Government and the Adelaide City Council. Onkaparinga, Tea Tree Gully, Lucindale, Port Pirie, Yorke Peninsula and Adelaide Hills Councils also co-operated with RSL Sub-Branches to light war memorials in red.



Red for Remembrance lights up the Cross of Sacrifice

This was also an occasion to refurbish and enhance the Cross of Sacrifice precinct. The Cross of Sacrifice commemorates the service of those who gave their lives in the Great War. It is often referred to as "The Women's War Memorial" because it was erected by the Women's War Memorial Committee. It reminds us of the silent suffering of the women of Australia in times of war. The ANZAC Day March finishes at the Cross of Sacrifice where a commemorative service is conducted. It is also used for other occasions such as Air Force Day.

Work done in this area during the year included the refurbishment of the Cross of Sacrifice (\$100,000), the erection of an Eternal Flame Memorial (\$55,000) and the erection of a monument recording Atatürk's Tribute to the ANZACs. This

project was funded by generous contributions from the Adelaide City Council, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the ANZAC Day Commemoration Council. The Eternal Flame Memorial was particularly significant as the Eternal Flame is a symbol of eternal life and symbolises the nation's perpetual gratitude towards, and remembrance of, its war dead.



The Eternal Flame Dedicated on 11 November 2008

The RSL hosted an exhibition of World War I artefacts in its Memorial Hall in the weeks leading up to Remembrance Day. A very successful concert, featuring music from World War I, was held in our Drill Hall and the funds raised were donated to AFOF.

Commemorations

2008 also marked the 40th Anniversary of the Battles of Coral/Balmoral. A very moving Remembrance Service was held at the Vietnam War Memorial and hosted by The Royal Australian Regiment Association which was also involved in commemorations for Kapyong Day and Long Tan Day. Other significant commemorations during the year included the Indigenous Service, Vietnam Veterans' Day, UN Day, Long Tan, and Peace and Remembrance Day.

The year also marked the erection of a memorial to commemorate the OBOE 6 landings in Brunei. One of our members, Bill Corey, was fortunate to be given the opportunity by DVA to attend the dedication of the memorial in Brunei.

ANZAC Day

ANZAC Day continues to gain in popularity especially with the young. Many Sub-Branches have reported a 10-fold increase in attendance at Dawn Services over the last 10 years. Our policy in relation to next of kin not marching with units but, instead, marching in their own group received wide publicity with positive results. The next of kin seemed to understand the unique and private nature of the event and are not intruding into units in the same numbers as in previous years. The next of kin group continues to grow and presents exceptionally well. Our multi-cultural groups have accepted the ANZAC Day Committee invitation to march in the next of kin group thus further reducing the incidents of next of kin marching in the ranks.

Memorials

The work on the Cross of Sacrifice area was not the only work conducted during the year. The State Government also refurbished the State National War Memorial at considerable expense. For this we are grateful. It also funded the refurbishment of unit crosses, many dating from World War I, which were displayed in the precincts of the State National War Memorial. These crosses were painstakingly restored by Artlab and enclosed in protective cases.

Plans for a memorial commemorating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel are proceeding. Fund raising is now advanced and it is likely that this will be completed in the next couple of years. Progress in erecting a memorial of Simpson's Donkey has proceeded slowly. Unfortunately, the original location at the Royal Adelaide Hospital is no longer available. The Committee is seeking an alternative location.

The Port Noarlunga and Christies Beach RSL Sub-Branch upgraded their memorial by including plaques for each and every conflict in which Australian Defence forces have been involved. This involved the recognition of many peacekeeping missions which are often overlooked.

The re-dedication of the memorial and gardens at Lucindale was attended by 500 people, including General Peter Cosgrove.

Sub-Branch Development

The RSL SA State Branch is positioning itself to confront the challenges of generational change. During the year we continued work on a strategic plan for the development of Sub-Branch premises. This will see many suburban RSL Sub-Branches merged to form larger Sub-Branches with upgraded facilities. I am pleased to report that the Hayhurst, Hilton and Keswick and Richmond RSL

Sub-Branches have agreed to merge to form a new sub-branch in the West Torrens Area. Negotiations are currently underway with the West Torrens Council regarding the erection of a community centre which will be managed by the new combined RSL Sub-Branch.

During the year the State Branch assisted the Murray Bridge RSL Sub-Branch in the sale of its current Sub-Branch premises. The Sub-Branch was facing the real prospect of being hemmed in by a major commercial development. An excellent price was obtained for the sale and we are now working with the Sub-Branch to develop quality clubrooms in the Murray Bridge area.

Two years ago the RSL purchased a large block of land on the Esplanade at Victor Harbor, a major South Australian seaside holiday destination. This land abuts the existing sub-branch premises. We are currently preparing plans for a major development on this site which will act as a flagship for the RSL in South Australia.

Work also continues in upgrading sub-branch premises in the country area. The Port Pirie Sub-Branch has been successful in obtaining funding for the establishment of a museum. There is no doubt this will become a premier attraction in Port Pirie.

Mount Gambier is currently undergoing a \$3.5M refurbishment. This will secure its reputation as being a pre-eminent club facility in the south east of South Australia.

In the city, the Brighton RSL Sub-Branch was successful in negotiating with the Council and the local Bowling Club to relocate its sub-branch premises to extensively refurbished clubrooms that provide high quality accommodation.

The ADF

The RSL has also had to confront the changing method of deployment of ADF personnel. No longer do our veterans go off to a conflict, return to Australia and are then discharged. Rather, they are going on multiple deployments and staying within the ADF. This means that we have had to reach out to and engage with veterans while they are still in the ADF.

We have experienced difficulty in obtaining access to the transition seminars put on by the ADF for those leaving the ADF. This saw the end of a decades old practice of the RSL making presentations at transition seminars. However, we are confident that this will be rectified in the coming year. We were successful in gaining access to the induction seminars run at RAAF Base Edinburgh for ADF personnel being transferred to the base. These were well received by those

attending and the RAAF Senior Officers. It has resulted in a large number of new members.

We have enjoyed excellent relations with the Service Chiefs in South Australia. A highlight of the year for us was the toast to the RSL delivered by the ADF Service Chiefs at the State Branch Conference Dinner. Their comments about the RSL were very moving and were proof of the positive and rewarding relationship which we share with them.

During the year we also hosted a very successful meeting for RSMs, WODs, and Senior Warrant Officers in ADF Units based in South Australia. Approximately 25 Senior Warrant Officers from all 3 services attended. There was a full and frank discussion about the role of the RSL and its relevance to current ADF personnel. This meeting resulted in improved co-operation between the RSL and ADF Warrant Officers. This has already borne fruit with increased recruitment of ADF personnel and the assistance of ADF personnel in the Poppy Day Appeal.

The RSL also hosted a 'Welcome Home' function for Army reservists who had been deployed to the Solomon Islands on a 3 month deployment.

Membership

Membership of the RSL increased significantly during the year. This was due to the increasing number of Affiliates, which is compensating for the declining number of World War II Members, and a substantial increase in ADF membership. The increase in ADF membership was largely as a result of the decision to offer 12 months free membership to current members of the ADF and the adoption of the Ambassador Card discount scheme. Many of the new ADF members have cited the Ambassador Card as a major reason for joining the RSL. It is only through developing such immediate rewards that we will be able to attract the current generation of ADF personnel.

Unfortunately, 6 Sub-Branches went into recess during the year. They were the British Imperials, Returned Sisters & Servicewomen, Tintinara, Wanilla, Wilmington and Red Shield. These Sub-Branches have provided valuable assistance to the League over many years.

The issue of declining membership in small regional Sub-Branches continues to be a concern to the League. There are a number of country Sub-Branches with only 20-30 active members. The State Branch is committed to supporting these Sub-Branches as they are a valuable centre for the organising of ANZAC Day Commemorative Services.

Youth Programs

A number of programs were run during the year to support our youth. One of the most visible was the Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize sponsored by the State Government. This saw 5 High School students being escorted on a tour of the Western Front where they attended the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux. This received considerable publicity and we are very thankful for the State Government's support of this project. Upon their return, the youth involved addressed RSL meetings. All reported that they had found the experience to be very moving, it had helped them in their personal development and they had come to better understand the sacrifices made by our troops during World War I.

Another significant youth activity was the ANZAC Eve Youth Vigil which will celebrate its 10th Anniversary in 2009. This program has become so successful that vigils are now being held at the State War Memorial, Morphett Vale, Blackwood and Marion. Word of success has spread and other State Governments are considering adopting its format. Up to 14 youth committee groups participated and over 1,000 young people were involved. It serves to both educate them about remembrance and the importance of the ANZAC tradition. The original concept of inviting a youth speaker to speak on what ANZAC Day means to them continues. In addition youth from up to 14 multi-cultural groups, wearing traditional dress, are involved in a wreath laying ceremony. The indigenous community were involved and laid the first wreath of remembrance. The youth of the Turkish community also continue to have a special part to play in the ceremony.

The feedback we have received from these youth programs has convinced us of the need to establish a curriculum within the schools to educate our youth on the sacrifice made by our veterans and our military history. LTCOL Steve Larkins is currently working with a number of people and the Education Department to establish such a curriculum. This will work in addition to our current system of school talks by veterans. Many veterans are involved in this project and we thank them for their time. All of them report on the positive experience to them and the children of this very important task.

The children of Robe Primary School provide an example of the way in which we can involve our children in the act of remembrance. Each year the children are taught about the importance of Remembrance Day and the traditions that go along with it. In the days leading up to 11 November the children focus on Remembrance Day and this often results in visits by grandparents or students

bringing in medals, photos and other memorabilia. The older classes learn the poem "In Flanders Fields" and discuss the significance of this text.

On Remembrance Day the entire school walks to the park to participate in the ceremony. The children place their poppies along the path leading up to the memorial and the school lays a wreath which is purchased from money raised by the children themselves.



Robe Primary School students place poppies on Remembrance Day

We continue to support the Cadet of the Year program although we have experienced problems in liaising with the three Cadet services.



State President Jock Statton OAM with Cadet of the Year finalists

It is clear that the Cadet hierarchy are concerned about their duty of care to their Cadets. This has often caused unnecessary barriers. However, we were finally successful in hosting three Cadets, one from each service, on a tour of Canberra in November where they visited the Australian War

Memorial. They also attended our Remembrance Services at the Cross of Sacrifice in Adelaide. All of them reported a very positive experience from this project.

Aged Care

The State Branch continues to be involved in Aged Care. The jewel in our crown is the RSL Villas at Angle Park. This well managed modern facility continues to operate at occupancy levels in excess of 95% and returned a healthy profit during the year that will fund future development. The most pleasing aspect of their operations was that we were able to maintain a focus on providing Aged Care to the indigent and the less affluent residents. Our residents receive excellent care from a dedicated staff and retaining quality staff remains an imperative for the RSL Villas management. The RSL is also involved in the War Veterans' Homes at Myrtle Bank. During the year the War Veteran's Homes expanded with the construction of additional independent living units.

Darby and Joan Cottages

The State Branch continues to operate Darby and Joan Cottages throughout South Australia. These provide affordable housing to financially impecunious members of the veteran and ex-service community. However, many of the units were erected decades ago and are showing signs of age. Unfortunately the units at Mount Gambier became so run down that the only alternative was to close them and sell the land. The proceeds of this sale will be reinvested into our housing projects. The units at Clovelly Park, Campbelltown, Semaphore and Wallaroo continue to be fully occupied.

Pensions and Welfare

The total number of interviews conducted by Headquarters staff in 2008 was 330. The most notable change in these figures is an increase in military compensation claims, a total of 42, and also a gradual rise in claims from Iraq veterans. The total number of interviews conducted during this period does not include the 63 cases prepared and presented to the Veterans' Review Board. We also successfully conducted an appeal before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. It is significant that the number of interviews conducted for veterans from post-Vietnam conflicts now exceeds the number of interviews carried out for pre-Vietnam veterans and is twice the number of interviews conducted for Vietnam Veterans.

Our Welfare Officers also made numerous grants during the year to assist veterans who had fallen on hard times to purchase necessary items of

household equipment and pay essential bills. This work was supported by a generous grant from the Queensland RSL State Branch.

The work of our Pensions Officers was also supported by a BEST grant from DVA which met the salaries and equipment needs of our professional staff. The Pensions Office also continued to provide administrative support to the TIP program.

Staff

There have been a number of changes in staff during the year. Our long time Executive Director, John Spencer OAM RFD, retired after 13 years service and was replaced by Guy Harley. Kathy Milligan OAM retired after 23 years service to the RSL. Fortunately, we will continue to have contact with her as her husband, David Milligan, is still employed by us. Our Welfare Officer, Hans Broweleit, who had served us for 7 years also retired and was replaced by Tich Tyson who is a volunteer. Our part-time Pensions Officer, Chelsea Brimelow, moved to Queensland in June 2008. She was replaced by Di Capus, a former employee of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Di has been invaluable in handling our military compensation claims and dealing with issues relating to current ADF personnel.

People

We note with regret the passing during the year of Major Len Opie DCM RFD ED. Len served in the Pacific region in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and UN Peacekeeping duties. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal while with 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Korea and in Vietnam he served 2 tours with the Australian Army Training Team. Significantly, his service was as a CMF soldier. He was accorded a military funeral. The tales are legendary and he will be sorely missed but long remembered.

It was pleasing that the following members received recognition during the year. Dean Adams OAM, Rex Lipman AO, Kevin Scarce AC, Clem Senior OAM, Robert Atkinson AM RFD, Raymond Deane OAM, John England OAM and John (Jack) Dowd OAM received awards in the Order of Australia during 2008.

