



ANNUAL RSL SUBMISSION MADE TO THE PRIME MINISTER

RSL National

President's Newsletter



Issue No. 7

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IN THIS ISSUE

Veterans' Affairs Budget

by Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Retd)

On 6 October 2015, the submission to the Australian Government regarding Veterans' Affairs issues for framing the portfolio budget was made to the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP. This was submitted on behalf of the National Board and Members of the Returned Services League of Australia (RSL).

The submission outlined the ways in which the RSL continues to assist the service and ex-service community and their families. It highlighted the RSL's contribution to the Invictus Games in 2014 and the plans to partner with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to send future Australian teams to compete at this event.

RSL's lead role in ANZAC Centenary events around Australia were also mentioned in the submission. For example, the partnership with the Australian Government for the delivery of the 70th Victory in the Pacific (VP70) commemorations and celebrations.

Once the Prime Minister has reviewed the draft it will also be forwarded to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Treasurer, the Leader of the Opposition and the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

The RSL Submission sets out the areas of greatest need within the service and ex-service community and require consideration for funding by the Australian Government in its 2016-17 Budget. As in previous submissions, the RSL has set out issues where there are shortfalls in the resources required to deliver the level of care and support for Australia's veterans; particularly those involved in overseas operations.

The submission has been divided into three sections that outline the following:

- * **Section 1** explains the League's on-going efforts to care for service and ex-service veterans valued at over \$62.5M in volunteer hours.
- * **Section 2** sets out the eight most significant veterans' issues to be funded in the 2016-17 Budget.
- * **Section 3** lists a number of matters, some that have been raised previously and a number from other Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) that we support.

A copy of the draft submission that has now been sent to all parties is available on the RSL National website www.rsl.org.au



National Conference

The 99th RSL National Conference was held on 22 September 2015 in Brisbane. This year's theme was Modern Veterans' and Mental Health.



RSL WA Congress

The 99th RSL WA Congress was held on 10 October 2015 in Perth. A number of addresses were given on key veterans' issues and a number of awards presented to recognise significant efforts of WA members.

National Conference

by Donna Alexander

The 99th National Conference of the RSL was held in Brisbane on 22 September and explored the topic of Mental Health and Modern Veterans. Professor Sandy McFarlane was the opening speaker and provided an insight into the work he is doing to better understand veteran wellbeing. It appears that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is impacting up to 18.7% of younger Veterans but this also means that 83% of this population are doing well.

The Hon Stuart Robert MP, was delighted to make his first speech as the newly appointed Minister for Veterans’ Affairs at the RSL National Conference. He assured the delegates present that whilst DVA and Department of Human Services (DHS) were in his portfolio, they would not be merged.

The Hon David Feeney MP, Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs provided his thoughts on the issue of mental health and young Veterans. His main concern is the lack of data on Veteran homelessness and encouraged the RSL to share its information with the relevant stakeholders to address this issue.



National President, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan presented the ANZAC Peace Prize to Frederick Hyde for his dedication to helping others. Fred has built 45 schools and 5 kindergartens in Bangladesh over the last 30 years and these facilities have provided education to over 60,000 children. Mr Hyde, a World War II Veteran, accepted the award on behalf of his team and shared that the reason people go to war is to fight for peace.

The afternoon comprised of three business panel sessions that provided information on DVA, Operation K9 and the Invictus Games.

A full summary of the Conference can be found at www.rsl.org.au

MINISTER ASSURES NO MERGER

The Hon. Stuart Robert MP said “DVA is a great department and better access by addressing our three key priorities will ensure we keep moving forward and helping veterans.”

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO:
donna.alexander@rsl.org.au



The Hon. Graham Edwards AM, RSL WA State President with the winners of the new community service award for 2015.

RSL WA Congress

by John Arthur

The RSL WA 99th Congress celebrated a busy year that had involved the contributions of many members to deliver a range of ANZAC Centenary events across the State.

This effort was recognised by all speakers and through the presentation of several awards, including the new award for outstanding community service. The award went to a team of RSL WA members who have installed and maintain more than 1,600 plaques dedicated to the fallen along Avenues of Honour at Kings Park.

RSL WA is focused on achieving Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status this year to expand its ability to conduct major fundraising activities.

Awarding the ANZAC Peace Prize to Mrs Anne Leach OAM FNM for over 50 years of service to the RSL in WA.



The future looks bright for RSL WA as sub-branches work to attract post-Vietnam veterans and adapt to stay relevant to younger members. Last year total membership grew for the first time in seven years and several sub-branches have been reinvigorated by young members filled with enthusiasm and optimism.

MINISTER ANNOUNCES NEW POLICY

The Hon. Stuart Robert MP announced the release of the new Strategy and Policy documents for Veterans’ Mental and Social Health at the RSL WA Conference.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO:
donna.alexander@rsl.org.au

NEW COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS



Social and Online Media

The RSL is now posting daily to Facebook and Twitter. You can read the latest news and make comments. A variety of other channels and new National website will go live on 1 January 2016 to launch the new RSL 100 logo.

