

RESPECTING, SUPPORTING AND REMEMBERING OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

REVEILLE

VOL 98, DECEMBER 2021



MINDING THEIR OWN BUSINESS

Four veteran entrepreneurs share
how they've built new careers
and created opportunities



**TURNING ADF
EXPERIENCE
INTO CIVILIAN
JOB SKILLS**

**HOW ONE
SUB-BRANCH
IS REELING IN
YOUNG VETS**

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY



RSL
NSW

IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE

Kickstart your civilian career

The NSW Government is proud to help veterans transition to civilian careers, offering:



Support and services



Job-ready skills



Fee-free training

These services are also available to partners of veterans, recognising the career sacrifices they have made.



Flying high

“ A VET pathway was the starting point to my successful career progression from real estate agent to now being a Business Development Manager for a national construction and property development company. ”

Mel Risby, Air Force veteran, Certificate IV in Real Estate through TAFE NSW



Find out more today about how you can kickstart your civilian career.

education.nsw.gov.au/skills-nsw/veterans



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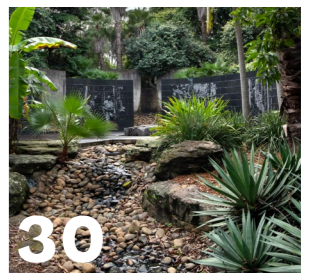
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**RAY JAMES OAM
PRESIDENT,
RSL NSW**

"There are veterans and families outside of our membership who are hurting, and they need our help. We need now to reach out to them, to render service."

For the first time in the history of the League in NSW, membership for 2022 is free and veterans can now easily join online. This signals to the veteran community that we want to welcome them into a united network of more than 25,000 members across 340 sub-Branched, who offer local support and mateship.

Every RSL member wears one of the most recognised badges in the country, a symbol of constant preparedness to render service to country and comrades. The withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and the establishment of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide have served to highlight that there are veterans and families outside of our membership who are hurting, and they need our help. We need now to reach out to them, to render service.

As you reflect on 2021, ask yourself what you can do to engage and support your fellow veterans next year. Whether it's inviting them to a sub-Branch function, connecting them with the practical services and support at RSL LifeCare, or simply having a brew and listening, there are many ways to connect outside of sub-Branch meetings.

While member recruitment is a high priority, it's more important that we ensure the visibility of the League and facilitate access to our services and support. I welcome the establishment of the RSL NSW Young Veterans Committee to give insight into how the initiatives of the Strategic Plan are resonating with veterans and current serving members of the ADF.

I wish everyone a safe and merry Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.



**JON BLACK
CEO, RSL NSW**

Reviewing the RSL NSW submission to the Royal Commission into Veterans and Defence Suicide reminded me of the reasons why a supportive and focused RSL is so vital.

I asked myself why we haven't effectively engaged with more of these younger veterans? When I read the many AGM motions about minor administration matters as opposed to motions about what can we do better to support our veterans, especially those cohorts who have served more recently, I can't help but agree with some commentators that the League has lost its way and is still too internally focused.

There is a clear place for a lead ex-service organisation in NSW. RSL NSW must unite and work together to support all veterans and their families. By mobilising our wonderful volunteer members and sub-Branch funds, the RSL can be this organisation.

With these thoughts in mind, I re-read the narrative of what the RSL in NSW will look like after we complete the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2021-2026.

We are now approaching the first review point for the Strategic Plan, in February 2022, and I encourage all members to read the narrative on page 30, review the goals and initiatives, and share feedback to inform the review.



+
View the RSL NSW Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and send feedback to support@rslnsw.org.au



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This article discusses veteran suicides and other issues that may impact veterans. If any of this raises issues for you, don't go through it alone.

ROYAL COMMISSION

Hearings have now begun in the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Throughout the process, RSL NSW and our partners continue to work with the veterans community to help ensure veterans and their families are heard and supported.

The RSL NSW Royal Commission Office consulted with members to create a joint submission, and is now supporting members and veterans through public hearings.

When we requested input from members to inform our submission to the Royal Commission, hundreds shared their insights and experience.

This allowed our submission to incorporate the views of RSL NSW members, advocates and sub-Branched, and draw on the significant breadth of evidence gathered in previous reports from inquiries into Defence and veteran suicides.

- The submission noted that:
 - Addressing the risk factors linked to Defence personnel and veteran suicides will take significant collaborative work. This collaboration will involve the Government, the Australian Defence Force, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, ex-service organisations (ESOs) and wider society.
 - The barriers for veterans transitioning from Defence are significant, particularly in accessing services, interacting with several Government departments and claiming their entitlements.
 - ESOs such as RSL NSW and our advocates are prevented from functioning in the most effective way to provide health and wellbeing support to veterans.
 - Delays in implementing and

failure to implement the recommendations of previous inquiries is a source of significant frustration and cynicism regarding the value of this Royal Commission. Immediate action must be taken.

The first hearings were held on 26 November, with participants providing evidence from 29 November.

The RSL NSW Royal Commission Office at ANZAC House is available to support veterans - whether members of the League or not - in their engagements with the Royal Commission, including providing evidence.

The Defence and Veterans Legal Service is providing free legal support to ADF personnel and veterans, as well as their families, carers and supporters, to safely share their



experiences with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The Attorney-General's Department also advises that legal assistance arrangements are available to participants, including a legal financial assistance scheme and a national legal advice service.

If you require RSL NSW assistance to make an individual submission to the Royal Commission, please contact RSL NSW Royal Commission Office on 0499 441 291 or submissions@rslnsw.org.au



Find out more about how the RSL NSW Royal Commission Office can support you.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Veterans recognised in state and national awards



BENJAMIN LYE
People's Choice Apprentice of the Year
2021 NSW Training Awards

After a medical discharge from the Army, RSL NSW member Benjamin earned his Certificate III in Parks and Gardens from TAFE NSW, and is now employed by Tamworth Regional Council. "I'm proof that a veteran can start again and find happiness," Benjamin told Training Services NSW. "I urge people to get their life back on track through VET. Take a leap of faith and try a new profession!"



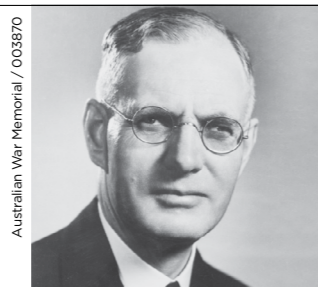
BEN DAVOREN
Veteran Employee of the Year
Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards

Former combat medic Ben Davoren joined veteran-owned business TacMed after his medical discharge in 2014, and used his experience to train first responders in high-risk work settings. Since joining as one of TacMed's first employees, Ben's now moved into a business development role. *Read more about TacMed and its founder in our cover feature, starting on page 14.*

On this day

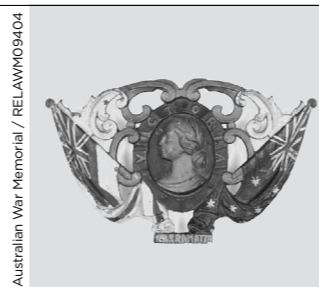
7-8 DEC

1941
Japanese aircraft attack the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Australia announces that it is at war with Japan.



27 DEC

1941
The US becomes Australia's main ally as Prime Minister John Curtin announces 'Australia looks to America'.



29 DEC

1860
Victoria's sailors take part in the action at Matarikoriko, NZ. "The first overseas military operation by an Australian unit." - AWM



11 JAN

1973
Governor-General Sir Paul Hasluck proclaims an end to 11 years of Australian involvement in the war in Vietnam.



28 FEB

1991
Gulf War ends, after Iraqi forces are driven from Kuwait and defeated.

Australian War Memorial / 043822

Australian War Memorial / 003870

Australian War Memorial / RELAW09404

Australian War Memorial / WAR/70/0024/VN

Defence Images



RSL NSW APPOINTS YOUNG VETERANS COMMITTEE

RSL NSW has recently established a Young Veterans Committee to advise the Board on matters impacting young veterans and help address declining membership and involvement.