Fund Raising

Work at the State Branch would not be possible without the support received from the ANZAC Appeal and the Poppy Day Appeal. In 2008, 110 Sub-Branches participated in the ANZAC Appeal along with 45 businesses, schools and aged care

homes. They were supported by 36 sellers in the city including National Servicemen and the ADF. A total of \$144,558.20 was raised.

108 Sub-Branches participated in the Poppy Day Appeal. They were supported by 83 businesses, schools and aged care homes. They were also supported by 34 sellers in the city including National Servicemen and current ADF personnel.

Marketing

The State Branch continues to maintain an active marketing program supported by our Marketing Manager, Keith Harrison. Sales have been steadily increasing during his tenure, particularly in the areas of bears, souvenirs and Unibic ANZAC biscuits.

Unfortunately, problems arose with the supply of commemorative tins by Unibic. Some designs were provided on an exclusive basis to Coles and Woolworths. This meant that many of our members, Sub-Branches and collectors could not access them. We were able to buy left-over stock from Woolworths and Coles and then Unibic provided us with additional tins at a later stage. This was inconvenient but we were eventually able to meet everyone's needs.

We continue to attend fairs and events to sell our wares and also canvas for new members. We also attended the Balaklava Veterans' Race Day and we acknowledge the support of the Balaklava Racing Club. This was another successful annual event.

The Signal

Keith Harrison, in his guise as compiler of 'The Signal', continued to work closely with our publisher to improve the appearance of 'The Signal', maintain the high standard of content and ensure that editions came out on schedule.

Health

During the year, the State Government overhauled the administration of hospital services in SA. This resulted in the Board of the Repatriation General Hospital, along with many other small hospital boards, being abolished. The Repatriation Hospital has now been absorbed into the Southern Area Health Service. We anticipate that this should result in an increased level of care for veterans. The Government was, however, mindful of its need to consult with the veterans' community and delayed all changes until full consultation had taken place with the veteran community. The State Government is currently establishing a Veterans' Health Advisory Council, to be chaired by the RSL

State President. This will ensure that veterans' health needs continue to be acknowledged and met within the South Australian health system.

Government Relations

Whilst the RSL State Branch has always enjoyed a very good relationship with the South Australian State Government, this relationship was considerably enhanced during the year. In response to a request by the RSL, the State Government announced that it would appoint a State Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

That position has been filled by the Attorney-General, Mr Michael Atkinson MP. He has been ably assisted by his Chief Advisor, and long time RSL member, LTCOL Bill Denny AM. The State Government also announced the formation of a Veterans' Advisory Council. In September, it held an open forum for 600 people at the Torrens Parade Ground during which the make-up and operation of the Council was canvassed. It has now appointed Sir Eric Neal AC CVO as the Chairman of the VAC.

The State Government also, in conjunction with Channel 7 Chairman Mr Kerry Stokes, purchased the Victoria Cross which had been awarded to Major Peter Badcoe VC. We are very grateful to the State Government for having preserved the VC and making it available to the Australian War Memorial. The State Government has also announced plans to tour the medal around regional South Australia in 2009. This will provide a valuable opportunity for us to educate our school children about our military heritage. The RSL and other ex-service organisations are integrally involved in providing personnel to man the exhibition.

The State Governor also announced that a major new bridge across the Port River would be named the 'Diver Derrick Bridge' in recognition of the contribution made by Thomas 'Diver' Derrick VC. The State Branch has been working with the project managers for the new South Road underpass on ANZAC Highway. It has provided advice on an appropriate name for the underpass and the development of suitable and significant sites to acknowledge the commemorative nature of ANZAC Highway.

Western Australia Branch Report - 2008

In reviewing the operations of the WA Branch I am able to report that significant achievements have been made that will ensure the prosperity of the League in Western Australia. The years of planning has allowed the development of an ethic that is focussed on service and a commitment to excellence.

Our organisational structure remains compatible with the corporate environment yet we have been able to zealously guard our traditional role, that of serving the veteran community.

Our governance model is regularly reviewed by both internal and external agencies that measure our performance against our expected outcomes and, using such information, provide future direction.

The Branch is administered on behalf of the members by an elected State Executive and Board of Directors. They are elected for three years and are committed to the operation of the League for the benefit of members and the veteran community. Working in harmony with them is a network of volunteers and sub committees that strive to achieve positive results in our activities. All officers work in a voluntary capacity and give freely of their time and expertise to achieve outcomes that are consistent with our Charter and Corporate Plan. A feature of their involvement is a strict conformity to the values of the League and compliance with the State Branch's Code of Conduct. This has resulted in the formation of a highly motivated, clearly focussed team approach to the administration of the League in Western Australia.

The RSL demonstrates strong leadership in the veteran community and contributes responsibly with comment on many social and community issues. Without hesitation, the RSL regularly challenges decisions that have or could impact on veterans and at all times have stood steadfastly for those traditional values that are essential in our society.

In that context we maintain a strong a-political position and as such have enjoyed the on-going support from both sides of parliament at Commonwealth and State level. Through our Sub-Branch structure we also enjoy an excellent and supportive relationship with the many local authorities throughout Western Australia.

Our responsible comments, coupled with a willingness to address controversial issues places us in high esteem with the media and the general public. Through the esteem in which we are held

in the community, the State Branch and our Sub-Branch office bearers are regularly consulted on topical issues and are often invited to make public comment on social, commemorative, security and veterans' affairs matters. It is pleasing to note that, without exception, all comments and representations are made with a high degree of professionalism.

We strive to present a good public image by encouraging our Sub-Branches and members to present the RSL as a caring organisation that takes the welfare of veterans and the future security and development of our country seriously.

Welfare

Since the RSL's foundation the welfare of the veteran has been its priority. We excel in the care for those veterans in need or necessitous circumstances.

As part of an on-going program of improvement the review of welfare services provided to members and the veteran community, a representative group of stakeholders, under the chairmanship of State Trustee Wayne Tarr, recommended some sweeping changes to make our welfare services more focussed and responsive to the needs of the individual. Those recommendations were carefully considered by the State Executive and those adopted are now in the process of being implemented. When fully implemented at State and Sub Branches it is anticipated that members who are in need of welfare assistance will be afforded ready access to appropriate funding to assist them in their time of need.

Funding sources for veterans' welfare is generated by grants from Lotterywest, bequests from supportive donors and from the Returned Sailors, Soldiers & Airmen's Imperial League of Australia Trust Fund. Allocations from these sources allow us to service the operations and fund veterans accordingly. These sources inject around \$200 000 annually into the veteran community.

Collections from the Annual Poppy Day Appeal resource a large portion of our welfare operations at State Branch and the Amelioration Accounts at Sub-Branches allow for on site welfare grants to be issued in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Fund Act. Future focus will encourage Sub-Branches to deal with their own welfare applications and to achieve this State Branch will act as a contact point for applications that, with the applicant's consent, may be referred to Sub-Branch Welfare

Officers for attention. It has been proved that personal contact at the local level is the most effective way in which support can be directed to those in need. As it is not always financial support that is required, immediate personal contact, at the local level will always provide a better understanding the individual's needs.

Veteran Affairs

The Veteran Affairs Committee is most effective in monitoring the multitude of issues that affect veterans. With representation across all services and key ESO's a better perspective of the needs of various groups within the veteran community has resulted. The positive relationships developed with officers of the Department of Veteran's Affairs have also provided a valuable communications link that has facilitated the prompt resolution of problems. Our participation on consultative committees has permitted input to programs and processes that have been of benefit to both administration and the veteran.

There has been careful monitoring of the quality of health services offered to veterans and of the service delivery by the Department of Veterans' Affairs consequent upon its on-going restructure.

Through the State Veteran Affairs Committee we have input into the establishment of League priorities for budget consideration by government. For years, the RSL has been actively lobbying for the government to redress the many inequities evident in veterans' welfare. While being mindful of the achievements realised, there are many issues that need to be dealt with and again, our input to the National Veteran's Affairs Committee assists the National Executive in re-ordering our priorities for future budgets.

In recent times the RSL has become involved in ADF Transitional programs and innovative programs are being developed to assist those who are leaving the ADF to enter the 'civilian world' with confidence.

Advocacy

Our two staff advocates provide a first class service to veterans who seek their assistance. They are supported by a highly trained group of volunteers who are rostered to provide a daily service that is used to capacity. This has resulted in a significant increase in the amount of advocacy work being undertaken by the advocates and volunteers operating out of ANZAC House. It appears this increase is occurring because of a decrease in the number of qualified Advocates either in the RSL or other ex-service organisations. Furthermore, active referrals from the Department of Veteran's Affairs and TIP training obligations have added to the current situation.

The State Branch is currently undertaking a survey of all advocates and welfare officers who practice under the RSL delegation. This is being undertaken to ensure that the skill levels are being maintained and that officers are current in their information and operational procedures. Where operators are in need of updates refresher courses are being offered. It will, however, become necessary in the future for advocates and welfare officers to remain current and attend refresher courses every three years. This will become a requirement to remain accredited and to operate as an RSL Advocate.

Advocacy has become more complex particularly with increasing variations to operative veterans' legislation, and therefore the skills necessary to act in the best interests of the veteran need to be improved. The RSL is covered for insurance for any possible negligence claim made by a veteran but this insurance cover could be deemed invalid if an Advocate has not actioned accreditation renewal.

RSL Care WA

The RSL WA Retirement and Aged Care Association (Inc), trading as RSL Care WA, operates the State Branch's Aged Care facilities in WA. The operational team enjoys credibility in the Aged Care industry and is supported by a Board of Management. They have developed the entity into a viable operation and have shed many of the inhibiting factors that prevailed in the past.

The Menora Gardens Aged Care facility, a state of the art Aged Care Home was commissioned during the year and was an historic occasion and a milestone in the redevelopment of the village. It marked the completion of the residential complex and the community centre and the beginning of a new phase in our Aged Care program. At this point in time further site development is planned for the construction of a third apartment block. Plans have been submitted to the City of Stirling for planning approval for this five floor, twenty-four apartment development.



The Hon Alan Griffin MP unveils the Plaque at the opening of the new Aged Care Facility at Menora Gardens

To accommodate veterans in regional Western Australia, RSL Care WA is working with local communities to determine areas of need for Aged Care facilities.

At Jurien Bay, some 300km north of Perth a number of meetings have taken place with both the residents and Councillors of the Shire of Dandaragan relative to the construction of a 96 Independent Living Unit Retirement Village next to the existing medical facility.

Further development is being planned at our existing Aged Care sites. At Meadow Springs at Mandurah (100km south of Perth) there is planned development for an additional thirty rooms, which would increase its capacity to eighty-five beds. An additional thirteen independent living units are planned for our facility at Geraldton.

The Aged Care industry is not just about bricks and mortar. RSL Care WA is proactive in servicing veterans and the community through Home Care Packages in both country and metropolitan locations. With government aged care policy moving in that direction we are keen to see we are looking after our aged veterans wherever we can.

The aged care industry is in exciting and challenging times with growth in retirement villages and aged care facilities at unprecedented levels. The Board and management readily embrace the many challenges ahead and remain committed that RSL Care WA be managed in a strong financial and viable manner ensuring that residents receive the highest possible level of care.

Finance

Although the League's financial position is sound, over recent times the cash operating base has been considerably eroded through cost increases attributed to salaries, cost of service delivery and generally operating a small business in the current economic climate. Strict adherence to our approved budget and constant reviews of income and expenditure profiles has limited any loss, but additional income is needed if we are to maintain the services required by the membership.

The Branch is in receipt of financial grants that assist the State Branch and Sub Branches. Through the generosity of Lotterywest, Department of Veterans' Affairs and ANZAC Working Committee we are able to support our many veteran and community activities. All these bodies value the sacrifices and contribution veterans have made for their country and are always willing to support needy causes.

ANZAC Club

Since the refurbishment of the ANZAC Club there has been a marked increase in patronage. The

enhanced environment has attracted not only League members to the facility but also good support from the general public. We have also been able to promote the use of the Gallipoli Room as a conference venue and this is proving popular with local business as a training course venue. There are still some refurbishment tasks to be completed and it is hoped all outstanding tasks will be finished by the end of the year



The ANZAC Club Function Centre

The commissioning of the library facility has commenced and we anticipate it will be operational early in the new year with reading, research, internet and newspaper sections available to members.

Staffing ANZAC Club has proved a challenge with managerial staff in the hospitality industry in constant demand but I am confident that our present manager, chef, permanent and casual staff there will form a cohesive team that will serve members and guests for quite some time to come.

Membership

Our membership numbers are stable at around 13,000 members including affiliates. The growth in new members is keeping pace with losses through death of our aged veterans. We maintain our well resourced and aggressive recruitment program and this is paying dividends, particularly in country regions. This year we welcome Jurien Bay, Turkish and Halls Creek Sub-Branches to the State Branch and fortunately we do not say farewell to any.



Members of the Turkish Sub-Branch receive their Charter from State President, Mr Bill Gaynor

The concept of 'Post Box Sub-Branches' has been welcomed by many smaller Sub-Branches in danger of closing due to small numbers. This format will see an RSL presence retained in the district. A further refinement of the operation of smaller Sub-Branches has seen larger nearby Sub-Branches offering administrative support and so achieving the same result.

Of prime concern is the fact that we are interested in knowing if there are veterans in need in the area so they can be serviced through RSL Welfare. No doubt we will have to explore every option available to attend to the welfare needs of veterans living in country locations and that appropriate commemorative services are conducted in cities and towns throughout Western Australia under RSL guidance.

