

# National President's Newsletter No 6 of 2015

**1. RSL National Communications & Marketing Manager.** It is pleasing to report that Ms Donna Alexander has been appointed to this position and will take up her duties at the RSL National Office on Tuesday 1 September 2015. Donna has extensive experience in both marketing and communications in the private sector and was most recently an Associate Director for the Westpac Institutional Bank. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Business and a Diploma in Marketing and Communications.

The position of National Communications and Marketing Manager reports to the Chief Executive Officer and will work cooperatively with those handling marketing and communications issues in the RSL State and Territory Branches.

The duties of the National Communications and Marketing Manager are to:

- Develop relationships at all levels with corporate partners
- Be the key point of contact for National marketing and PR campaigns
- Represent the RSL at meetings with corporate partners, media and stakeholders
- Develop and implement sophisticated communications plans
- Develop communications material and publications
- Develop a partner PR strategy
- Work with State and Territory Branch teams

An early challenge for Donna will be to redesign the RSL National website. Another will be to use the deliverables from the current contract let to establish the RSL needs now and into the future in the social media space.

## **2. Victory in the Pacific 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration 15**

**August 2015.** As earlier reported the RSL accepted the invitation of Government to undertake the management of this important commemorative event and has since put in place activities around the nation to honour veterans of the Pacific Theatre Campaign of World War II.

All State and Territory Branches of the RSL except Queensland will host commemorative services in the national capital and state capitals at

about midday on Saturday 15 August. We understand the Prime Minister will attend the commemoration in Adelaide.

The National Commemoration will take place at the Shrine of Remembrance in Ann Street, Brisbane and will be hosted by RSL National supported by the RSL Queensland State Branch.

That evening a select group of World War II Pacific Theatre campaign veterans will be guests of honour at a gala dinner in Brisbane at which the special guest speaker will be Prime Minister Abbott. Others attending this event will include His Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Ambassadors and High Commissioners from many of Australia's allies during World War II and RSL State and Territory Branch Presidents.

The Commonwealth Government has provided the funds for this series of national commemorative events through the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson. RSL National has kept the Minister fully informed as planning has progressed and I will be calling on Minister Ronaldson a few days before the events as a courtesy and to finalise last minute details.

I encourage all RSL members to attend these significant commemorative events in their States and Territories.

### **3. Inaugural Women Veterans Symposium, Brisbane Friday 24**

**July.** Along with the Queensland Branch State President Stewart Cameron and the RSL National Chief Executive Officer, Mrs Samantha Jackman, I had the privilege of attending this event at the Community Centre of the Kedron/Wavell RSL late last month. This was an initiative of the Samford and Geebung/Zillmere/Bald Hills/Aspley Sub Branches which provided a first class opportunity for women veterans to discuss a very wide range of relevant issues. It also provided those attending with considerable information about what is being done by some of the organisations assisting women veterans.

This event was a splendid initiative and I commend the organisers for their inspiring work.

### **4. Remembering ANZAC – A Conference focused on the health outcomes of Military Service.**

Along with the RSL National Medical Advisor Dr Rod Bain I attended this forward looking conference in Adelaide on Wednesday 15 July. It was opened by former Chief of the

Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston. Some of the points he made were that in treating members of the ADF there needed to be better coordination between doctors and military commanders; that improvement was needed in boundary issues between Defence and DVA; that psychologists and psychiatrists need to be deployed to the front line; that more research into military health is essential; and that there is a need for evidence based treatment for mental health.

The University of Adelaide hosted the event and on behalf of that institution and in his own right Professor Sandy McFarlane said that lessons from former conflicts had been forgotten and changes based on these lessons had not been instituted. He also talked about the high health standards needed by those seeking to join the ADF noting that 51% of those conscripted at the time of the Vietnam War were rejected on health grounds; and that hence comparisons of ADF health with the general population may not be valid.

The gathering was preceded by a dinner where the guest of honour was the former principal medical advisor to the Department of Veterans' Affairs Dr Graeme Killer.

A lengthy private discussion with Dr Killer during a break in the Conference resulted in a decision that some action had to be initiated if perceived shortcomings in the fragmented delivery of health outcomes to serving and former members of the ADF were to be remedied. More specifically something has to be done to make health care truly seamless as serving members of the ADF transition back to civilian life.

To this end I have started work on a comprehensive conceptual framework paper examining this complex subject. Once this document is complete I anticipate assistance from Dr Killer and will involve others to enable the RSL to put forward a detailed and comprehensively researched policy proposal.

In furtherance of this aim I met with the President of the Australian Medical Association Professor Brian Oowler on Thursday 6 August and continue to receive assistance from Dr Rod Bain.

The aim is to derive from an examination of all relevant factors, viable options for delivering better through life health outcomes for serving and former members of the ADF; and from this assessing whether one or more of these options is more cost effective (or at least as cost effective) as the current fragmented complex system.

This is an effort which must be made and the RSL National Board were briefed about the initiative at the Monday 27 July meeting.

In undertaking this task there is a clear understanding of the enormity of the challenge and that the examination may result in a finding that there is no more cost effective path ahead.