From 17 candidates who were nominated or recommended for the committee, 11 have been appointed as founding members. They will serve two- and three-year terms.

In considering each of the candidates, the Board sought a

diversity of service experience, impact of service, gender and post-service employment.

Committee members bring their experience and expertise in advocating for young veterans and their families. They are well-versed in the entitlements and provisions provided to veterans and families by the Department of Veteran Affairs and have a good understanding of the ex-serving organisation landscape.

Join RSL NSW

No fees, simple sign-up, open to serving members and veterans



There should be no barrier for any current serving member or veteran of the ADF to join RSL NSW. That's why we've made membership fee-free.

Members receive:

- > A membership badge
- > Reveille magazine
- > Access to RSL services and support
- > Connection to community
- > Mateship and connection to others who have served
- > Opportunity to volunteer and support veterans and coordinate commemorations

Join instantly now.



Scan code to learn more



RSL DAY CLUBS

Sponsored by RSL sub-Branched and supported by the DVA, Day Clubs provide social and activity opportunities for older people. Each Day Club is open to any interested member of the community, and run by volunteers.



Find out more at rslnsw.org.au



WBI: A HISTORY

Former RSL NSW CEO Robyn Collins has published a history of the RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution.



Scan the QR code to read the article

HMAS COLLINS

Former CO Jason Cupples shares his experience of leading the crew of *HMAS Collins*, one of the most uniquely challenging jobs in Defence.



Story Tess Durack

While leaders squabble about the new AUKUS deal and potential fallout with France, the *HMAS Collins* — silent, formidable, extraordinarily sophisticated — remains indifferent. Submerged in the inky depths, the submarine operates beyond the realm of news headlines, and the crew’s primary focus is strategic deterrence and defence.

For most of us, the claustrophobic environment of a submarine is the stuff of nightmares. We’ve seen the films and the television series depicting deep-sea disasters,

near misses and cries of “Dive, dive, dive!” We’ve shuddered at the thought of no sunlight and little privacy for days on end, and of the limitless darkness on the other side of the hull.

But the crew of *HMAS Collins* takes these conditions in stride, each member trained to deal with the unique challenges of a job few of us could imagine signing up for.

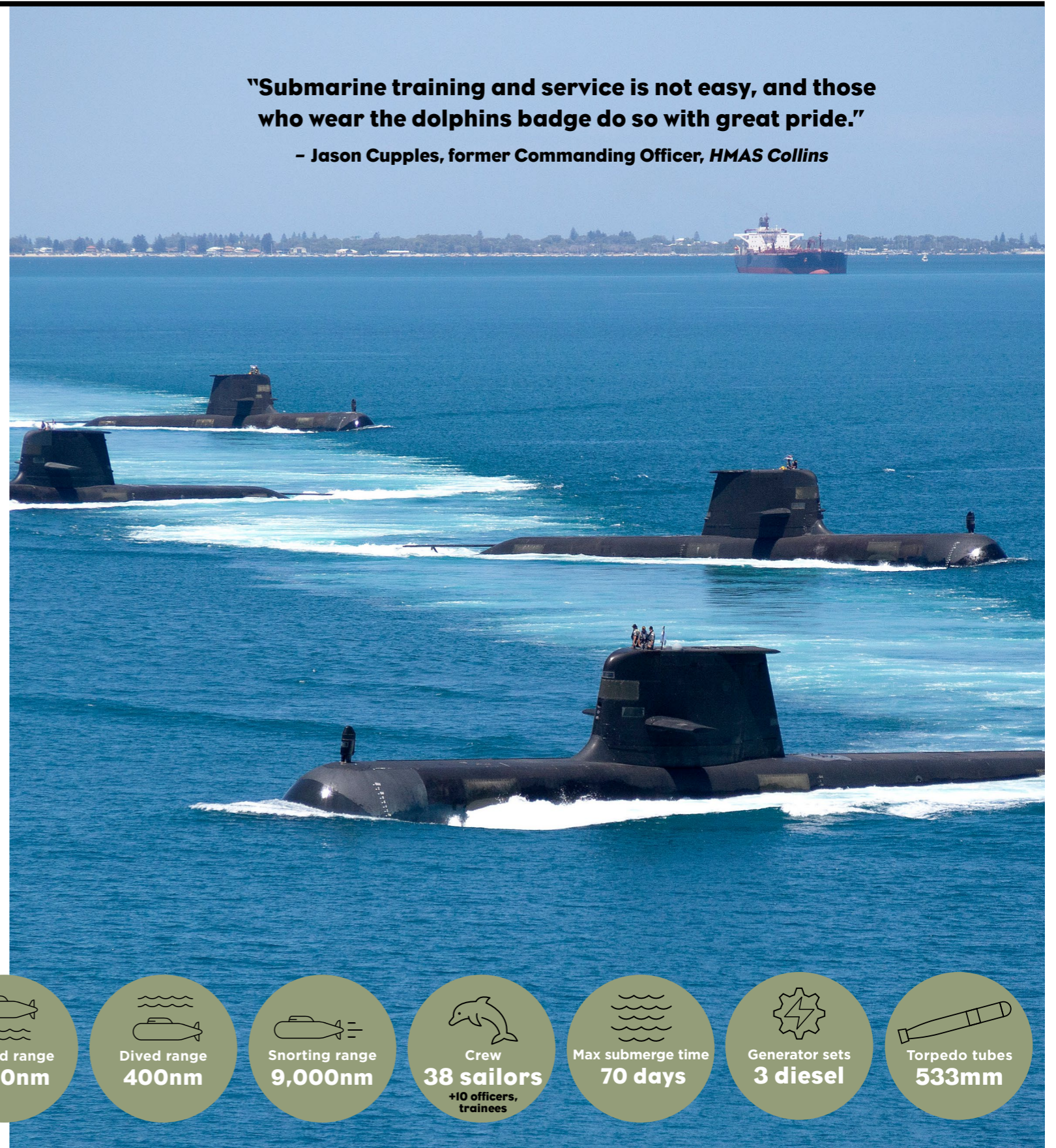
“Submarine training and service is not easy,” says Jason Cupples, former Commanding Officer of *HMAS Collins*, “and those who wear the dolphins badge do so with great pride. Each submariner is trained not only in their own specialisation but across a

range of skills necessary to be able to react to emergencies and other situations in any part of the boat. The crew rely on each other with their lives, and that responsibility is taken very seriously.”

Smells like team spirit



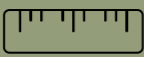


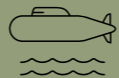





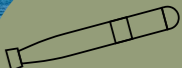
Living and working in such proximity for long periods creates strong bonds.

“The esprit de corps among submariners is unique and something that endures long after people leave the service,” says Cupples. “There are many aspects of submarine service which make it a sought-after occupation, such as visiting exotic locations and working with cutting-edge technology.” »



“Submarine training and service is not easy, and those who wear the dolphins badge do so with great pride.”

– Jason Cupples, former Commanding Officer, *HMAS Collins*

 Launched 28/08/93	 Commissioned 27/07/96	 Length 77.8m	 Width 7.8m	 Maximum speed 20 knots (37km/h)	 Surfaced range 11,500nm	 Dived range 400nm	 Snorting range 9,000nm	 Crew 38 sailors +10 officers, trainees	 Max submerge time 70 days	 Generator sets 3 diesel	 Torpedo tubes 533mm
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HMAS Collins, launched in Adelaide in 1993 and commissioned in 1996, was one of the first submarines to be designed entirely by computers. Its features include a high-performance hull form, automated controls, low indiscretion rates, high shock resistance and optimal noise suppression, and a combat system that gathers intelligence from its sensors, computes that data, then launches and directs weapons.