Our recruiting and welfare trailer, proudly sponsored by Hollywood Private Hospital and Australian Defence Credit has been fully refurbished thanks to Keith Boxshall and the group from Nollamara Sub-Branch. This useful resource is available to Sub-Branches, Schools and Communities to promote RSL and to provide an educational resource for veteran activities.

The Membership and Youth Committee led by Oliver Lovelle is responsible for the Australian Cadet of the Year Program. This initiative results in Service Cadets participating in a visit to battlefields where Australian troops saw action. This year, through unforeseen circumstances the touring group visited Canberra and the Australian War Memorial.



2008 Cadet of the Year Winners Cadet Sergeant Ashley Duckling, CPO David Thatcher, CUO Hannah Walker

The financial support from Hollywood Private Hospital, Sub-Branches and the interest shown by numerous local supporters of the initiative has ensured the success of the program.

The committee also oversees the Cadet Efficiency Trophy. This is financially supported by Australian Defence Credit and results in the award of a perpetual and annual shield to the most efficient Navy, Army and Air Force Cadet Unit in Western Australia, together with a cheque for \$1000 to each of the winning Units.

The RSL values the contribution the Cadet movement makes to the youth of our State and is a willing supporter of rewarding excellence in achievement.

The RSL Community Link Program is proving popular with schools that assume responsibility for community war memorials. Boddington and Ballajura have established groups and enquiries are being received from other groups who have expressed interest in acting as wardens for town memorials where Sub-Branches no longer exist.

Affiliates

The number of Affiliates in Sub-Branches continues to grow. Affiliates play a major role in the operation of small Sub-Branches. Those citizens with empathy for the RSL and the values we hold are welcome to join us with that status. It is essential that we strike a realistic position for Affiliates. They should be part of the veteran family and enjoy the benefits of Sub-Branch life within the stated rules. I would like all Affiliates to, receive the same membership value added benefits as enjoyed by Service Members but this is not possible within the present capitation structure. The membership will need to be responsive to this challenge if we are to show this group of supporters their true value in promoting and progressing the League.

Marketing

Marketing continues to be one of the least developed areas of League activity and one which, if sensitively handled, can deliver long term benefits to the League and the membership, at all levels.

Following a follow up survey of members by students in the Marketing Department at Curtin University Business School, the results of the previously conducted surveys were validated. Membership surveys proved helpful in determining the types of services and facilities members want, but they are only one part of the marketing challenge. We need to do more in taking the RSL to the wider community. Last year's survey provided valuable information as to how the State Branch was performing in line with members' expectations. Many of the suggestions for improvement were taken on board and from feedback received there is a high degree of member satisfaction as to our performance.

To further progress the initiative, we have commenced an end-to-end examination of all aspects of the League's activities to identify more business opportunities than a purely membership funded enterprise can deliver. The League has developed excellent facilities and considerable expertise in several areas that are being brought together in a mutually supporting, integrated

marketing plan, for example, ANZAC Club facilities, pensions and advocacy, welfare, aged care and retirement villages. Each of these areas has been the subject of careful study so that we can bring our products and services to specifically identified niches in the marketplace. For some of these product and service launches we have engaged outside professional marketing organisations to assist us in our endeavours.

A further innovation has been the formation of a number of strategic corporate alliances - some of which are commercially oriented while others are with other like-minded not-for-private-profit organisations. Essentially we need a balanced mix of both if we are to be successful.

The obvious point of all our marketing effort is to increase League revenues from which we can continue to provide welfare, services and fellowship opportunities to our members

Defence

Our Defence Committee has been refocussed in its role to include the Integrated People Support Program and has been active in progressing this initiative.

The RSL, at all levels, continues to support our Defence Force personnel, both those on deployment and in reserve. Sub-Branches in close proximity to Defence Force Bases have established supportive relationships with personnel and their families and honour that commitment when troops are on deployment. The WA State Branch financially supports the RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund that regularly sends gift parcels to our troops on deployment. From all reports received, that gesture is very much appreciated.

Communications

The RSL's bi-monthly publication 'The Listening Post' is our main link with the membership. The magazine has a distribution of around 10,000 copies and is widely read by members, sponsors and supporters. It has developed into a first class publication and, thanks to the hard work of a dedicated production team, presents the reader with timely and topical information. It is costly to produce and distribute to the membership but it is well worth the price we pay to keep the membership fully informed of League activities.

The monthly newsletter the 'Sub-Branch Signal' keeps those who attend Sub-Branch meetings informed on the activities of State Executive and the Board of Directors with respect to policy and other matters affecting the day to day running of the Branch.

Acting on suggestions from the recently conducted member survey, we have upgraded our website. We have recently placed the Sub-Branch Signal on the web and expect to have other relevant information available as the site undergoes reconstruction.

Perhaps the best communication is through a personal approach. In the period under review, State Executive members had the opportunity to personally visit many country Sub-Branches. The travel schedule included the Eastern Goldfields, the North West, Great Southern and South West. Several Avon and mid-west areas were also included. The warmth of the welcome and the diverse range of issues discussed certainly gave the travellers a greater insight to how RSL operates in country Western Australia.

Our challenge is to see that our organisation continues to be represented in these rural communities and that the values we support are not lost.

Corporate Alliances

We have been fortunate in progressing the close link we have with Curtin University. The research project "Remembering the Wars" is now in its second year and the information collated from books, records, minutes and many other sources is forming an interesting pattern that will provide local communities with an historic link to the families whose relatives appear on town war memorials.

It is an exciting project that will furnish us with many recommendations that we trust we will be able to implement.

Of significant importance is the connection we have with Curtin's School of Business Studies. Their research project is the Membership Satisfaction Surveys. Their findings form the basis of our program for operational efficiency and we expect that upon implementation our organisation will be more responsive to the needs of the membership. On-going validation of this program is currently under way.

Our Membership Card initiative has produced a value-add bonus for the membership. A range of discounts is available upon the production of a valid RSL Membership Card and this is set to expand in future years.

Commemorative Services

The State War Memorial continues to be the principal place for RSL Commemorative Services. Apart from the RSL conducted ANZAC Day Dawn Service and Remembrance Day Service, the War Memorial and its precinct are used by ex-service

organisations and community groups to honour their fallen. On Remembrance Day 2007, The Hon Professor David K. Malcolm AC QC CitWA KCSJ - former Chief Justice of WA assumed duties as State War Memorial Warden. With the assistance of Phillip Skelton, Deputy Warden and sub-wardens from the Highgate Sub-Branch they have assisted all user groups in the conduct of services in keeping with established protocols.

ANZAC Day Services continue to be well supported, with reported increases in attendances throughout the State. The pleasing feature is the family participation that is emerging. If this trend continues the future of ANZAC Day as a time when we can honour our fallen is assured.

The generous local community support and the financial assistance from Lotterywest in funding ANZAC Day services are acknowledged. In particular, Lotterywest's commitment to further enhance services in regional areas is a most welcome gesture that is certain to be taken up by rural groups.



USA Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, at the State War Memorial to honour the fallen

The support given to schools and community groups by Sub-Branches is also acknowledged. That support is valued by the younger generation who have a thirst for knowledge of the sacrifices made by their parents and grandparents in the defence of their country.

Sub-Branches

Our organisational structure is based on a Sub-Branch network. Currently we have 140 active Sub-Branches on the State Register and they all do a magnificent job in servicing the needs of the veteran. The RSL caters for all veterans of all conflicts and our charter requires us to service veterans whether they are members or not. On that basis our work is truly humanitarian. Our Sub-Branches are the public face of the RSL and the manner in which our organisation presents itself in the community is exemplary.

The administration of a Sub-Branch can often be seen as an onerous task. Members are sometimes reluctant to take office for fear of the work and procedures involved. Acting on demand for some form of training for Sub-Branch Office Bearers, State Branch continues to provide a series of training modules especially prepared for members who were interested in taking office. They have proved very popular and have been presented in Perth and in regional Western Australia.

Working in association with Sub-Branches are the ladies of the Women's Auxiliary. This dedicated group have for years supported the RSL in social activities, fund raising and caring for and visiting our elderly and sick veterans. Although diminishing in numbers they still fulfil a vital role and their work is very much appreciated.

National RSL

Our parent body, The Returned & Services League of Australia Limited is based in Canberra. And the National Executive meets quarterly. It is the policy making group of the organisation and through its various sub committees it is active in attending to veteran affairs matters with government. Its professional approach to issues is its strength and in this manner it invariably produces good outcomes.

State Branch

In keeping with our policy of improving service delivery, a review of our administration was commissioned. While elements of the review are still underway, certain changes to staffing and procedures are starting to take effect. All such changes are being made to improve the quality of service provided to members. We constantly seek strategies that will reduce the response time to member queries and improve the quality of advice given on specific matters.

The Way Ahead

The next twelve months will be challenging for the League in Western Australia as we continue to implement our Corporate Plan.

Priority initiatives will be:

- Restructure of our welfare and advocacy services;
- Restructure of our administrative elements at Headquarters and RSL Care;
- Support RSL Care WA in consolidating its position in the aged care industry;
- Continuation of strong alliances with corporate entities;
- Support Sub-Branch operations through regular visits and training modules; and
- An enhancement of our leadership role in the veteran community.

Acknowledgments

Following Ian Griffiths' departure we were fortunate to obtain the services of Mr Kevin Davidson MVO OAM as CEO to RSL & RSL Care WA. Kevin brings a new level of administrative expertise to RSL. We welcome him and look forward to working with him in his new role.

The work of Assistant State Secretaries Gary Sutherland, Geoff (Blue) Dunne and Denis Connolly is also valued. Their loyalty, professionalism and willingness to undertake tasks at short notice are very much appreciated.

The Branch further acknowledges the support given to the League by our Patron, Dr Ken Michael AC Governor of Western Australia. His Excellency is a willing participant in League activities and we value his patronage. We take this opportunity to wish, His Excellency & Mrs Michael well for the future.

Conclusion

Your State Branch is in a healthy state. It is well administered and enjoys the commitment of a dedicated group of willing workers. We still have challenges ahead but with the determination of elected representatives and the support of the Sub Branches there is a bright future for the League.

WILLIAM E. GAYNOR OAM RFD
State President

Tasmanian Branch Report - 2008



Tony Scott OAM JP
State President

State Branch Headquarters

During the year we continued to receive great support from our counterparts in the larger states. Support also came from our State Government when, in the State Budget, \$100,000 dollars was allocated to RSL (Tasmania Branch) to assist in maintaining the objects of the League here in Tasmania.

We have made great progress with the benefits we have been working hard to obtain for our Sub-Branches and members. During the past six months we have achieved the 'umbrella' Public Liability and Volunteer Workers insurance policy which provides cover to all our Sub-Branches; the introduction and training of the Online Membership Database; the SIAG website and creation of a huge Human Resources information package specifically for RSL (Tasmania) Sub-Branches and Clubs. We have also received considerable funding through the BEST Joint Venture - Tasmania program which will enable us to provide computer and other IT equipment to those Sub-Branches who previously had none

State Congress

State Congress was this year was officially opened by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon Alan Griffin MP. There were 23 motions debated by the delegates which saw 21 carried and two withdrawn. 20 motions went forward to the National Congress held in Townville in September 2008. The former Governor of Tasmania, Mr. William Cox AC RFD ED was presented with a framed painting of the "Charge of the Light Brigade" at Beersheba in appreciation of his support to the veteran community and the League during his time as Tasmania's Governor.

Recognised for their service to the RSL and the veteran community were:

Meritorious Service Medal

Mr David Moles DFM

Life Membership

Lyndon John Bolton
Lance William Cox
Gregory Cottrell
Barry Franklin Ginn RFD ED
Noeleen Lincoln OAM
Peter William Morgan
Maurie Charles Stevens RFD

Membership

The Defence presence in Tasmania is predominantly Reservist with a small ARA staff. The RSL now has a presence at Derwent Barracks one Tuesday night a month coinciding with training parade nights. This has not only allowed us to increase our membership, but provides the military with valuable information and assistance in respect of welfare and disability claims.

Remembrance Day



School children with WW1 Banners

Armistice Day, or Remembrance Day as it is better known, saw commemorative services held in many centres across the State. The two main commemorative services were held in Launceston, where the Governor of Tasmania, His Excellency Peter Underwood, lead the wreath laying ceremony, and at the Hobart Cenotaph where school children participated in a parade of World War One banners accompanied by the Australian Army Band - Tasmania. Although Remembrance Day isn't as identifiable as ANZAC Day, the good

weather saw good crowds attend the services to mark the 90th anniversary of that first Armistice Day on the 11th November 1918 when the carnage of the Western Front finally ceased.

Chief Justice Ewan Crawford gave the address in Hobart to an audience that included Premier David Bartlett, Opposition Leader Will Hodgman and Green's Leader, Nick McKim. Also in attendance in Hobart were senior representatives of the Australian Defence Force, Tasmania Police, Veterans Affairs and other ex-service organisations. The Premier, the Hon David Bartlett MP suspended Parliament on the day, which allowed politicians to attend commemorative services around the state.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the State Government for their contribution to the commemorative activities, in the lighting up in red of Parliament House in Hobart on the nights leading up to and including the 11th November. The site was spectacular.

The Frank MacDonald MM Memorial Prize 2008

The Frank MacDonald MM Memorial Prize is a joint initiative of the RSL (Tasmania Branch) and the State Government of Tasmania. It was created shortly after the death of Tasmania's last WW1 veteran, Frank MacDonald MM to honour his memory. The prize is open to Year 9 Tasmanian students and six winners are selected each year. The tour is taken early in the following year. The prize tour group comprises those six student winners, three RSL (Tasmania Branch) representatives, two school teachers as student chaperones and State Government representatives.



Frank MacDonald MM Memorial Prize Tour 2008
at the Menin Gate ceremony

The 2007 student prize winners were Luke Bell, Thomas Adams, Julian Cook, Declan Siedler, Kate Murfet and Bianca Downes. These young people came from various secondary schools around the State. During the prize tour in April/May 2008 their teacher chaperones were Stephen King and Rosalie Mulcahy. CEO, Noeleen Lincoln OAM represented the State President and was accompanied by the other two RSL members, Paul Burley and John (Jesse) James. In the months leading up to the trip the students and adults were consistently researching either a family member or local veteran who either served or lost his life at Gallipoli or on the Western Front. The ultimate goal of the research was to visit the battle grounds and final resting places of those soldiers researched. Representing the Premier of Tasmania was The Hon Alison Ritchie MP. We remain grateful to the State Government of Tasmania for their ongoing support and commitment to the Frank MacDonald MM Memorial Prize.

Australian Capital Territory Branch Report - 2008



State President
John Merrick

This year saw the handing over of the Presidency of the ACT Branch from Gary Brodie OAM to John Merrick.

Australia Day Medallions

In accordance with established procedure to present Australia Day medallions to very worthy Branch members, three were presented at a morning tea held at ANZAC House in January 2008 to:

- Mr Paul Bohun - City of Canberra Sub-Branch
- Mr Laurie Dillon - City of Canberra Sub-Branch and Branch Trustee
- Mrs Betty Mills - Woden Valley Sub-Branch



Australia Day Medallion recipients, Laurie Dillon, Mrs Betty Mills and Paul Bohun, with State President Gary Brodie

Australian Honours and Awards

During the year under review, the following members of the Branch were honoured with Australian awards, on Australia Day and later on the Queen's Birthday:

- LTCOL Anthony Rawlins DSC
 - City of Canberra Sub-Branch
- COL Adrian Roberts OAM (Retd)
 - Woden Valley Sub-Branch
- AFP Federal Agent Vince Pannell APM
 - Peacekeepers Sub-Branch
- COL Arthur Craig OAM (Retd)
 - Branch Advocate and Welfare Officer

Commemorative Events

The ACT Branch arranges or participates in many commemorative activities in Canberra and the surrounding region. Naturally, ANZAC Day forms the major commemorative event in the yearly calendar but other events continue to involve Branch members just as much.

ANZAC Day activities

• Pre-ANZAC Day wreath-laying ceremony

The Australian War Memorial and the Department of Veterans' Affairs again jointly conducted a special wreath-laying ceremony on 8th April 2008 in the Western Forecourt of the Memorial to allow aged veterans and War Widows/Widowers an opportunity to commemorate this significant anniversary, knowing that otherwise they may not be able to attend ANZAC Day services.

• Annual Combined Schools ANZAC and Peace Ceremony

This very moving and informative pre-ANZAC Day event is organised each year by the Executive and members of the Woden Valley Sub-Branch for school students and members of the community in the Woden Valley area. This year's guest speaker was His Excellency Monsieur François Descoueyte, Ambassador of France, who spoke of the sacrifice and bravery of the Australian troops who fought in France and Belgium during World War I.

• Dawn Service

A very cold Canberra morning again did not deter the estimated 30,000 people who were in attendance. This record figure surpasses all previous Dawn Service attendances in Canberra. The solemn laying of two wreaths on the Stone of Remembrance during the ceremony by Mr Allan Sellwood DFC of the City of Canberra Sub-Branch and Air Commodore Peter Port ONZM, Military Attaché at the New Zealand High Commission, symbolised the unity of ANZAC. Piper Constable Stephen Ladd of the Australian Federal Police Pipes & Drums Band played the Pipers' Lament during the wreath laying. ACT President, Gary Brodie OAM read the ANZAC Dedication segment and Vice President John King recited The Ode.

Major Rodney Ainsworth of the Salvation Army offered a very poignant address, with Junior Legatee James Buchanan reading the poem "In Flanders Fields". It is of note that this service is broadcast live throughout Australia by the ABC and radio and television networks.

- **92nd ANZAC Day March and Commemorative Service**

The attendance at this year's programme was estimated at around 18,000 (similar to last year's figure). The Service was attended by the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Kevin Rudd, and his wife Ms Therese Rein, His Excellency Dr John Larkindale, New Zealand High Commissioner, and Mrs Philippa Larkindale, amongst other VIPs and dignitaries. The Prime Minister took the salute, with the March being led by ACT Branch President Mr Gary Brodie OAM, and Air Commodore Peter Port ONZM, Defence Adviser, New Zealand High Commission.

Our sincere thanks go to the Dawn Service coordinator, Vice-President Jan Paulga; the ANZAC March coordinator, Derek Roylance AM; and the Senior Parade Marshal, Kevin Noon CSM. Also our thanks extended to the Chairman, Director and staff of the Australian War Memorial committees, who give unstintingly of their time and expertise in providing the finest venue in Australia to commemorate ANZAC Day.

- **ANZAC Day Memorial Service - Embassy of France**

As in past years, following the commemorations in ANZAC Parade, the Ambassador of France held a memorial service where wreaths were laid by the National President, Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd), and by the Branch President, Mr Gary Brodie OAM. Mr Brodie also delivered a formal address as part of the ceremony. A formal reception in the Embassy residence followed the service.

Other Commemorative Events

Other commemorative events in which the Branch was involved during the year included:

February

- National Servicemen's Memorial Service

March

- ADFA Chief of Defence Force Parade
- RAAF 87th Anniversary Commemorative Service

May

- Battle of the Coral Sea Commemorative Service
- Re-dedication of RSL Memorial Stone at Gungahlin Cemetery

June

- Trooping of the Queen's Colour at RMC
- RMC Prizes and Sporting Awards Ceremony
- RMC Fulltime GSO Graduation Parade
- Reserve Forces Day 60th Anniversary Ceremony
- Japan's Armed Forces Day Reception

July

- Australian Defence Force Military Diocese World Youth Day
- Re-dedication of 10th Bn Memorial in Eddison Park, Woden
- Korean Veterans' Day Memorial Ceremony

August

- Vietnam Veterans' Remembrance Day Ceremony

September

- Battle for Australia Commemorative Ceremony

October

- RMC Beating the Retreat Ceremony
- United Nations Day Flag Raising Ceremony
- National Merchant Navy Annual Memorial Service

November

- Greek National Day Commemoration Ceremony
- Remembrance Day Ceremony at Australian War Memorial

December

- RMC Prize Giving and Graduation Parade

Branch Congress

The ACT Branch Congress was held on Friday, 13th June 2008, again at the Hellenic Club, Canberra. The Congress was preceded by a memorial service and wreath-laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier at the Australian War Memorial.

This year the Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker was the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Major General Steve Gower AO (Retd) who formally opened the Congress and presented League Awards to well-deserving recipients. Other speakers included Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd), (National RSL President), The Hon. Alan Griffin MP, (Minister for Veterans' Affairs), The Hon Mrs Bronwyn Bishop MP, (Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs), Mr Ed Killestyn PSM (Acting Secretary DVA), Mr Bill Humphreys (NSW State Councillor, representing RSL NSW State President Mr Don Rowe OAM,) and Mr Kel Ryan (Senior Vice President Queensland RSL).

These speakers were complemented by other VIP guests including, in alphabetical order, Mr Gary Collins, (Deputy Commissioner, DVA), Professor Ken Donald AO (Chairperson, Repatriation Medical Authority), Mrs Annette Ellis MP (Federal Member for Canberra), Mr Michael Griffin (Principal Member, Veterans' Review Board), The Hon Margaret Reid AO LLB (Honorary RSL Life Member), Mr Derek Robson AM, (RSL National Secretary), Brigadier Bill Rolfe AO (Retd), (Services Member, Repatriation Commission), Major General Paul Stevens AO (Retd) (Director, Australian War Graves). They were joined by Past ACT Branch Presidents Ron Metcalfe OAM, Derek Roylance AM and Mrs Colleen Thurgar AM and representatives from Kindred Service Organisations.

This year two representatives from the Port Moresby Sub-Branch attended the Congress - President, Mr Joe Filippi DMS and Treasurer, Mr Garth McIlwain CBE.

Branch Executive

The following members were announced as being elected unopposed to offices as follows:

Branch President	LTCO John Merrick (Retd)
Dpty Branch President	Mr John King
Vice President	Mrs June Healy OAM
Vice President	Mr David Millar
Vice President	Mr Jan Paulga
Branch Treasurer	Mr Mickey Michaelis
Assistant Secretary	Mr Bruce Tunnah OAM JP

League Awards

The following were presented with League Awards and Certificates by Major General Gower:

Meritorious Service Award

LTCOL John Joseph Merrick (Retd)

Life Membership

Mrs Loraina Lillian Dorham OAM
Mr George Derek Fowler
Mr David Graeme Millar

Certificate of Appreciation

Mr Robert (Bob) Johnson
Mrs Gwenoth Hazel Kirk
Mrs Muriel Edith Pearce
Mr Paul Taylor
The Canberra Times
(for ANZAC Day assistance)
ABC Television, Canberra
(for live broadcasts of ANZAC march)
Signflair
(for provision of contingent signs for ANZAC march)

Long Service Award

Mr Clive Edward Gardner
Mr George Maxwell Pridgeon
Mr Dudley Charles Smith
Mr George Edward Whitfield
Mr Trevor Leslie William Wilson



LTCOL John Merrick receiving his Meritorious Service Award from MAJGEN Steve Gower

RSL - ADF Involvement

The strong bonds formed over many years between the Branch and the Staff, Officer Cadets and Midshipmen of the Australian Defence Force Academy and the Royal Military College, Duntroon continue unabated. The Branch provides prizes for nominated personnel, prior to the respective graduation ceremonies. Branch personnel are continually invited to (and attend) Prizes & Awards Ceremonies, Graduation Ceremonies, Trooping the Colour and other significant occasions.

Membership

Branch membership continues to 'flutter' around the 1900 mark, although there is a pleasant rise in the number of Affiliates joining the League. We should continue to look at ways of attracting more serving members and thus retain our position as the peak national Ex-Service Organisation. It is difficult in the ACT to persuade potential members that the RSL exists primarily for the welfare of serving and ex-service personnel and their dependants.

Welfare and Advocacy

As is well known, the welfare of veterans and their dependants forms the foundation of the League, not just those who are RSL members. Arthur Craig and his wife Kathleen ably assist all applicants with initial claims, the preparation of cases for the Veterans' Review Board and liaison with the Branch Solicitors in presenting cases at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Finances

Our financial position is steady and, thanks to the sterling efforts of Sub-Branch members, our ANZAC Day and 'Red Poppy' appeals, we are able to continue to support the local Veteran community.

Overseas Sub-Branches

Overseas Sub-Branches of the RSL are managed by the ACT Branch. They continue to provide valuable service to their local veteran communities by raising the profile of the RSL in a number of overseas countries in liaison with other Ex-Service organisations. They offer advice on general welfare aspects, not only to our ex-pat veterans and their dependents, but also to numerous charities in their sphere of influence.

Currently there are four overseas Sub-Branches of the League administered by the ACT Branch - Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea), Angeles City (Philippines), Subic Bay (Philippines) and Washington (USA).

Change of Venue for Branch Headquarters

The organisation which had provided our 'home' for a considerable time, the Canberra RSL Memorial and Citizens Club, went into voluntary receivership in March, but was hoping to be able to trade out of their difficulties. This unfortunately did not eventuate and the Branch was advised in October that it would have to vacate the premises in about six weeks. Later that month the Branch was advised that the Club would cease to operate at the close of business on 11th November. The premises and contents had been purchased by the Hellenic Club and the building would be subject to considerable renovation until about May 2009.

Following discussions with several organisations regarding possible accommodation, the President and Committee of the Canberra Services Club in

Manuka were offered to provide suitable accommodation for the Branch Headquarters in their premises. Relocation to the new premises took place at the end of November, which will be our 'home' for 2009 with the possibility of a longer term arrangement.

Comments of Appreciation

My sincere thanks to the RSL National President, Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd); RSL National Secretary, Mr Derek Robson AM; the respective RSL State Presidents and the staff of RSL National Headquarters for their always wise counsel and comradeship shared through the numerous National Executive meetings, the necessary Committee work and RSL activities.

My sincere thanks also, to our own Branch Executive for their strong support to me in our successful endeavours to promote worthwhile projects and activities here in the ACT for the Veteran community.

I owe a special thanks to the appointed ACT Chief Executive Officer, Mr James Davidson, who has been a most professional and dedicated colleague, always on hand to advise and to offer guidance to myself and others when required on the complexities or subtleties of the RSL Constitution or other important RSL issues that have been raised from time to time.

Conclusion

I consider it an honour to have served as the ACT Branch President since June 2008 and value the opportunity to serve for and with so many fine people, united in their dedication to do our best for the Veteran community and their dependants.

JOHN J. MERRICK
Branch President

National Conditions of Service Committee Report - 2008

The Committee continued to meet on a regular basis to both monitor Defence conditions of service and to action representations from individuals and State Branches.

Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

During 2008 GPCAPT Phil Morrall AM, CSC (Rtd) continued to represent the League as an intervenor at the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal. In addition to a range of pay and allowance cases applying to individual musterings or groups, the major DFRT cases related to the placements of Other Ranks groups under the new Graded Other Ranks Pay Scale (GORPS) and revision of the graded pay structure for Warrant Officers.

The major remaining issue for 2009 consideration is the placement of Commissioned Aircrew members of all three Services.