Keeping company

“Despite the complexities of operating such a platform in diverse and challenging circumstances, the relationship between command and the ship’s company is close,” says Cupples.

“This recognises the fact that the crew are all volunteers, highly trained, and committed individuals. There is also a high level of mutual respect and an acute awareness that we can only succeed as a team, everyone understanding their role and able to respond at a moment’s notice.”

Even now, almost a decade on, Cupples considers his time as Commanding Officer a rare privilege and a career highlight.

“Leading a highly professional and dedicated team of up to 60 men and women in the most challenging possible environment as a submarine Commanding Officer is one of the most rewarding jobs in the Royal Australian Navy and is a great honour.”

4 HMAS COLLINS FACTS

1 AN ADMIRABLE NAMESAKE

The HMAS Collins is named for Vice Admiral Sir John Augustine Collins, KBE, CB, RAN (1899-1989). Computer-designed subs might have been unthinkable in his time, but his Naval career was distinguished by many honours, including being awarded the Commander Egerton Memorial Prize and being made an Officer of the United States Legion of Merit.

2 SWEDISH DESIGN

The Collins Class submarines were developed from five generations of submarines designed and built by the Swedish Navy. Thought your Hemnes bookshelf was complicated? There are around 350,000 individual technical documents associated with a Collins Class submarine, including 70,727 design drawings, 46,717 parts lists and 42,865 specifications. Each submarine took 2.5 million hours to construct.

3 CALLS TO ARMS

A Collins Class submarine contains 108 integrated systems that are linked structurally, mechanically, electrically, hydraulically, pneumatically and electronically. The submarines include 23,500m of piping, 75,000m of cable, 200,000 cable connections and 400 tonnes of batteries. The Collins Class are armed with 533mm torpedo tubes, and their weapons systems can carry up to 22 surface-to-surface missiles and Tomahawk SLCMs.

4 LIVE LONG & PROSPER

Life-of-type extensions within the budget of \$4.3-6.4 billion will extend the life of each of the six Collins Class submarines by 10 years. Any need for extensions beyond that time will depend on the outcomes of the work done by the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force over the next 18 months and subject to feasibility.



Veteran Wellbeing Centres



We’re for veterans

More than 1200 veterans and serving personnel have died by suicide over the past 20 years – veterans need our help, and they need it now.*

RSL NSW is seeking Federal Government support for the establishment of permanent Veteran Wellbeing Centres in key areas to connect with a spoke network of 340 RSL sub-Branches.

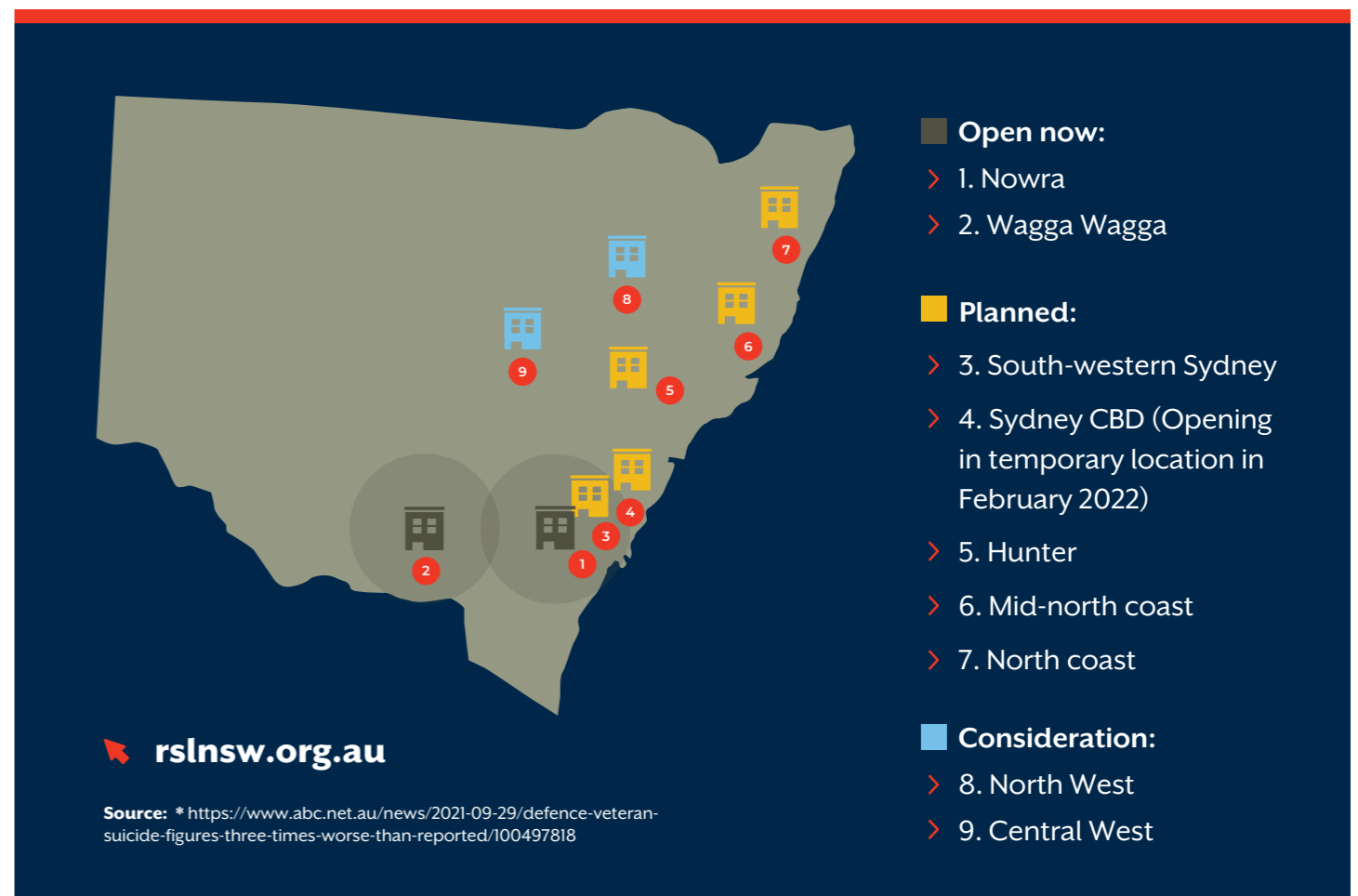
We have already established two Veteran Wellbeing Centres in regional

areas, and more are in the planning stages. To support the establishment of these centres in your region, please contact support@rslnsw.org.au to find out how you can get involved.

Veteran Wellbeing Centres are a joint strategic initiative of RSL NSW and our charity partner, RSL LifeCare. Find out more in the RSL NSW Strategic Plan 2021-26.



Scan code to learn more about the Veteran Wellbeing Centre model.





MINDING THEIR OWN BUSINESS

ADF veterans are exceptional entrepreneurs. And as they build their businesses, many are creating professional networks of veterans by employing ex-service people.



Story Chris Sheedy

Image: Denise Pope

Veteran entrepreneurship has a long and glorious history in Australia. Consider the story of Hudson Fysh, who served in WWI at Gallipoli and in the Australian Flying Corps, and his friend and fellow corpsman Paul McGinness.

After the war, the Department of Defence gave Fysh and McGinness an assignment to survey an air race across northern Australia. As they drove more than 2,000km in a Model T Ford, setting up supply dumps for the competitors, they developed an idea that would become the country's national airline, Qantas.

"That's what we're looking to inspire via the Veteran Community Business Chamber," says the organisation's co-founder Peter Liston. He likes to tell the Qantas story.

"We'll know we've succeeded in that goal when we have developed an entrepreneur ecosystem that not only nurtures and inspires the seed of entrepreneurship from within the »

◀ **Alan Toner, founder of EcoWalks Tours, says his Army experience has been invaluable in his business life.**

military community, but also helps develop solid business acumen and creates funding models so businesses can access the capital and support they need to grow.”

In Australia, there are numerous examples of excellent veteran-founded businesses. One of the best known is Aspen Medical, a provider of healthcare solutions across public and private sectors and geographical locations.

Aspen Medical was launched by Glenn Keys AO and Dr Andrew Walker, both Army veterans and schoolmates since the age of 12. Glenn graduated Duntroon in the class of '84 and served 15 years.

Defence was in his blood. Glenn is related to Sir William Keys, who was serving as RSL's National President when he attended Glenn's Duntroon graduation in 1984 with his wife Dulcie. Glenn's father, several uncles and grandfather also served in the Army or Air Force.

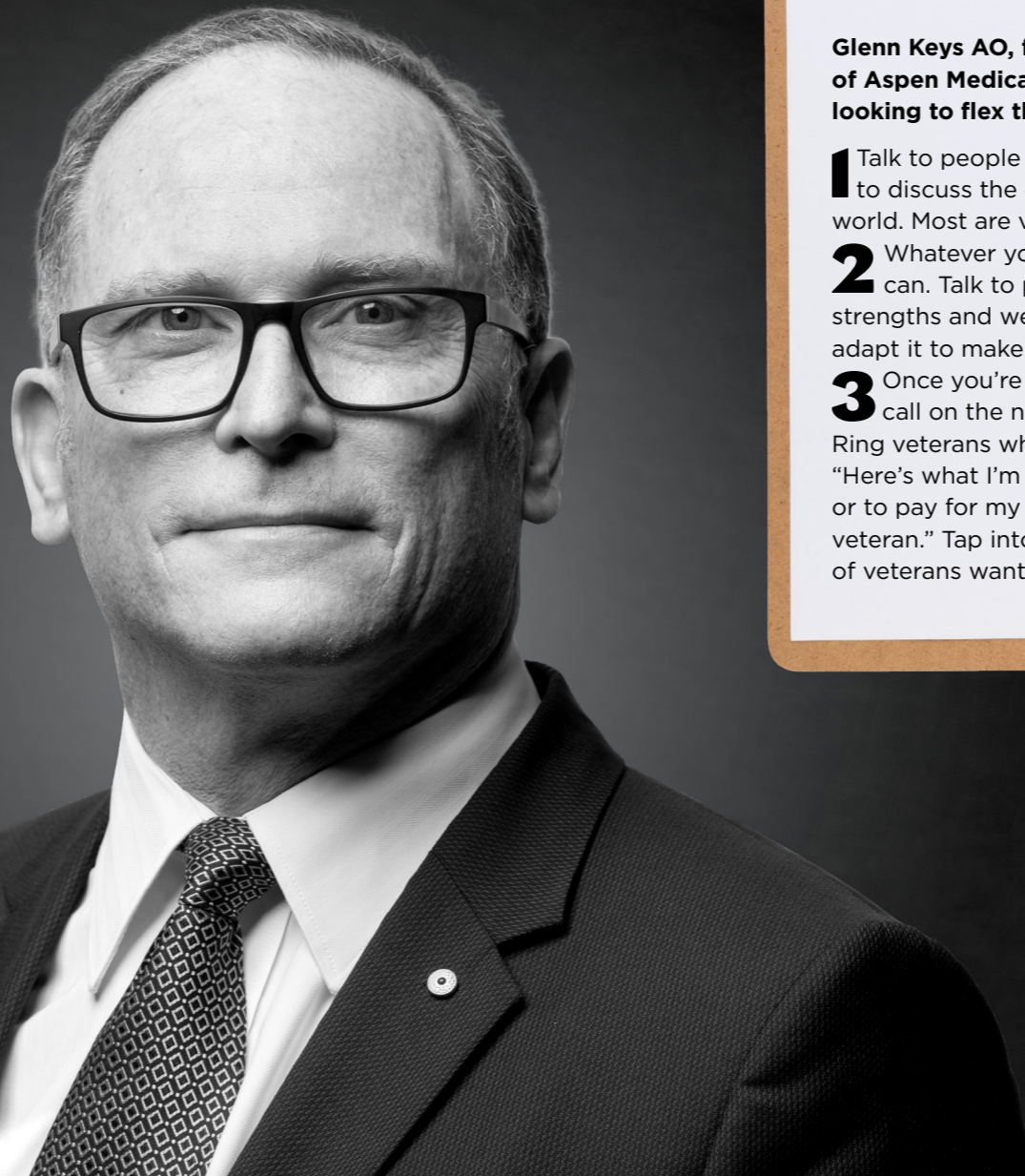
“My father's father was in the 1st Light Horse twice,” Glenn smiles. “He came home medically discharged, changed his name and joined again.”

Glenn, who completed an aeronautical engineering degree during his service, says he “had a fantastic time in the military”.

He was posted to England, where he was the first engineer to go to test pilot school; to Papua New

“Once you're ready to kick off, don't be afraid to call on the network to help grow your business ... The vast majority of veterans want to help others.”

— Glenn Keys AO



Glenn Keys credits the military > for teaching him problem solving and people management.

GLENN KEYS' TOP 3 TIPS FOR VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS

Glenn Keys AO, founder and Executive Chairman of Aspen Medical, offers his advice to veterans looking to flex their entrepreneurial muscles.

- 1** Talk to people who are already out of Defence to discuss the current challenges in the business world. Most are very happy to take a call.
- 2** Whatever your idea is, test it as much as you can. Talk to people about it and work out its strengths and weaknesses. Figure out how you can adapt it to make it even stronger.
- 3** Once you're ready to kick off, don't be afraid to call on the network to help grow your business. Ring veterans who are also in business and say, “Here's what I'm doing. Do you need to buy this, or to pay for my services? You're a veteran, I'm a veteran.” Tap into that network. The vast majority of veterans want to help others.

Guinea, where he taught the local defence force to maintain their own vehicles and equipment; and to Germany, when it was still separated into East and West.

After 15 years of adventures, one proved too challenging for Glenn. He was posted to a very remote region, too far from the medical specialists his son, who has Down syndrome, required. As much as he loved the military, family came first.

Several years later, having helped build and sell defence startup Aerospace Technology Services and worked within a major US defence company, Glenn contacted his old friend Andrew Walker. The UK's medical system was failing and Prime Minister Tony Blair was after innovative solutions. Aspen Medical was born in May 2003.

The business now employs more than 6,000 people globally — but of course there have been numerous challenges along the way to today's success story. Glenn's military experience helped the business face each.

“We were taught in the military that we're never going to be an expert, but that we can pull together good people, develop a good plan and then let people deliver on that plan,” says Glenn, winner of the 2016 EY Entrepreneur of the Year Australia award.

“The military is brilliant at problem solving. It teaches people management. It teaches »

you to see through the noise, distil information and discern what's important. Finally, the military teaches you that you must never stop learning."

In the military, Glenn says, large, complex issues are broken down so they can be understood, so intelligence can be gathered and a solution built. A plan is then developed to deliver that solution.

"It's perfect preparation for business," he says.

Business success: No walk in the park

At the other end of the business-footprint scale, from global to hyperlocal, is EcoWalks Tours. Founded by Alan Toner in late 2019, it operates walking tours around Sydney Harbour.

Having served in the Army from 2000 to 2006, including in Nauru, East Timor and Iraq, and as a Reservist from 2009 to 2015, Alan began thinking deeply about his own values and how he might build his own future.