Other Matters

The Committee considered and received briefings from Defence representatives on a range of issues, including housing and removals.

The Committee has undertaken continuing cooperation with DFWA in formulating a joint response to the conditions of service issues as they arise.

The Committee wishes to encourage both individual League members and Branches to represent matters of concern and more general feedback in order that the League might maintain an informed view on issues affecting current and former ADF members.

PHIL MORRALL
Chairman

Youth, Heritage and Citizenship Committee Report - 2008

The Youth, Heritage and Citizenship Committee (YHC) did not meet during the year, although the Chairman, Brigadier John Moyle (Retd), continues to represent the RSL on the Simpson Prize Advisory Committee. The Simpson Prize, sponsored by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Department of Veterans'

Affairs, provides for an expenses paid trip for a secondary student from each State and Territory each year to the ANZAC Day Ceremony at Gallipoli.

JOHN MOYLE
Chairman

National Defence Committee Report - 2008

General

The first nine months of the year have seen progress in some of the major strategic issues facing the world and retrogression in others. On the positive side, there were indications that North Korea was serious, for the first time, in her commitment to eliminate its nuclear weapons capability, although recent developments are less certain and the situation in Iraq is showing marked improvement. Iran's nuclear intentions on the other hand are still unclear. While the West is convinced that she is developing a nuclear weapons capability, Iran is adamant that its nuclear capacity is for civil purposes only. The stalemate continues although recent talks have perhaps made some progress. Additionally, Iran's support in the form of weapons for both Hezbollah and Hamas is a matter of significant concern for the West and Israel in particular. Afghanistan continues as a major problem for NATO and the West in general. The most favourable estimate is that the operational situation has not changed and the least favourable is that it has deteriorated. Whatever the truth, the country is unstable, has weak central government and requires massive infrastructure development to achieve any form of ultimate stability.

In our immediate region, Timor still has the potential for periodic political instability, a situation which will continue for some time, although in recent months there has been relative calm. Papua New Guinea and Fiji, two of the largest countries, have made little progress, the former through governmental deficiencies and the latter because of its overthrow of legitimate democratic processes.

The incursions into and obvious interest in the Pacific region of China has some analysts worried. Whether this interest has wider significance or is merely an attempt to compete with other interested countries, namely Taiwan and Japan, for influence and economic advantage, is unclear.

Iraq

From the Australian viewpoint, the most significant occurrence was the withdrawal of the Overwatch Battle Group (OBG-W) and the Australian Army Training Team (AATTI) on 2 June. This move was in line with a pre-election commitment to withdraw the operational element of the Army, by the new Government. The Australians have been replaced by US units in southern Iraq, presumably carrying

out the same role as the Australians they replaced, calling into question the rationale for the withdrawal, that the task of handing over responsibility to the Iraqi Army was now complete.

There is no doubt that although the OBG-W and the AATTI have made significant progress and the AATTI particularly has been involved in training some 33000 Iraqi soldiers, the case for withdrawal was based more on politics than on military reality. Whatever the reason, RAAF units flying from external bases will continue to operate inside Iraq, and an RAN ship will continue to operate in the Gulf. The Security Detachment in Baghdad will also remain in place. In December, the Iraqi government concluded an agreement with Australia and other countries to allow foreign forces to remain in Iraq after 2008.

Taking a wider view, the security situation in Iraq generally has improved considerably over the last few months, attributed to the recent troop surge, but also obviously to the focussed counter insurgency tactics introduced by General Petraeus. As a result, the Iraqi government appears to have stabilised to some degree and is functioning with greater confidence and effectiveness, giving rise to reasonable expectations that some political solution may be achievable in due course.

Afghanistan

The Australian Reconstruction Task Force (RTF), comprising engineers and infantry, the Special Operations Task Group of Commandos and SAS, and the RAAF radar surveillance unit continue to operate in Afghanistan. Early in the year, additional operational elements were deployed. Two Chinooks from 5 Aviation Regiment and supporting elements deployed in February to the southern province of Kandahar to provide troop carrying and heavy lift support to Coalition forces. In March, 15 Australian gunners from 3/12 Medium Regiment deployed with British troops to Afghanistan after spending six months in the UK in preparation. It was also announced that field gunners from 4 Field Regiment will deploy with 7th Regiment Royal Horse Artillery as part of Task Force Helmand late in 2008. These two developments are interesting and perhaps signify a willingness on the part of the Government to become more involved in a war it has identified as of primary importance to the West and to the world.

The overall situation in Afghanistan remains difficult and although significant inroads into Taliban strength

have been made, there is no shortage of volunteers to make up the ranks, substantially due to a porous border with Pakistan. There is no doubt more troops are needed and Australia has repeatedly called for greater efforts from NATO countries. Whether we will back our rhetoric and do more by contributing conventional elements in reasonable numbers remains to be seen. To date only the US and Britain have pledged to increase troop numbers, with the US committing an additional 30,000 in 2009. Even with increased troop numbers, massive economic and infrastructure development will be required to ensure political stability and some form of genuine democratic government. If this does not occur, the stalemate which presently exists will not improve and may well deteriorate.

Timor

The Australian commitment of a battalion group to East Timor remained in place and the situation in that country has remained relatively calm over the first months of 2008. The main task of the Australian unit is to provide a back up to the UN and Timorese Police in the event of substantial civil disturbance and, more importantly, to provide assurance to the Government that Australia has a continuing vested interest in the stability of the country. It should be anticipated that this commitment will continue in the immediate future, although it is not without cost to the Army, as many soldiers, particularly NCOs, have had multiple tours in an environment that is generally routine and lacking the stimulation of the more active theatres of Iraq and Afghanistan.

In October, the Minister announced that the Australian force would be reduced to 650 by early 2009. This reduction signifies that the security situation has improved, but also that our long term commitment to East Timor remains.

Solomon Islands

In March, a company of Army Reservists deployed to the Solomon Islands as part of Australia's commitment to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The Reservists, from 11 Bde had six weeks force preparation training in Townsville before the deployment, which lasted for four months. In July, a further deployment of Reservists took place. The experiment of drawing Reserve volunteers as the main element of the Army contribution to RAMSI has been successful and will no doubt continue while this commitment remains in place.

Deployment Rotation

For the last few years, the ADF has been committed to a number of different theatres simultaneously placing some stress on defence

manpower. Because most Army deployments are small, of one or two companies, there has been a tendency to extract sub-units from different locations and cobble together ad-hoc organisations. To avoid the obvious disadvantages of this practice for unit cohesion and for other reasons, it has been decided that in future operational deployments will be provided from one Brigade at a time. This will allow the non-operational Brigades to concentrate on re-grouping after completing their operational commitment and more importantly provide time for proper collective training. This is a significant change of direction and is strongly supported by the Defence Committee.

Defence Budget 2008-09

Because Defence was faced with a substantial overfunding problem from the financial year 2007-08, the department has been forced to cover a number of items in this year's budget from its own resources. These include \$1billion in operational deployment costs, \$77million for unfunded new initiatives, and a requirement to defer \$191million of spending until the next decade.

However, the budget for the year 2008-09 remains relatively generous. The total amount of taxpayers dollars to be expended is \$22.1billion, which is an increase of \$2.1billion on the previous year and represents 3.9% real growth. During the next four years, net defence spending will rise by 4.9%. This represents 1.8% of GDP, although this year's budget has increased over last years when the figure was 2%, due to increased economic growth.

The largest items in this year's budget are deployment costs. Over the next three years, \$702million will be spent in Afghanistan, \$268million in Iraq and \$193million in East Timor, bringing the total costs of operations in Afghanistan to \$2.1billion and in Iraq to \$2.3billion respectively.

The budget revealed that recent initiatives on recruitment and retention are paying dividends. For some years the ADF has had difficulty in retaining its size let alone growing. However, for the second year in a row the ADF has grown. Army is up by 1,141, Air Force by 319 and Navy by 192 compared to last year. This is a considerable achievement in a tight labour market, but still has not solved the problem of deficiencies in particular skills and trades.

Growth projections into the future are ambitious; from a strength of 53,156 the ADF will grow to 54,747 next year and 57,506 in four years time. On the other hand, civilian numbers are set to fall over four years from 20,795 to 20,000.

The picture for major equipment is not as good. The \$2.3billion of deferrals announced in this year's budget, are the most recent instalment of \$5.6billion of delays that have arisen over the last eighteen months. These delays are due to a number of factors, including unique Australian specifications. In contrast, recent off the shelf acquisitions have been delivered with considerable speed. None the less, the list of major capital items coming into service at present or in train is impressive and unparalleled in peace time.¹

The Defence Committee is of the view that the present government is continuing with the initiatives in equipment and manpower generated by the previous government to the benefit of Australia's long term defence capability. While the Government appears genuinely committed to maintaining defence expenditure, it remains to be seen what effect the economic downturn in the last quarter of 2008 will have in the short term on the budget and hence on the defence program.

Defence White Paper

In February, the Defence Minister announced the commissioning of a new White Paper along with the announcement of the people responsible for its delivery. Mr Michael Pezzullo, a Deputy Secretary of Defence was appointed principal author, together with a writing team. In addition, a Ministerial Advisory Panel of three was appointed to provide external advice and work with the writing team. Also, the appointment of a Community Consultation Panel was foreshadowed, which was appointed later in June under the chairmanship of Mr Stephen Loosley.

At the time of writing, the work on the White Paper is well advanced and the Community Consultation Panel has almost finished its external activities. While there are reports of considerable internal conflict in equating desirable objectives to available funding, the result should be known just before the 2009 budget. On 5 August, the Defence Committee had a consultation with the Panel at the RSL National Headquarters. An overall RSL position on strategy, defence policy and force structure was put and a very constrictive discussion followed. Both the Committee and the Panel were well satisfied with the outcome, which the Chairman of the Panel described as extremely useful.

Army Reorganisation

The Chief of Army recently announced that he will be restructuring the Army's higher command and control organisation. The rationale for the restructuring is to better position the Army to

conduct current operations and operations that may be required by government in the future. Acknowledging that the Functional Command structure has served the Army well, Lieutenant General Gillespie said that improvements in communication, both vertically and laterally have necessitated this change for maximum efficiency.

Starting in early 2009, Army will raise a Forces Command which will be responsible for the conduct of individual and collective training for much of the Army. The 1st Division will assume the primary role as the mounting, assessment and certifications authority for all individuals and conventional force elements deploying on operations.

C17 Fleet

The fourth Boeing C17 was delivered to the RAAF in March, completing the purchase on time and on budget. The first Globemaster entered service in December 2006 and they have already been used on a number of external operations. An initial operational capability with the aircraft was achieved in September 2007, and full operational capability will be achieved in 2011 with the completion of in-country training systems and permanent facilities at Amberley. The acquisition of these aircraft represents a significant increase in Australia's capacity to deploy troops and logistic support.

Air Combat Capability Review, Part A

The main conclusion to come out of the Air Combat Capability Review Part A was that the projected purchase of additional Super Hornet aircraft announced by the previous government was confirmed. The justification for this conclusion was that cancellation of the project would have involved significant financial penalties and also have created unacceptable tensions between the contract partners. However, it was acknowledged that the Super Hornet was an excellent aircraft for the tasks required, a view long held by the Defence Committee. To stifle any further argument, the government announced in October the creation of a Super Hornet Facilities project at Amberley at a cost of \$117m, to begin in early 2009 to support the 24 new aircraft.

Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Project

The Minister for Defence visited the Lockheed Martin plant in Texas in June to review progress on this project in which Australia has a financial interest. He was apparently satisfied that good progress was being made, although there were still a number of challenges to be met if the aircraft was to meet all its specifications. A final decision

¹The Cost of Defence, ASPI Defence Budget Brief 2008-2009. pp VI-VIII

on the acquisition of the aircraft is to be made in the context of the White Paper due out in 2009. It appears that the fanciful idea of acquisition of Raptors has now been discarded, a conclusion long endorsed by the Defence Committee.

Late in the year, articles appeared in the press to the effect that the RAND Corporation had conducted a war game and that the F35 JSF had come out of it very badly. These reports were entirely inaccurate with RAND denying that the war games had involved an adjudication of air-to-air combat capability. Why these reports appeared is unknown, but probably stem from commercial competition.

Collins Class Submarines Capability Upgrades - Future Submarine Capability

HMAS Waller is the first Collins Class submarine to receive the new Replacement Combat System and Heavyweight Torpedo capabilities and will now undergo a period of operational tests and evaluation, including taking part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC 08) exercise off Hawaii. This upgrade is an important milestone in developing the final capability of the Collins Class submarines. Installation of these capabilities is continuing for the remaining submarine fleet.

In a speech in November, the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Procurement, Mr Combet, said that the Government was committed to retaining a viable submarine warfare capability and would conduct studies to enable a submission for consideration in the second half of 2009. He emphasised that construction of the next generation submarines will be a major program perhaps unrivalled in Australian history in relation to its technical complexity. He also announced that a Project Office is in the process of establishment to manage the Future Submarine Project.

Upgraded Frigates

Two upgraded guided missile frigates, HMA Ships Darwin and Sydney were accepted from the prime contractors in November. Acceptance of the third frigate, HMAS Melbourne occurred at the end of the year, with the fourth, HMAS Newcastle due by June 2009.

Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters (ARH)

In May, the Government announced that a Deed of Agreement had been signed with the contractor Australian Aerospace Ltd in order to get 22 ARH Tiger helicopters to the Army as fast as possible. This agreement follows a number of delays in the project related to pilot training and through life support and a consequent need to reprogram

funds in the Defence budget. Eleven ARH Tiger aircraft have already been accepted with 2400 hours now flown and 20 aircrew qualified.