"In my time in the Army, I saw a lot of environmental degradation," Alan says. "I saw people who were disenfranchised and huge inequalities around the world. I got to a point at about 25 where I saw myself being able to contribute more to the betterment of the world. My values were shaped around the environment and a connection to people."

After transitioning out, Alan spent time in the Whitsundays, putting his Army watercraft



◀ **Alan Toner's passion for military history and fieldcraft inspired his eco startup.**

marketing plans, and in risk management," Alan says. "Even the way I meet and greet people, my nonverbal communication skills, were learned in the Army. Finally, just having the courage to give it a go — that is a great attribute I learned in the Army."

Peter, with his insights from the Veteran Community Business Chamber, agrees that there are enormously valuable traits and skills that come out of a military career.

"The number one consistent carryover between military service and business is character and integrity. That is core to being a successful business owner. So much is based on trust," Peter says.

"Then there are skills around operations, planning, how to manage people and get the best out of team members — these are all absolutely transferable to business.

"Finally, consider the value of intelligence, of knowing the battle space, of analysing sensitive information.

qualifications to good use and learning the ins and outs of the tourism business. Soon, he realised he could combine his knowledge of military history and fieldcraft with his passion for the environment and the management skills he learned in the Army.

"I couldn't have achieved this without my Army experience," he says. "It has been really important to understand logistics, for example."

The aspects of Army training that Alan has used in building his own business range from systems, policies and procedures, right through to the 'softer' people skills.

"I've used a lot of those frameworks in developing

"The number one consistent carryover between military service and business is character and integrity. That is core to being a successful business owner." — Peter Liston

"In the Army there's a saying: improvise, adapt and overcome. Entrepreneurship is very similar."

— **Jeremy Holder**



These principles are key to understanding the business marketplace and making good decisions."

EcoWalks Tours operates Thursdays to Sundays and, during lockdown periods, found a new market in virtual tours. When school groups, tourists and Sydneysiders were unable to stroll the scenic trails around Sydney Harbour, Alan ran live virtual tours for corporate groups in the USA, India and elsewhere.

"I have images of this growing into something significant," Alan says. "I would like EcoWalks Tours to become a household name when people think of visiting Sydney Harbour."

The successful side hustle

TacMed Australia, a first aid company that uses deep experience and knowledge of battlefield medicine to train first responders, now employs 20 people full-time and 100 casuals — with veterans making up more than 60 per cent of employees.

Its success came as a small surprise to founder and now Managing Director Jeremy Holder, who ran it as a side hustle for several years before it outgrew that definition.

Jeremy had served in the Army from 2001 to 2008, and in the Reserves for four years after »

◀ **Self-discipline and initiative, two values the military teaches, are vital for developing a business, Jeremy Holder says.**

that. When he transitioned out, he transferred straight into the ambulance service.

“It was just a move from one uniform to another,” he says. “I’d deployed to Afghanistan with Special Operations. I’d done counterterrorism. I loved the medical skills but was due for promotion to Sergeant. That meant I probably would have been off the tools, but I enjoyed it too much.”

He spent a decade as a paramedic, and ran his ‘hobby business’ on the side for the second half of that decade. Every year, Jeremy says, the business grew a little. He never took any money out. Instead he bought more products, invested more in marketing and built better websites.

Then, in 2015, he was awarded a government contract.

“That’s when our real trajectory as a business began,” he says. “Our biggest client now is the Australian Defence Force. So what I used to do in the green uniform as a medic, we now provide paramedic contractors to do.”

How did military experience assist his business’s development, apart from the obvious medical training and experience?

Defence embeds self-discipline and initiative, Jeremy says.

“There’s a culture of teamwork and, for those of us who have transitioned from Defence, a connection, a shared culture, and

an appetite for risk. In the Army there’s a saying: improvise, adapt and overcome. Entrepreneurship is very similar,” he says.

“Still, there were a lot of challenges. I knew nothing about customer service or finance. So I read books and learned a lot on YouTube. I listened to business podcasts and sought external business coaching and mentoring. I really looked up to people like Glenn Keys and read case studies and articles about him, and people like him.”

By all measures, TacMed Australia has been a great success. But the pandemic has proven an almighty challenge.

“Our business relies on us working nationally, so when our trainers and paramedics couldn’t cross borders, it was really difficult,” Jeremy explains. He and the team leaned on their military experience for the solutions to those pandemic-related challenges.

“One solution was to use caches, as we did in the Army. We’d leave ambulances and equipment in strategic locations that would allow us to do our work while minimising travel. The Army makes you very good at solving problems.”

Home at last: Financial security for servicepeople

After joining the Army as a 17-year-old in 1990, Robbie Turner served for 24 years. He commissioned across to Captain about halfway through that



“I might have been a Lieutenant Colonel or a full Colonel by now. But there is no way that I could have created a safe employment space for 10 veterans, a place for them to work, a way for them to feed their families, be happy and find new purpose.”

— **Robbie Turner**

service, then was promoted to Major. Five years after that, he reached a crossroad.

“I thought, do I stay in, do 30 or 40 years, and get out as a 60-year-old? Or do I take an opportunity now, while I’m young enough to start a new career?”

← Robbie Turner’s years in Special Forces helped prepare him for life as a business leader.

In choosing the latter, Robbie is far from alone. Peter says around 6,500 people transition out of the ADF every year. With an entrepreneur rate of around 10 per cent in Australian society, that means there are likely around 650 new, veteran-owned businesses launched every year.

The same is true for reservists. The ADF’s Defence Census 2019 says 11 per cent of reservists run their own businesses.

“It’s not unreasonable to assume there are around 30,000 veteran-owned businesses operating in Australia right now,” Peter says. One of them is Robbie’s property advisory, Axon Property Group.

Robbie had invested in property each time he returned from his five Special Forces deployments. It had become a passion — and he saw it as offering him financial security. After transitioning out, Robbie worked for four years in a property coaching firm before realising his values were out of alignment with that business.

Instead, he’d go it alone.

“In some ways, the military doesn’t do a good job of preparing people to run their own business,” Robbie smiles. “When I started Axon Property Group in 2017, I was very fortunate to have had that four years of experience in the other business.”

Despite the misalignment of values, Robbie’s grateful for the opportunities and lessons that came from those four years — his ‘transition job’.

“My job in the military, as a Special Forces guy especially, was to coordinate the use of air power to stop certain behaviours on the ground. Obviously, I can’t drop bombs in the real world to solve problems. So, what am I going to do?” he says.

“I had no idea of the differences between marketing and advertising. I had no idea how to run accounts. I hadn’t done an MBA. So it was a steep learning curve when I worked with that other firm. Having said that, the combination of my planning skills and my leadership and management experience laid a great platform.”

Axon Property Group, which provides the Defence community with strategic guidance and

mentoring around maximising ADF housing entitlements to achieve financial goals, now employs 10 veterans with a combined 120 years of military experience.

Running a successful business is satisfying in numerous ways, Robbie says. It’s particularly fulfilling to know he’s giving back to veterans — his staff and his clients.

“We have so far created around \$140 million of wealth, and that’s the purchase price of the properties we’ve helped people buy, not the current market value. We’ve also got another 100 properties being built right now that are not included in that value figure,” he says.

“If I had stayed in the military, I might have been a Lieutenant Colonel or a full Colonel by now. But there is no way that I could have created a safe employment space for 10 veterans, a place for them to work, a way for them to feed their families, be happy and find new purpose. And there’s certainly no way I would have been able to inject \$140 million of wealth into the Defence community. That’s the real joy of business.” 🍷



Keen to find out more about starting your own business?

Tune in for our February 2022 webinar as a panel of veteran entrepreneurs discuss how they started and grew their businesses, the challenges they faced and how they overcame them, and their plans for the future.

Sign up for RSL NSW newsletters and keep an eye on your inbox for registration details.

FRESH FACES

Coogee Randwick Clovelly RSL sub-Branch is busily recruiting young local veterans. Here's how it's reaching out and bringing them into the League.

and



← Louise Kirkwood is passionate about her sub-Branch and giving back to the community.



← Ben Jones and Louise Kirkwood at the ANZAC Day service.

Louise Kirkwood isn't a typical member of the Coogee Randwick Clovelly RSL sub-Branch. She's one of a recent crop of committee members helping to inspire a new generation of veterans to join.

"I'm pretty passionate about people and this country, and about Defence and mental health, and I really wanted to be involved in my local sub-Branch so I could find a way to give back," says Louise.

"The first few meetings I attended were a bit of a challenge — I was the youngest person in the room," she remembers. "But we did have one thing in common: we didn't want this sub-Branch to disappear. And [President] Mike Sterling and I realised that we'd have to actively work to recruit new members, or that's exactly what would happen."

Ben Jones, sub-Branch Secretary, was similarly motivated. "I got to go all over the world and was lucky enough to represent the Army in rugby union, so the opportunity to connect with other vets and give back was a driving force for me," he says. "And now that I'm part of it, I want to help get new members in."

Overcoming inertia

There has, say Ben and Louise, been some resistance to change. But a focus on supporting older members as well as developing new initiatives has helped steady a rocky boat, showing the value of a larger and more diverse community.

"Sometimes, it's something as simple as giving an older member a lift to meetings,

mowing a lawn, helping them with technology, or just sitting down for a coffee and a chat," says Louise. Indeed, a monthly coffee catch-up has been an important way to maintain contact and communication with older members and address any concerns they might have.

Clearing barriers to membership

"There's a stereotype about the RSL," says Ben, reflecting on the common confusion between RSL sub-Branches made up of veteran members and RSL Clubs, the licensed venues. "People think it's just old blokes sitting around drinking beer and talking about the old days." »

That image of the RSL Club can deter younger veterans from joining the sub-Branch. But it's not the only barrier.

"Even the meeting times are tricky for many younger veterans," says Mike. "Ours are currently held mid-morning on Saturday, and for vets with young families who work full-time, that's tough — they're busy running around with kids and sport. Why would they give that up to come to a long committee meeting?"

"So it's about how we sell it," says Ben. "We want to show veterans that we'll listen, that we'll adapt, that they are an important part of the sub-Branch's future."

Making it easy to join and stay connected is a crucial part of attracting new members.

"Joining used to involve filling out so many forms, then a long wait before you'd hear back," explains Louise. "But the membership process is far more streamlined now."

"We want to use technology to make communication easier for members," says Mike. "That way, they don't have to come in for meetings if they can't — we can keep in touch in other ways."

Finding local veterans

Reaching out to their own networks has been one way to connect with potential new members, says Louise. And with seven new members signed up at the last sub-Branch meeting, three of whom put their hands up for a position on the committee, the recruitment drive is off to a good start.

An abundance of local surf, soccer, football and cricket clubs, along with schools, offers a wealth of opportunities for the sub-Branch to connect with the community. Ben is looking forward to putting a team into the Shark Island Swim later this summer.

"There are some partnerships with Defence-related sports associations already in play from the terrific work of our predecessors," says Louise. "And we're now opening up support from the sub-Branch to include more of the women's teams and clubs."

The committee is also planning more activities around ANZAC Day next year.



Coogee Randwick Clovelly RSL sub-Branch ANZAC Day 2021 celebrations. Spectators filled the streets to watch the march, which included some 60 local veterans.

"We'd love to look at making it a week-long event that could involve fitness challenges with teams from the local sports clubs, school and the mayor's office," says Ben.

Reflecting diversity

ANZAC Day in 2021, even given the constraints associated with the pandemic, was a triumph for the new committee, a demonstration of the community-focused, family-friendly, contemporary outlook the new committee members are building. And it marked the beginning of a newly invigorated partnership with Randwick City Council, the event's primary sponsor.

Around 60 veterans participated in a local march as the streets of Coogee filled with spectators and supporters, as well as people tuning in to the live stream from across the globe.

"Our treasurer, Adrian Sutter, gave a fantastic address — an

address from a young veteran that really moved the crowd," recalls Ben.

"And seeing a woman, Louise, deliver the ode was a very big deal," says Mike.

The inclusion of the Aboriginal flag and a Welcome to Country in the ceremony were notable changes, part of a move towards better reflecting the identity of the community now.

"There was less fire and brimstone and not so many hymns," says Mike. "We want to offer a modern service that appeals to everyone and reflects our diverse community. The changes we made were in response to the feedback the sub-Branch has received, and this year we had such a positive response from the community."

We will work as a team to keep improving the service."

For many veterans, ANZAC Day is the one day they'll wear their medals or take part in commemorations — making it one of the most valuable opportunities to reach out to them or help instil pride.

"I've looked through the crowd on many ANZAC Days and it's broken my heart to see so many people wearing medals who don't want to be part of a sub-Branch because they don't see something that appeals to them," says Mike. "It's our goal to change that, to be progressive and well-respected in the community, and to bring a new generation of veterans to the Coogee Randwick Clovelly RSL sub-Branch and help make them proud to be members." 🇺🇲

SUB-BRANCH INVESTMENT: OFF THE COMMITTEE'S TO-DO LIST

With millions of dollars available for investment, the new committee was determined to get the best advice and returns possible for the sub-Branch. They researched their options and selected Morgan Stanley to manage their investment. Mike Sterling says it's been a good decision.

"Our Morgan Stanley account is currently returning about 10% after cost. It is made up of only 30% equities as per the investment policy, which has to be conservative to meet ACNC standards," explains Mike.

"In years past, we usually made up to two per cent on investment, as most funds were in term deposits. We now have more surplus income to spend on veteran support without impacting on capital."

"It feels very much like a partnership," says Louise Kirkwood. "Morgan Stanley will come out to give presentations on where we're at and answer any questions. Transparency is key for the current committee, and we're glad to have an organisation with the expertise and experience to manage our funds so we can concentrate on delivering what our members need."

Ready to reach out to young veterans in your community? Turn to page 9 to see how they can join the League for free, online.



Mike Sterling, Vice President of the Coogee Randwick Clovelly RSL sub-Branch.

GET MOVING

During Veterans' Health Week, four recent veterans shared their discharge, transition, and career-building experiences and advice in a RSL NSW webinar. Here are the highlights.



Transitioning from full-time military service into civilian life can present many unexpected challenges, but the following advice from veterans who've done it will help point the way.

On discharge

"A sort of grief cycle ensued," says Kieran Toohey of his sudden shift into civilian life. Kieran, an Army veteran of 12 years, now works as a Peer and Community Adviser at Open Arms. The path to that point has not been simple. But unlike his discharge, which was not planned or on his terms, recovery is a path he's trodden with intention.

Kieran credits mentors and a reframing of his 'soldier' mentality, sharing a story of a mentor who questioned why, if he was a soldier, he wasn't behaving like one.

"It clicked. He's got me there — I do still identify as a soldier," says Kieran. "But if I do identify as a soldier, I've got work to do every day. And I still do, every day, some work on myself to stay away from that dark space.

"I know I'll have dark days, but I think that we willingly put ourselves through basic training or RMC-Duntroon, which is hard. If we can reframe it in a way to fight this new battle ... then we could and might. I hope that we see the veteran community coming out the other side in the right way."