Additional Bushmasters and Upgraded M113

A contract was signed in late 2008 (with Thales) for an additional 293 Bushmaster vehicles for the Army. The Bushmaster has proved to be a successful vehicle in the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan and has been exported to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom with other countries showing interest. The excellent mobility and protection afforded by the Bushmaster has significantly enhanced the protection provided to troops in operational areas.

An additional 81 upgraded M113 have been added to 350 vehicles already provided with increased firepower and protection, to cater for the requirements of 5RAR and the recently raised 7RAR.

Defence Capability Plan (DCP)

A senior Defence official addressed the National Defence Committee on the Defence Capability Plan (DCP). In a wide ranging address he emphasised the long term and joint service nature of all major capability development in the ADF. He also mentioned the limitations imposed on Force development caused by the availability of expert and experienced Service personnel. He emphasised that a key factor influencing the formulation of the DCP was whether the plan could be realised, given that it is one thing to make a plan but quite another to bring a DCP to fruition in the planned time frame. Factors taken into account included the cost of evolving technology for capital equipment and its sustainability; the ability to recruit and retain skilled personnel to execute the DCP; transition arrangements as new capabilities and technologies entered service; and the through life costs of repair, maintenance and support.

Prime Minister's Speech

At the RSL National Congress Dinner in September, the Prime Minister made a wide ranging speech on defence policy. He emphasised the strategic implications of the extensive re-armament activities in a number of South East Asian countries, the expanding influence of China, both economically and militarily, particularly in relation to a significant expansion in Chinese military capacity and the consequences for Australia of these developments.

During the speech, he detailed the capacity that he considered each Service must develop to meet these challenges. It was a realistic, blunt and

accurate assessment of the situation Australia is in at present and the situation facing this country in the medium term, together with a definitive statement of what is required of the Defence Force.

Consultations with the Defence Committee

The Defence Committee continued the practice of inviting guests to speak to it on a variety of subjects connected with general defence policy. So far this year these included:

- Lieutenant General Hurley - on command and control within the ADF and current operational matters;
- Mr Ric Smith - on China;
- Mr Anthony Bergin and Mr Don Williams - on Australia's homeland security;
- Mr Ric Smith - on the Homeland and Border Security Review;
- Vice Admiral Tripovich - on capability development;
- The Defence White Paper Community Development Panel - a general discussion with the Committee on current and future defence issues.

Consultation with the Shadow Minister for Defence

On 3 December, the Defence Committee held a consultation with the Shadow Minister for Defence, Senator Johnston. During the meeting the Senator expanded on the Opposition's strategic perceptions and answered a number of questions.

Conclusion

The advent of the new Government has not materially altered the direction of defence policy. There have been some changes at the margins such as the partial withdrawal from Iraq, but generally Australia's commitment to major operations in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, Timor have been maintained and, in the case of Afghanistan, enthusiastically supported. Although there have been some politically generated noises about various aspects of major capital procurement, these projects have all remained intact, as has the commitment to two further infantry battalions and the policies of improving recruitment and retention and of a modest expansion of the ADF. There are unknown factors that may effect defence funding that flow from the dramatic economic downturn globally and in Australia in the last months of 2008, and the predictions of worse to come in 2009. The Government's budget will be significantly restructured with possible consequences for defence spending. These consequences, together with the outcome of the White Paper processes are impossible to predict, but the hope is that present trends in the development of the ADF will continue with the minimum possible disruption.

A CLUNIES-ROSS
Chairman

National Trustees Report - 2008

General

During 2008, the National Trustees were:

Mr John Sheldrick OAM - Chairman
MAJGEN Sir William Refshauge AC CBE ED (Retd)
Mr Harold Fife OAM
Mr John Button OAM
The Hon. Mr Justice Dennis Cowdroy OAM
Mr Eric Kay AM ED
Mr Derek Roylance AM
MAJGEN Peter Day AO (Retd)

Meetings were also attended by Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd), National President; Mr Gary Brodie OAM, President ACT Branch (National Executive Member); Lieutenant Colonel John Merrick who replaced Mr Brodie as the National Executive Member on his election as President of the ACT Branch in June 2008 and Mr David Sinclair, National Treasurer. Mrs Jan Ormerod, Business Manager RSL National Headquarters, acted as Secretary to the Trustees.

Meetings were held on four occasions during the year. In addition, there were some out of session deliberations to address pressing matters. Income for the Funds resulted from capitation payments to the Jubilee Fund, some gratefully received donations, and interest earned from deposited funds. Interest returns for 2008 were decreased compared to recent past performance due to the lowering of Australian interest rates.

The RSL Overseas Aid Fund

This Fund was established to accept donations from the RSL, its members and the public especially in support of special appeals which may be raised from time to time to assist in relief of persons in developing countries, particularly those of the Asia-Pacific region, and which are recognised as developing countries by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Due to the lack of use of this Fund over the last few years and little likelihood of it being needed in the foreseeable future, this Fund was wound up during 2008 with all residual fund money being transferred to the Jubilee Fund.

The National RSL Welfare & Disaster Fund

This Fund was established by the League to assist eligible persons in Australia who are in necessitous circumstances. During 2008, \$6566 was distributed in grants.

The Australian World War I Veterans Welfare & Commemorative Fund

The primary purpose of this Fund is to provide assistance to World War I veterans and their dependants in necessitous or deserving circumstances. The Fund is also able to be used to make contributions to commemorating World War I service. With little likelihood of there being any claims relating to this fund from World War I dependants, this fund was wound-up during 2008 and all residual monies transferred to the VC and Historic Medals Trust.

The Jubilee Commemorative Fund of the RSL

This Fund, which was established in 1966, enables the League to promote understanding and friendship between Australia and neighbouring countries, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region. The Trust also enables the League to assist the families of ex-servicemen in that region who are in need, and families of ex-servicemen in countries presently or formerly members of the Commonwealth of Nations. The Trust also supports the RSL Reg Saunders Scholarship and RSL Scholarships, awarded annually to Australian veterans' children in necessitous and deserving circumstances, while undertaking tertiary education in Australia.

During the year, grants of \$US 920 each were made for three RSL Kapyong Scholarships. These scholarships are provided each year and include one each from the Australian Korean Society (ACT) Fund and the Australian Korean War Memorial Fund. (Both funds are sub-accounts of the Jubilee Fund).

A grant of \$12,000 was made again this year to support the exchange of medical students to PNG, Fiji and Vietnam through the Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney and the Hoc Mai exchange program.

Two RSL Scholarships, each of \$4000 were awarded to Australian veterans' children to assist in undertaking tertiary studies. The 2008 recipients were Ms Melissa Anderson and Ms Krista McMeeken.

The RSL Reg Saunders Scholarship of \$3000 was awarded, but the recipient and the nominated reserve recipient subsequently did not take up the offer. This was a most unfortunate situation and is the second year in a row where the nominated winners of the scholarship failed to pursue the offer.

The Reg Saunders Scholarship and the RSL Scholarships are administered through the Australian Veterans' Children's Assistance Trust (AVCAT) and the RSL again acknowledges their assistance.

The Council of the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (RCEL) meeting in Ghana during the year agreed to waive the payment of affiliation fees from member nations to the RCEL. As a consequence, no affiliation fees were paid this year and this arrangement will continue into the future. Instead a membership fee of £10 sterling is to be paid annually.

Following a request from NSW Branch, a grant of \$1000 was made through the Australian Embassy in Cambodia to the Cambodian Children's Surgical Centre.

The Victoria Cross & Historic Medals Trust (including the Special Commemorative Plaques)

This Fund allows the League to assist in the purchase of historic medals for display to the public in museums and in particular the Australian War Memorial, and for commemorative purposes.

A grant of £250 sterling for maintenance of Rising Sun Badges cut into the Chalk hillsides by WWI diggers at Codford St Marys, England, was paid during 2008.

\$1200 was granted for restoration work to be carried out at the grave of Flt Sgt Tony La Gruta, an Australian Airman, who was killed in an air crash in the UK during World War II and whose grave is near the site of the crash in which he was killed. The grant was made through the Victorian branch of the RSL which contributed also to the work.

The Special Commemorative Plaques Fund is maintained to support the commemorative work of Mr Ross Bastiaan. Mr Bastiaan made no requests for withdrawals from the Fund for his work during the year.

The Mountbatten Memorial Fund

This Fund, which was established in 1979, perpetuates the memory of Lord Louis Mountbatten. The invested capital of the Fund is maintained and the interest earned is provided annually to the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (RCEL) to assist in relieving distress and hardship among disadvantaged ex-servicemen and women in countries presently or formerly members of the Commonwealth of Nations. A grant of \$7000 was made to the RCEL from the Fund during 2008.

The RSL & 6th Division Australian-Hellenic Educational Memorial Fund

This Fund was established from the residual funds remaining after the completion of the Hellenic Memorial in ANZAC Parade, Canberra. Contributions from the 6th Australian Division Association and the Preveli Monastery Fund in Western Australia also added to the Fund which supports assistance to students in Crete and to other charitable works on the island.

Following the untimely death of Mr Kyriakos Maniatis (the then Deputy Greek Ambassador), the Greek Ambassador has now recently appointed Mr Emmanuel Soultanopoulos as his representative on the Committee for this Fund.

Earnings from this Fund provide each year for two scholarships to assist Cretan students under the age of 25 to undertake tertiary education in Greece. One scholarship is named as the 6th Australian Division Scholarship and one name the Preveli Monastery Scholarship. As well, an annual donation is made to the Bishop of Spili's Destitute Fund.



Presentation of the 2008 6th Division Scholarship, Preveli Monastery Scholarship and the donation to the Bishop of Spili's Destitute Fund by the Australian Ambassador.

Various donations, including from Bellinger River RSL Sub-branch, City of Blacktown RSL Sub-branch and Lightning Ridge RSL Sub-branch, which add to the capital of the Fund and hence its earnings, were gratefully received during the year. For 2008, the Trustees were pleased to increase the value of each scholarship to \$2750 and the donation to the Bishop of Spili's Destitute Fund to \$1000. The Trustees were most grateful that the Australian Ambassador to Greece was able to be present in Crete again in 2008 to make the presentations of the Scholarships and donation.

The Mona Tait & May Hayman Memorial Fund

This Fund commemorates the bravery of two Nursing Sisters, formerly of the Canberra Community Hospital, both of whom were murdered by Japanese troops during World War II. Sister Mona Tait was killed on the shores of Banka Island whilst attached to the 8th Australian Division and May Hayman was killed when she was attached to an Anglican Mission in Papua New Guinea. The Fund was initiated by staff of the old Canberra Hospital but after some time they requested it be transferred to the RSL National Trustees. The Fund enables books to be purchased from accrued interest and presented to the Nurses' Library at the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Canberra each year.

During 2008 a donation to the Fund was gratefully received from The Gap RSL Sub-Branch and a further grant made from the Fund to purchase books for the Nurses' Library at the University of Canberra.

The RSL War Veterans' Homes and Welfare Trust

This Fund was established in 1995 with a donation from the Queensland State Branch of the RSL. During 2008, grants from accrued interest amounting to \$41,820.24 were paid to RSL National Headquarters to meet a proportion of the welfare costs it incurred.

RSL Foundation

The Trustees made a grant from accrued interest of \$24,053.57 from the RSL Foundation to the RSL National Office to meet a proportion of the welfare costs it incurred.

J A SHELDRIK
Chairman

National Veterans' Affairs Committee Report - 2008

The Year in Review

Last year started with a new Government and new Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Honourable Alan Griffin MP in place. The year also saw a changing of the guard at the Department, with the resignation of the Secretary and President of the Repatriation Commission, Mr Mark Sullivan AO. Mr Sullivan has taken up the appointment as Managing Director of ACTEW Corporation and leaves DVA with the thanks of NVAC for his willingness to engage with NVAC on veterans' issues.

He has been replaced by Mr Ian Campbell PSM, who was previously the Electoral Commissioner. Mr Campbell is no stranger to DVA as he has previously served as the Deputy President of the Repatriation Commission. We wish him well in his new appointment.

Following the election of the Labour Government, it has delivered on the following election promises:

- increased payments for the General Rate of Disability Pension, the Special Rate Pension (TPI), and the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA);
- pensions would be indexed at the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE) rather than traditional CPI increases; and
- widows/ers of veterans who died whilst in receipt of the Intermediate Rate and Temporary payment at the Special Rate (TTI) of Pension would be entitled to the War Widows Pension.

The promises that are still to be ratified include:

- review into the Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Act;
- revisit the recommendations of the Clarke Review;
- address the cost of pharmaceuticals for accepted disabilities;
- inquiry into former F-111 Deseal/Reseal workers;
- include young ex-service people with disabilities in the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement; and
- review the aged care needs of veterans and 'special needs'.

NVAC will consistently monitor the Government to ensure that all its election pledges for veterans and their dependents are implemented.

F-111 Deseal/Reseal Inquiry

In September, along with Mr Viv Quinn and Mr Ray Townsend of RSL Queensland, I represented the RSL at the joint Parliamentary Committee Hearing into the F-111 Deseal/Reseal Workers and their Families Inquiry.

The RSL submission and the transcript are available at the RSL website www.rsl.org.au.

The report on this inquiry was due to be released mid 2009.

2008 National Congress

Arising out of each National Congress is the RSL's Budget Submission to the Government.

The Priority Proposals are as follows:

1. Indexation

That the indexation of all components of Disability Pensions and Military Superannuation under the DFRDB and MSBS schemes be calculated with reference to both the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE).