On transition

"I was very fortunate twice in my career to be a direct report to Sir Peter Cosgrove, who had a lovely pearl of wisdom," says Catherine McGregor. "He said, 'If you can, make your last day a good one, because you'll probably carry it with you for the rest of your life'.

"[But] if it's a bad one, there's a way of making peace with that as well. It doesn't have to be the miserable ghost at your table, living rent-free in your head for the rest of your life."

That intentional approach is not always possible — as in Nicki Young's case.

"I was having a transition, but I didn't realise I was having a transition until I jumped into this job," says Nicki. The job she's referring to is Executive General Manager of Veteran Services at RSL LifeCare, RSL NSW's partner charity that provides housing, employment, wellbeing and Department of Veteran's Affairs claim support »

"You're a warrior — get up, keep pushing for you and for your family, and see yourself walking with your chest out and your head high again. Visualise that." — Kieran Toohey

Meet the speakers



CATHERINE MCGREGOR
Army and RAAF veteran;
writer and broadcaster



NICKI YOUNG
Navy veteran; EGM Veteran Services, RSL LifeCare



LIEUTENANT COLONEL NICK DE BONT
Commanding Officer, Sydney University Regiment; Chief Security Officer, Thales



KIERAN TOOHEY
Army veteran;
Peer and Community Adviser, Open Arms

to veterans across the state. “An opportunity presented itself and within three weeks I was gone, and I think that’s quite a common story for people in my situation.”

In her new civilian role, Nicki quickly learnt that the civilian world doesn’t know anything about Defence, what ADF personnel do and why, and that the Defence world is unaware of the civilian knowledge gap.

“The lesson in there for me is that, once you’re outside of Defence, the language is really different,” Nicki says.

“You might all be saying the same thing, but you don’t realise that we’re using a different language — it’s about trying to translate that once you transition out.”



“Value yourself, value the contribution that you made to your country’s safety and security, and value what you have to contribute now to your community — make that your new purpose and identity.” — Nicki Young

On career-building

“You need to translate your military experience directly into the words that you see in the job advertisement,” advises Nick de Bont, who’s currently Commanding Officer of the Sydney University Regiment as well as Chief Security Officer at Thales.

Nick has interviewed and hired veterans directly, and strongly advises veterans looking for civilian roles to research these roles as a first step.

“I have people say, ‘I’m only an Infantry Corps Corporal — I don’t have those skills’. Well, I’ve hired an Infantry Corps Corporal before — he did all the research,” Nick says. “His resume and interview were absolutely amazing because he did that preparation to turn his military experience into very clear business outcomes — no acronyms.”

Sometimes that translation means leaving some of the details of military experience or training off the CV, but in an interview, that experience can help you tell a broader story about your abilities.

“It’s also really key to let go of some of those things that you’re proud of but aren’t relevant for the job. So it’s great that you’re parachute trained, but that’s not useful in financial services. So leave it off,” says Nick.

“But the fear that you overcome to parachute out and motivate the people behind you? You can translate that story in an interview, showing your initiative, your leadership, your ability to negotiate with others under pressure and a whole range of core skills.”



Find out about the RSL Veterans’ Employment Program, which is delivered by RSL LifeCare and available to veterans and their partners.



Watch on demand: RSL NSW transition webinar

Get moving in civilian life: tips from four recent veterans

RSL NSW member, veteran advocate and Sky News host Catherine McGregor and a panel of recent veterans discuss the challenges they’ve faced moving into new careers, new communities, new routines and more.



Hear from RSL NSW members:

- > **Catherine McGregor:** Army and RAAF veteran; writer and broadcaster
- > **Nicki Young:** Navy veteran; EGM Veteran Services, RSL LifeCare
- > **Lieutenant Colonel Nick de Bont:** Commanding Officer, Sydney University Regiment; Chief Security Officer, Thales
- > **Kieran Toohey:** Army veteran; Peer and Community Advisor, Open Arms

Watch now, on demand:





ON THE RIGHT TRACK

After 25 years, the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is still evolving, educating and immersing us in veterans' experiences.



Story John Gatfield

Since the first section of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway opened in 1996, the site has attracted ever-increasing numbers of veterans, their families, school students and others paying their respects and learning about WWII. Now, a new book traces the history of the memorial, its significance, and its reinvention of the accepted form of Australian war memorials. Here, author John Gatfield shares part of that story.

Currently, only three NSW memorials have national status: the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, the Cenotaph in Martin Place, and the Korean War Memorial in Moore Park. After 25 years, the relevance, educational significance and support from the wider veteran community for the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway justify national recognition.

In the 1990s, as the country prepared to embrace the Australia Remembers program, which marked 50 years since the end of WWII, Concord Repatriation General Hospital manager Alan Kinkade looked at a strip of unloved public land along the shore of the Parramatta River and imagined it as a contoured living memorial, recreating the atmosphere of the Kokoda Track across the Owen Stanley Range.

"We were transitioning from being a veterans' hospital to a public hospital, and I wanted to do something for the veterans," Kinkade recalls.

He ran the idea past Concord Mayor Peter Woods, whose council was working to clean up the Parramatta River, preserve its mangroves and provide public access to the foreshore, reclaiming it from a century of industrial use.

"He said it wouldn't cost Concord Council anything," says Woods. "So that was rather attractive to a mayor. I must say it has cost us, but we've been quite willing."

RSL NSW and veterans on board

By late 1994, a steering committee was formed with representatives of the hospital and council, as well as the RSL and veterans who had taken part in the New Guinea campaign. RSL NSW President Godfrey Eugene 'Rusty' Priest AM was among those attending the first meeting and became the first chairman of the board when the Walkway became an incorporated company. »



▲ The Memorial Centrepiece under construction in early 1996.

MEMORIAL WALKWAY THROUGH TIME

1994
Steering committee forms with representatives of the hospital, council, RSL NSW and veterans.

1996
Stage one opens.

2000
The Olympic Torch Relay begins from the Memorial Centrepiece, with four veterans carrying the torch along the Walkway.

Veterans were consulted extensively in the planning of the expansive site.

“I was keen to work on this project because my father, Corporal Edward Richard Taylor, had served in New Guinea during WWII,” says landscape architect Matthew Taylor.

He consulted a number of veterans, and on their advice 22 commemorative stations were built along the pathway, each acknowledging a significant location or wartime engagement. These stations were fitted with automatic audio narratives so visitors could understand the importance of each location and the toll in Australian lives.

A fundraising appeal prompted an immediate and generous response from veterans’ groups and individuals. The first Gold Sponsor was the Returned Sisters RSL sub-Branch, which gave \$3,000 towards the Memorial Rose Garden, followed by the RSL State Branch, which donated \$5,000 towards the Memorial Centrepiece.

The Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training used the construction and landscaping project to train approximately 100 unemployed people over 18 months, and their labour was valued at \$1.3 million.



▲ The granite walls were unveiled during the official opening.

From stone to AR

After stage one’s official opening on 3 October 1996, commemorative services were held for ANZAC Day and VP Day, then from 2008, on 3 November for Kokoda Day, attracting increasing numbers of veterans and their families.

The Walkway also became a destination for school groups, who were led along the pathway by volunteers, including WWII veterans, who could recount their personal experiences of the Kokoda campaign. RSL sub-Branches were very active in sponsoring many of these visits.

The opening of the Ralph Honner Kokoda Education Centre in 2009 provided a boost to the resources at the memorial. Recently, virtual and augmented reality



▲ One of 22 commemorative stations.

experiences were launched, incorporating interviews with men who fought on the Kokoda Track, to immerse students in their memories of 1942.

The development of the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway has been remarkable: from a piece of neglected and overlooked land to a vibrant, living memorial receiving thousands of visitors each year.

It has achieved much more than its original aims of recognising those who fought the Japanese in New Guinea and educating younger generations about that campaign. It now ranks as a unique memorial, inspirational and respectful. The Walkway has recently been awarded State Government funding of \$600,000 over four years.

Their Spirit Lives On by John Gatfield was released on Kokoda Day and is available from the Memorial. Contact Alice Kang: alice.kang@kokodawalkway.com.au

<p>2008 First Kokoda Day service is held on 3 November.</p>	<p>2009 Ralph Honner Kokoda Education Centre opens.</p>	<p>2015 Dawn service marks the centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli.</p>	<p>2021 Virtual and augmented reality experiences launch to immerse participants in the memories of veterans.</p>
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KEY STATS

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> Dr Brendan Nelson (centre) and Ray James (right) at the official opening of the Berrigan Memorial Wall.

< Members of the Berrigan RSL sub-Branch celebrate the completion of the memorial, which honours veterans from the local area.

BERRIGAN MEMORIAL PROJECT COMPLETED

The Berrigan Memorial Wall was officially opened by the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson AO, former head of the Australian War Memorial, on 12 November, wrapping up a five-year \$50,000 project honouring Berrigan's local veterans.

The new memorial wall displays the names of local

residents who participated in WWI, WWII, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. Berrigan RSL sub-Branch President Jeff Stein is delighted with the outcome.

"The memorial wall is a wonderful monument dedicated to our community," Stein said. "It honours our veterans both past and



present, and it's a place where our community can come and pay their respects."

The project started from an idea at a sub-Branch meeting in 2016, and the team has overcome challenges along the way, including the drought's impact on the local community, fundraising restrictions and COVID-19.

"To stand here and see the memorial constructed, we can all be very proud," Stein said.

Over the past five years, the Berrigan RSL has received financial support from support from the RSL and community groups, as well as a \$10,000 grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

"We are very fortunate to also receive many financial contributions from members and families within our community. We are very grateful for their continued support," Stein said.

"I would like to particularly thank Amy Batten, Stuart Brooksby, Bill Daly, Mick Hartney and David Woodward, who have been the backbone of this project."

DUBBO CARE PACKAGES FOR ADF TROOPS

RSL NSW members have delivered 100 care packages to Australian Defence Force (ADF) clinicians and support personnel deployed in Western NSW to say thank you for their efforts in Operation COVID-19 Assist.

Care packages funded by the Australian Forces Overseas Fund were delivered by Dubbo RSL sub-Branch President Tom Gray and members to the ADF taskforce's temporary headquarters in Dubbo.

"This is a small way that members of the League can let them know the veteran community is right behind them," Gray said.

RSL NSW President Ray James said the circumstances in Dubbo resemble what troops often experience on deployment overseas, which is typically where the RSL sends care packages to support them.



"The teams are doing the hard slog day in and day out and are unable to leave their accommodation to purchase snacks or enjoy morale-boosting activities," James said.

"The care packages might seem a small thing, but they do make a difference, and RSL NSW is committed to helping our troops wherever they might be deployed."

> (l-r) Lieutenant Hugh Manson, Aircraftman Zac Fraser and Able Seaman Renee Shultz assist Foodbank volunteers in preparing food hampers for communities affected by COVID-19.



Defence Media

GOULBURN VALE, LANCE COOKE

Goulburn RSL sub-Branch recently farewelled one of its longest-serving members, and one of the few remaining WWII veterans, when Leading Aircraftman Lance Cooke passed away.

Cooke was born in Yass, NSW, in 1925 and joined the RAAF in 1943. He was posted to Borneo with No. 93 Beaufort Squadron on Labuan Island.

He held numerous roles with Gunning RSL sub-Branch and was awarded the RSL Meritorious Service Medal.

When Gunning closed, Cooke transferred to Goulburn RSL sub-Branch, where he held the position of Vice President.

He will be missed.



COOMA/MONARO WORKING BEE IN BUNGARBY

Cooma/Monaro RSL sub-Branch President Geoff Stokes rallied his members (and their whipper snippers, shovels, ride-on mowers and tools) to help prepare the 116-year-old Bungarby Memorial Hall, 70km south of Cooma, for the annual Remembrance Day service.

After the working bee, Bungarby Hall President Andrew Dunlop lit the barbecue and everyone enjoyed a well-earned sausage sizzle.

< RSL NSW President Ray James (right) outside the Bungarby Memorial Hall.



➤ Teresa Earley and Vickie Jackson, of the Old Bar Beach RSL sub-Branch Auxiliary.



AUXILIARY

OLD BAR BEACH A NEW AUXILIARY

The Old Bar Beach RSL sub-Branch has recently increased membership from 12 to 40 and appointed an Auxiliary. The 18 members of the new Auxiliary have been fundraising to support local veterans, building the sub-Branch's social media

profile and assisting with administration, as well as visiting local schools and preschools to read commemorative books and make paper poppies with students.

The growth of the Old Bar Beach RSL sub-Branch can be attributed to a renewed focus on being family oriented to attract younger members.

LADY WOODWARD CUP

Congratulations to the ANZAC House Auxiliary (Penshurst), recipients of the 2021 Lady Woodward Cup, which raised more than any other Auxiliary in FY21 for RSL DefenceCare.

MOREE "I AM NOW OLD ENOUGH"

Les Smith, a well-known Moree identity, has just joined the Moree RSL sub-Branch — at the age of 102. "I am now old enough," said Smith, who joined the RAAF in 1943 and served as a Leading Aircraftman in New Guinea.

He also worked as a motor mechanic in Moree throughout his life and has more recently turned his hand to poetry, publishing four books. Smith still supports himself and drives his own car.

Les Smith and Moree RSL sub-Branch President Roger Butler OAM.



CITY OF WOLLONGONG A LIFE OF MERITORIOUS SERVICE

The City of Wollongong RSL sub-Branch lost a former long-term President earlier this year with the passing of Peter John Poulton AM.

Poulton became President of the City of Wollongong RSL sub-Branch in 1997, serving in that position for 23 years until February 2020. He was made a Life Member of the RSL in 2003 and awarded the RSL Meritorious Service Medal in 2019.

Poulton was also a leader in the Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Committee in 1986-87, coordinating the Welcome Home Parade and convincing then-Prime Minister Bob Hawke of the need to establish the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra.

He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his service in this role.

Poulton assisted countless veterans during his decades of service and was a good mate to many.

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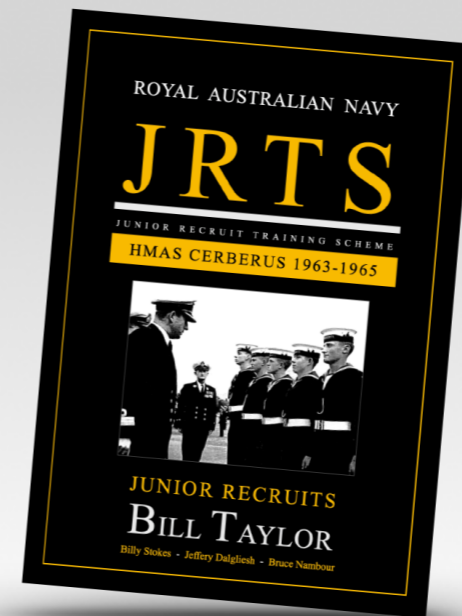
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The information contained in the Last Post has been provided by DVA and RSL members. Where possible we have attempted to provide all service details. We regret any missing information.



REMEMBRANCE DAY 11 NOVEMBER 2021

A pre-dawn service honoured those who've served in all conflicts since WWI. RSL NSW President Ray James, NSW Minister for Veterans Natalie Ward, and RSL ambassador and veteran Peter Rudland watched as the Opera House sails were lit in remembrance. This image, captured by RSL NSW photographers, was shared widely on social media, including by the Prime Minister of Australia.



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