2. Carbon Emissions Trading Scheme

That no recipient of the Service Pension, War Widows Pension, or Income Support Supplement be financially disadvantaged under the carbon emissions trading scheme.

3. Mental Health Disorders and Rehabilitation

That the Government develop a national mental health rehabilitation scheme for veterans suffering with chronic mental health problems based on individual case assessment and management programs which includes, where necessary, accommodation assistance options for homeless veterans.

4. Residential Care-Younger Veterans

That the Government develop a system to ensure access to appropriate accommodation for disabled veterans who require 24 hour supported living but are too young to qualify for aged care services.

5. Veterans' Aged Care

That the Government remove the barriers to veterans and war widows accessing higher levels of community aged care and thereby enabling them to make informed and appropriate choices regarding their ability to continue to live in the community. For nursing home accommodation, ensure that the 'special needs' status of veterans is recognised consistently across all States in the annual advertising and allocation of new aged care places and packages.

6. Pharmaceuticals

Those entitled veterans are provided with free pharmaceuticals for accepted disabilities.

7. HomeCare

That the Government formally recognise and foster the critical role that primary carers provide for veterans. This recognition should include an increase in Carers Allowance and, where necessary, provide additional support services, particularly in respect of funding the infrastructure to support the DVA policy of placing more reliance on community health structures. For veterans in receipt of the Extreme Disablement Adjustment, who are still at home, their 'carers' be automatically granted the Carer's Allowance.

MRCA, SRDP & Voluntary work

In the 2007 Annual Report I wrote about the issue of voluntary work for those members who are in receipt of the Special Rate of Disability Pension (SRDP) under the Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Act. The SRDP is the VEA equivalent of TPI.

It was feared by the RSL that if a person is undertaking voluntary work this may be an indication that they are able to work in a similar capacity as they were prior to their injury. This capacity to work may make a person ineligible for SRDP.

Following representations made to both the Department of Veterans' Affairs by myself and to the Minister by the National President, the Repatriation Commission has issued the following guidelines:

DVA regards voluntary work in the same way for all three Acts it administers, the VEA, the SRCA and the MRCA. There is no legislated definition of voluntary work in any of these Acts. However, in policy terms, voluntary work is defined as unpaid work for a recognised community or welfare organisation.

DVA encourages veterans and members of the ex-service community to volunteer to assist community or welfare groups. Many thousands of veterans provide immeasurable support to ex-service organisations and other charities. Studies have also shown that volunteering has physical, psychological and social benefits.

Undertaking voluntary work of this nature does not trigger a reassessment of incapacity payments under either the SRCA or the MRCA. It is accepted that the conditions of engagement in volunteering cannot necessarily be equated to remunerative work given the person generally works at their own pace and time and is not subject to the conditions normally applied to paid employment.

Recipients of incapacity payments should be aware of how some other unpaid work may affect their benefits. Unpaid work for family, friends or a business enterprise formed for the purposes of making a profit is not classified as voluntary work.

For example, a recipient of incapacity payments and/or certain disability pensions who works several hours in a job that aims to make a profit may be found to be able to undertake paid work, and therefore ineligible for their current rate of payment. The same person volunteering as an advocate, pension or welfare officer would not be deemed capable of paid work purely on the basis of that voluntary work alone.

Under the MRCA and the SRCA, incapacity payments are regularly reviewed. The review assesses a person's ability to earn during the period and is based on rehabilitation and specialist medical assessments. The assessments take into account physical and mental capacities, skills and training, work history, age and so on. Voluntary work is not a trigger for the review and does not of itself imply that someone is able to undertake remunerative work. In fact, voluntary work with a community or welfare group is most often beneficial to a person's wellbeing.

References in SRCA and MRCA legislation to "capacity for rehabilitation" or "capacity for work" do not automatically translate to mean that a person who is undertaking voluntary work has a capacity to do paid work.

The RSL is grateful for the clarification of Voluntary Work Policy.

Partners Service Pension

In August the Government introduced a Bill into Parliament that sought to cease eligibility, after 12 months, for Partner Service Pension for those Partners who are separated but not divorced from their veteran spouse and who have not reached age pension age. The RSL opposed this amendment if the separation occurred because of a war or defence caused disability.

On 18 September 2008, on the recommendation of the Selection of Bills Committee, the Senate referred the Bill to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 10 November 2008.

The RSL produced a submission and I represented the RSL at the Inquiry.

The RSL argued that if the spouse separates because of any form of abuse from an accepted disability then that spouse is entitled to continue to receive the Partner Service Pension. It was further argued that the decision that the separation was caused by an accepted disability could be made by the spouse's GP or qualified and registered Social Worker.

On Monday 1st December, following the tabling in the Senate of the Report, the Senate resumed debate. The Government moved an amendment to the Bill that stated in effect that:

- the eligibility of a spouse still ceases at the end of 12 months but
- the eligibility does not cease if circumstances exist as specified in a new Legislative Instrument to be produced by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

In the Explanatory Memorandum to these new amendments, the Government has indicated that the circumstances specified will be that, at the date

of separation if the person's veteran partner has a psychological or mental health condition that is:

- an accepted war-caused injury or disease; or
- an accepted defence-caused injury or disease; or
- an accepted service injury or disease; or
- a psychological or mental health condition that has been accepted for the purposes of non-liability health care; and
- the person is living separately and apart from the veteran and does not reside in the same residence as the veteran; and
- there is supporting information of an unsafe domestic environment in respect of the person and/or their children

This amendment encompasses the changes that the RSL sought in both its submission and at the Public Hearing. The amended Bill was then forwarded to the House of Representatives on Tuesday 2nd December and was supported by both sides. The RSL commends the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Department for acting on the concerns that the RSL had expressed in relation to this Bill.

Conclusion

The main focus of NVAC continues to be to ensure that the Government honours its election promises to Veterans and that our hard won entitlements and benefits are not eroded either by budget restraints or the natural downsizing of DVA as the Veteran population diminishes.

I would like to thank the fellow members of NVAC, in particular the counsel of the National President, and all the staff at National Headquarters for their support throughout the year.

JOHN M HODGES
National Veterans' Affairs Advisor

The RSL Captain Reg Saunders Memorial Scholarship - 2008

The Scholarship

The RSL established this tertiary level scholarship for drug and alcohol abuse studies in 1992 for students of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. The Scholarship provides a \$3,000 grant to assist with these studies

In the development of the Scholarship, consultation with ATSIC revealed the urgent need for qualified substance abuse professionals among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As such, the Scholarship requires an applicant to major or specialise in drug and alcohol abuse targeted courses. Where these courses do not specifically contain subjects or units dealing with substance abuse, the students must be able to provide scope for such studies in their elective subjects and field placements.

The closing date for applications is 31 October each year for studies commencing the following year.

This Scholarship is now administered by the Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust Limited, known as AVCAT. Requests for Scholarship Applications can be forwarded to:

AVCAT
PO Box K978
HAYMARKET NSW 1240
Telephone: (02) 9281 7077
Facsimile: (02) 9281 9164
E-mail: vvt@accsoft.com.au

The 2008 Recipient

The 2008 Reg Saunders Scholarship was awarded to Ms Courtney Bethel.

Courtney is studying for her Bachelor of Nursing at the University of Queensland. She intends to specialise in Midwifery and work in her Aboriginal community upon completion of her studies.

Captain Saunders

Captain Reginald Walter Saunders, a member of the Gunditjmara tribe, was born on 7 August 1920, in the small town of Purnim just outside the Framlingham Aboriginal reserve in the Western District of Victoria.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 he joined the Second Australian Imperial Force. This was part of his heritage, that of being a warrior. His people, the Gunditjmara, had fought many battles with the white settlers in trying to retain their land.

He then began his military career, serving in World War II and Korea. During World War II he was selected for training at an Officer Cadet Training Unit, where he graduated as a Lieutenant with men such as Tom Derrick VC. Later promoted to Captain, Reg Saunders served in the 6th Division and saw action in the Middle East and New Guinea.

In Korea he was the Officer in Command of 'C' Company of the Third Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR). This Battalion won a United States Presidential Citation for the Battle of Kapyong.

During the last 20 years of his life, Reg Saunders worked with the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Reg travelled widely and was able to meet with Aboriginal people from a variety of backgrounds. He was awarded an MBE in 1977. He died in 1990.

RSL AFOF Report - 2008

The RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund (AFOF) provides packages to Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police personnel serving overseas.

The majority of these personnel serve in peace-keeping or peace-making missions on a six month rotation basis, and to ensure that each receives the benefit of a package during his period of overseas service, the packages are made available for delivery twice yearly. The packages are prepared in May and November each year.

In 2008, RSL AFOF provided packages to personnel serving overseas in Afghanistan, Timor Leste, Iraq, Israel, Middle East, Sinai, Solomon Islands and Sudan. Australia has large numbers of personnel serving in these overseas missions.

A total of 3,654 mid year packages and 2,915 Christmas packages were prepared in facilities kindly made available by the 39th Personnel Support Battalion within Randwick Barracks. The packages were prepared during the first week of May and November.

The packages contained various items to remind personnel of home, and included ANZAC biscuits, glucose confectionery, salted peanuts, health bars, lollies, a letter of appreciation on behalf of all Australians and a letter introducing the RSL State Branches and their Membership contact details.



The RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund is supported by all Australians, and the ongoing personal monetary donations from the Veteran and general community ensure the continuance of the Fund's activities. The Fund is promoted through a wide distribution of the AFOF brochure which contains a brief history of the Fund and its purpose. In particular, the following significant donations were very much appreciated:

- Sunshine Coast & Regional District \$8,000
- Wagga Wagga Sub-Branch \$2,000
- Osborne Park Sub-Branch \$ 500
- Mount Gambier Sub-Branch \$ 500

AFOF relies on the many volunteers who give so freely of their time to assist in the preparation of the packages, and in particular, the contribution given by the 39th Personnel Support Battalion, serving members from Randwick based Units, staff from the Directorate of Personnel Support Amenities in Canberra, the Department of Veterans' Affairs Sydney office and the DVA Military Compensation Group, Christian Brothers High School Lewisham, St Aloysius's College Army Cadet Unit, NSW RSL State Branch, the Malabar RSL Sub-Branch, the staff of RSL National Headquarters, and the many friends of AFOF from the general community, was greatly appreciated.



RSL AFOF is proud to have been able to make this contribution to the welfare of our serving personnel on behalf of our grateful Nation.



We wish all those serving overseas good fortune - and a safe return home.

DEREK J ROBSON
Executive Commissioner

RSL Awards - 2008

Meritorious Service Medal

VIC

ANDERSON, J
CLAYTON, W W

CULLEN, J F
DOYLE, F W

DUNCAN, S B
HUDSON, W

PARRY, E J
WILLMOTT, J W

TAS

MOLES DFM, D T

SA

KENNY, D P

WA

ELLIOT, R F

LOFFMAN OAM ED

ACT

MERRICK, J J

QLD

BEST, R H

FOOT OAM, M G

REECE, A F

NSW

BLANCH, R F
CROSTHWAITE, R C

McRAE, J R
SCOBIE OAM, I J

SHORT, T H

TINK OAM, J E

Honorary National Vice President

ACT

BRODIE OAM, G

Life Membership

ACT

DORHAM OAM, L L

FOWLER, G D

MILLAR, D G

VIC

ARMSTRONG, D G
BOGUSZ, G
BOWDEN, A P
BROWN, M S
BURLAND, A W
CARMICHAEL, T
CONSIDINE, J B

DAVISON, P
DUFFELL, E T
FRANKS, A B
GRANT, T R
HAINES, J W
HEENAN, K L
HIBBERT, G

LOGAN, G M
MALLICK, J
McCLELLAND, R H
McINTYRE, P
McMILLAN, J
McQUALTER, A J
NEIL, P W

O'CONNOR, R R
PARKIN, D H
PATTINSON, S O
PETERS, L J
THORNTON, R K

TAS

BOLTON, L J
COTTRELL, G

COX, L W
GINN RFD ED, B F

LINCOLN OAM, N T
MORGAN, P W

STEVENS, M

QLD

ARDREY, D J
BAKER, G J
CECIL, D
COOK, S
CULLEN, K J
DAWSON, J

FARMER, D
GILLOW, F
GOWDIE, M A
HUNTLEY, F W
JAMES, R D
JAMIESON, N J

JONES, D
LIDDELOW, R C
McLEOD, R D
McNAMARA, P
ROWSELL, A F
RUSSELL, G I

SPRING, R T
THORPE, G W
TOMLINSON, L
WARENDORP, B
WILLIAMS, K D

NSW

ANDERSON, V K
 ASPINALL, D I
 BARON, J T
 BELLAMY, G
 BLAIR, G
 BREEZE, A V
 BRIEN, M J
 CLARK, J C
 COUCHMAN, W T
 CROZIER, N A
 CURDIE, J K
 DRUM, M J
 DUNNE, A A
 GARSIDE, R E

GEHRIG, R J
 GURNETT, D
 HARRIGAN, W T
 HARRIS, C J
 HARRISON, D
 HOOK, A E
 KEADY, B T
 KEEVERS, A J
 KERNICK, G P
 KILPATRICK, D
 KNIGHT, R J
 MARRIOTT, A V
 McDONALD, J A
 McGRATH, K E

McWHIRTER, A R
 MOORE, R J
 NISH, H C
 NORRISH, R C
 OUVRIER, A G
 PALMER, L
 PATCH, D F
 PETERSEN, G J
 RENDOTH, K S
 RICE, E J
 RANDALL, F P
 SALAKAS, C
 SPARKES OAM, A S
 STUBBS, J B

SULLIVAN, A J F
 TATE, G
 TATE, J R
 TOUSSAINT, A A
 TRIGGS, K O
 TUCKER, L S
 WATTERS, J
 WEBB, D F
 WEBB, D F
 WIGHTON, K A

SA

CLOUGH, W
 FRANKE, J E

HAZEL, R J
 MANSER, W R

O'LEARY, J D
 TOBIASEN, J L

VIKOR, J P

WA

BADGER, F B
 BLAIR RFD ED, D J

CHRISTMASS AFSM, D P
 DIXON, D J

EDWARDS, J L
 PEACOCK, N I

STEWART, L A

Honorary Life Membership**QLD**

MAY, M

Honorary Membership**VIC**

WARREN AO, D

Certificate of Appreciation**TAS**

DRAKE, A

VIC

JACKSON, H
 LEE, J

MASKELL, A
 PRITCHARD, R

RILEY, LTCOL P
 SCHOLTENS, W

VARNDELL, D

ACT

JOHNSON, R
 ABC Television Canberra
 Signflair
 The Canberra Times

KIRK, G H

PEARCE, M E

TAYLOR, P

WA

JONES, K

WILSON MBE, W R

Certificate of Merit & Gold Badge**VIC**

BANKS, R
 COCKERELL, J

EDWARDS, D
 FORSYTH, H

HENRY, J
 HIGGINS, J E

MADILL, I
 ROBBINS, J M

SA

HAYNES, J K

MICHIE, E N

SMITH, D E R

NSW

COOPER, R
DEES, P G
EDWARDS, R

EGAN, B F
EVANS, B
GREEN, E A

HUSH, N H
KERNICK, M
McNEIL, M

MUSGRAVE, A
STEWART, R

QLD

BAIN, G

Women's Auxiliary Life Membership**TAS**

BUTLER, B
COCKERILL, J

GARWOOD, B
JOHNSON, M

ROBINSON, A
WAGNER, M

WENN, B

VIC

BASSETT, J A
BONE, R
COX, E P

CRITTENDEN, B J
DUGGAN, J

KORS, M
McINNES, A J

NEW, I
PROCTER, G H

QLD

CAIRNS, R M
COPLEY, E
DOBSON-WALTERS, D

IVES, P M
MacKENZIE, M M
McKENZIE, J M

O'CONNOR, V
PATTERSON, H E
SOUTHWELL, D

WALKER, O M
WELCH, P

NSW

BARBER, E
BROWNLOW, L
BURLEY, F
BURNS, S
FRASER, M

GODING, M
HALE, E M
HICKEY, Y
JENNAR, E
MARTIN, M

O'KEEFE, J
PLAISTED, C
RICE, J
ROY, V
SEDDON, D

TICEHURST, J
WALKER, J
WILSON, N M
WOOD, S
YOUNG, E N

SA

BERNHARDT, N M
FIELDING, E

LILL, P
McCLEERY, B

ROENNFELDT, E J

WILLIAMS, G M

Long Service Award**SA**

BARNES, R L
BILNEY, K G
BRAND, E R
CARR, R D
CHAPPEL, R
CLAMPETT, R W
DAVIDSON, H W

EVANS, E G
FISHER, F
GARROD, R
GILMORE, D R
HUNT, H
JARRETT, K
KIRKMORE, J

LAWRENCE, W H
LEUNIG, R
MAGOR, S
McGRICE, M H
NEWLAND, R
PATERSON, W G
REDWAY, P

SCHRIEVER, K B
RIVETT, E A
STEVENS, R O
TRIGGS, R
WATERS, K J
WELLS, C
ZWAR, R

VIC

ALEXANDER, R
BARBER, S G
BARTLE, P
BELL, D H
BOLITHO, R
BOWEN, D
CAPEL, J
EMMETT, K F

HANCOCK, H
HORSBURGH, R
HORTON, T O
JENKINS, R N
LANHAM, K G
MATTHEWS, A W
McKENZIE, R
MORECROFT, E J

MURPHY, K J
PAGRAM, R W
SERPLESS, W
STEWART, A D
STEWART, G A
STOKES, W D
TAYLOR, H W
TAYLOR, H W

TAYLOR, J F
VERRALL, J M
WATERSON, N E
WEBB, C M
WILLS, H

QLD

ALLDRIDGE, V N
ANGOVE, R E
ARCHER, T
BALLARD, N E
BANKS, N F W

CHASEN, P J
COOK, R
HASSETT, H R
HENDERSON, C V P
HOUSTON, A N

JACKSON, R
KNEIPP, B W
LYNAM, C
McGREGOR, J
McINTOSH, J C

PARRY, N H
POWER, I S A
STRATTON, E W
TUTTLE, F
WAIGHTS, A C

ACT

GARDNER, C E
PITT, I O

PRIDGEON, G M
SMITH, D C

WHITFIELD, G E

WILSON, T L W

TAS

BANHAM, H L
HAMILTON, W

JACK, D
JAMES, S E

MARLOWE, E
RUTHERFORD, E H R

WOODMAN, S K

WA

WILSON, E E

NSW

AISBETT, N T
ARNDSELL, N B
ASHBY, A F
BAINES, A V
BARRETT, D E
BAXTER, A F
BEAUCHAMP, J J
BEHAN, J
BELL, R J
BENNET, O
BUGLER, B E
BURNHAM, R J
BURTON, N H
CAMPBELL, B
CARROLL, I F
CHAPMAN, R L J
COLEMAN, R E
COWDROY, E L
CURRY, W E
DAVIES, R G
DICKSON, J C
DIETRICH, F W

DOLAN, H R
DUFFY, T
DUNSTAN, M
ELFORD, J T
EMERSON, B N
EMERY, H
FINDLER, K R
FOY, R B
FREW, F P
GARDNER, S
GIBLIN, A W
GREEN, C W
GUY, A H
HANDFIELD, R A
HAY, A S
HELM, J
HICKS, C C
HILL, A
HILL, R E J
HOGAN, T F
HOLLEY, J P
HOLSTEIN, A

JONES, A L
JONES, R
KILHAM, D
LEEMAN, W
LINDSAY, K J
LUCAS, J R
LUNAM, B W
MALOUF, K G
MANNING, K
MATHIAS, O C
McAULIFFE, J
McBRIARTY, F F
McDONELL, R
McDONNELL, R
MEDDICK, A J
MILLS H, J
MOORE, N T
PALMER, D C
PATERSON, M A
PLATT, H G
POWER, H
QUINN, H F

RICE, E J
ROBERTS, R J
ROSSITER, A A
ROWE, P W
ROYAL, J D
SEDDON, J W
SHARP, K C
SHUTE, D
SIMPSON, W
SMITH, J C
SMITH, N
SMITH, W
SMITH, W C
TATE, W
TAYLOR, L C
TAYLOR, S
VIRTUE, A G
WELCH, F E
WELLS, A McR
YAGER, N

70 Year Certificate**NSW**

Brooklyn RSL Sub-Branch

QLD

Burleigh Heads RSL Sub-Branch

75 Year Certificate**NSW**

Springwood RSL Sub-Branch

SA

Port MacDonnell Sub-Branch

80 Year Certificate**NSW**

Campsie RSL Sub-Branch

90 Year Certificate**NSW**

Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch
Katoomba RSL Sub-Branch
Peak Hill RSL Sub-Branch
Wagga Wagga RSL Sub-Branch
Mosman RSL Sub-Branch
City of Wollongong RSL Sub-Branch
Scone RSL Sub-Branch

WA

City of Subiaco Sub-Branch

RSL Prizes - 2008

Awards to Service Colleges

Australian Defence Force Academy

RSL Sword for Service - Officer Cadet Louise Taylor

Royal Military College of Australia

June Graduation - Staff Cadet James Flawith
December Graduation - Staff Cadet Benjamin Kreis

ANZAC Awards

ANZAC Peace Prize

The 2008 ANZAC Peace Prize has been awarded to Scouts Australia. 2008 is the Year of the Scout and marks the centenary of Scouting in Australia. The award of the ANZAC Peace Prize recognises the part that Scouting has played in the development of two million Australians over the past 100 years, both as individuals and as citizens. Today young men and women, boys and girls, continue to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the largest youth movement in the world, with more than 28 million members in 155 countries. International Scout Jamborees, whether they have been held in Australia or in other countries, have brought young people and their leaders together from all parts of the world, regardless of nationality, creed or religion. The friendships thus established have made a significant contribution to international goodwill and understanding, and to world peace.

ANZAC of the Year Awards

The 2008 ANZAC of the Year awards have been made to:

Mr James Bourke MG of Victoria for his perseverance, dedication and leadership in the work of 'Operation Aussies Home' and his team's endeavours to recover Australian soldiers Missing-in-Action in the Vietnam War.

Mrs Carolyn McColl of New South Wales for her voluntary work on numerous committees and fund raising projects in the communities of Pambula/Merimbula on the South Coast of NSW.

Mr Harry Toole of Victoria for his tireless work as a volunteer in the community of Clunes, Victoria.

Mr Jonathon Welch of Victoria for his untiring, tenacious and inspirational work with disadvantaged and homeless men and women in establishing the 'Choir of Hard Knocks'.

RSL Scholarships 2008

The RSL Scholarships were introduced in 2006 by the RSL National Trustees. Two scholarships are awarded to children of veterans in necessitous and deserving circumstances while they undertake tertiary education in Australia.

This year's RSL Scholarships have been awarded to:

Miss Melissa Anderson
Miss Krista McMeeken

National Executive Members - 2008

National President
Deputy National President
National Secretary

Major General William Crews AO (Retd)
Mr Don Rowe OAM
Mr Derek Robson AM

State Presidents

Victorian Branch President
Western Australian President
New South Wales Branch President
South Australian Branch President
Queensland Branch President
Tasmanian Branch President
Australian Capital Territory Branch President

Major General David McLachlan AO (Retd)
Mr William Gaynor OAM RFD
Mr Don Rowe OAM
Mr Jock Statton OAM
Mr Doug Formby
Mr Tony Scott OAM
Mr Gary Brodie OAM (until June)
LTCOL John J Merrick (Retd) (from June)

National Officers/Advisors

National Treasurer
National Legal Advisor
National Defence Advisor
Veterans' Affairs Advisor

Mr David Sinclair
Mr Brian Loftus RFD
Major General Adrian Clunies-Ross AO MBE (Retd)
Mr John Hodges

National Headquarters Staff Members - 2008

- as at December 2008

National Secretary
National Project Officer
National Research Advisor
Business Manager
Personal Assistants
to National Secretary
to National President

Mr Derek Robson AM
Mr Herbert (Mickey) Michaelis
Mr Alistair Coe (until November)
Mrs Jan Ormerod

Ms Dawn Kitchener
Mrs Denise Howard (until August)
Mrs Lorelee Mason (from August)

Reception

Mrs Linda Munro (until August)
Ms Tess Black (from April)

RSL Membership Details - as at 31 December 2008

STATE	STATE RSL MEMBERSHIP		WOMENS' AUXILIARY	
	Membership	Sub-Branch	Membership	Sub-Branch
ACT/Overseas	1,889	15	-	-
NSW	55,057	413	4,226	194
QLD	39,225	253	983	49
SA / NT	14,771	145	607	38
TAS	5,038	52	352	28
VIC	62,132	304	1,800	106
WA	11,238	134	195	17
ANNUAL STATISTICS TOTALS				
2008	189,350	1,316	8,163	432
2007	193,418	1,327	8,626	441
2006	194,425	1,335	9,247	463
2005	202,957	1,336	9,745	508
2004	201,593	1,332	10,412	520
2003	208,772	1,354	12,025	577
2002	212,074	1,363	12,690	590
2001	214,647	1,373	12,168	606
2000	220,600	1,395	13,121	628
1999	226,843	1,408	13,807	652
1998	227,040	1,418	14,607	670

Registered Offices

The Returned & Services League of Australia A.C.N. 008 488 097

is a company limited by guarantee and incorporated in the ACT.

National

RSL National Headquarters
Cnr Constitution Avenue and Blamey Crescent
CAMPBELL
Phone: (02) 6248 7199
Fax: (02) 6247 7637

Postal Address: GPO Box 303
CANBERRA ACT 2601

State Branches

ACT

Canberra Services Club
Canberra Avenue
MANUKA
Postal: GPO Box 708
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Phone: (02) 6260 6344
Fax: (02) 6295 1628

TAS

ANZAC House
68 Davey Street
HOBART TAS 7001
Phone: (03) 6224 0881
Fax: (03) 6223 1229

QLD

283 St Paul's Terrace
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006
Postal: PO Box 629
SPRING HILL QLD 4004
Phone: (07) 3634 9444
Fax: (07) 3634 9400

SA

ANZAC House
Torrens Training Depot
Victoria Drive
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8232 0322
Fax: (08) 8232 0377

VIC

ANZAC House
4 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Phone: (03) 9655 5555
Fax: (03) 9655 5500

WA

ANZAC House
28 St Georges Terrace
PERTH
Postal: PO Box 3023
Adelaide Terrace
PERTH WA 6832
Phone: (08) 9287 3799
Fax: (08) 9287 3732

NSW

ANZAC House
245 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Phone: (02) 9264 8188
Fax: (02) 9264 8466

Back Page:

Crowds throng in Martin Place, Sydney on Armistice Day – 11 November 1918.

(photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial)

Inside Back:

Minister Griffin at the Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel
Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Alan Griffin MP at the official re-dedication ceremony of the Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel, France on Saturday 8 November 2008.

(Photo courtesy of Department of Veterans' Affairs)