Newsletter Format and Frequency

This is the first edition of the RSL National President’s newsletter in its new format. The newsletter will be published on the last Friday of each month. Your contributions to articles are welcomed and can be emailed to: donna.alexander@rsl.org.au

FAST FACTS

\$50,000

Estimated donations received at Floriade to help veterans in Canberra.

1,097 hrs

Estimated time donated by RSL volunteers to help visitors pin poppies to the reflection wall.



Thank you to the many visitors and RSL volunteers that donated to the Reflection Wall at Floriade.

Floriade

by Peter Eveille, RSL ACT

Floriade is an annual flower show that opened in Canberra on 12 September and continued until 11 October 2015. RSL ACT was pleased to be selected as one of the charity partners by Floriade.

Each year the festival has a theme and this year it was “Reflection”. A Reflection Wall was established for visitors to be able to donate a gold coin in exchange for a poppy which they attached to the wall in remembrance of someone.

The photos above show the sheer number of poppies that were pinned over the 30 days of Floriade. They were assisted by a number of RSL volunteers that will now turn the poppies into wreaths and donate them to local schools on Remembrance Day.

National President, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan visited the Reflection Wall to thank the public and the volunteers. *“It is wonderful to see such a major tribute to our fallen reflected upon at the wall and the generosity of visitors to Floriade and RSL volunteers”, said Ken.*

Adaptive Sports

by Darren McManus-Smith OAM, RSL NSW

In September, a team of 12 contemporary veterans and serving personnel participated in the 2015 Canadian Army Running Festival. The Festival was held in Ottawa over the weekend of the 18-21 September.

Close to 25,000 people participated in the 8th annual Canada Army Run and the event raised approximately \$400,000. These funds are given to charities that provide military support services.

The event started in 2008 and has raised over \$1.6 million and become Canada’s biggest running festival.

The RSL recognises the benefits of adaptive sports for serving and ex-service personnel as part of the treatment for anxiety disorders and for overall wellbeing.

This was experienced first-hand by National President, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan when he spoke to one of the participants after the Invictus Games in 2014. He kept shaking my hand and saying “I’ve got my life back”, Ken told the audience at the RSL WA Congress.

Nominations will be called soon for veterans to take part in the 2016 Invictus Games, to be held next May in Orlando, Florida. The RSL will support a team of 40 with 20 serving and 20 ex-serving members. Details will be released on RSL branch and national websites soon.

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to know more about RSL’s Adaptive Sports programs or to nominate for Invictus Games

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO:
Dmcmnussmith@rslnsw.org.au



Operation K9

by Darren Adamson, RSL SA

Operation K9 matches highly trained and accredited assistance dogs with veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress and anxiety disorders. It is the result of a successful partnership between the Royal Society for the Blind and the RSL SA.

These assistance dogs go beyond simply providing companionship to Veterans but increase their social interaction, health and independence.

This is an evidence based treatment that has been proven by several medical studies to have a positive effect on people suffering from PTSD. The dogs are part of an overall treatment plan and trained to respond to stress cues.

Peter Checkley recently received his assistance dog Ruby and told the RSL National conference delegates that it had changed his life.

“Ruby has saved me and my marriage. I would never go to the movies before and now I am out doing social things every single day”, Peter said.

RSL SA encouraged other branches to get involved in the program and NSW RSL is reviewing its capacity to start one soon. For more information contact RSL-SA on (08) 8100 7300.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about the Operation K9 Veterans’ assistance dogs

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO:
darrena@rslsa.org.au



World-first study reveals physical impact of PTSD

by Kylie Hatfield, RSL QLD

Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are twice as prone to stomach ulcers and four times more likely to have had a heart attack, according to the world's first comprehensive study into the medical and psychological health of Vietnam veterans.



The research, funded by RSL (Queensland Branch) and conducted by the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation (GMRF), involved clinical and psychological evaluations of 300 veterans.

The three-year study involved assessing veterans' blood pathology, heart disease and lung function assessments, abdominal ultrasounds and brain imaging, along with tests on resilience, alcohol use, sleep habits, and diet.

It found Vietnam veterans with PTSD had a higher risk of sleep disorders, gastrointestinal problems and cardiac disease than service personnel without the condition.

RSL (Queensland Branch) State President Stewart Cameron said, "This vital medical and scientific research will be ongoing and will play a role in best treatments of the disorder both now and in the future." While the findings have not come as a surprise to many of those living with PTSD and their families, the significance of the research is that the medical community, and the broader community, can now be on the lookout for physical symptoms which may be indicators of an underlying struggle with PTSD.

Key findings revealed veterans with PTSD have:

- * More than triple the risk of acting out their dreams while asleep
- * Twice the chance of being diagnosed with sleep apnea
- * Almost two times the tendency of restless legs
- * Increased daytime fatigue and sleepiness
- * Two times the chance of suffering stomach ulcers
- * Double the chance of reflux
- * Greater tendency to report constipation, diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome
- * A four-fold higher risk of heart attack in the past
- * Lower levels of the 'good' cholesterol which contributes to an increased risk of heart disease.

The findings were presented at PTSD 2015, held in Brisbane in September for which RSL (Queensland Branch) was the Patron Sponsor. For more information visit: <http://www.rslqld.org/news-events/>

RSL Military Museum Opens and President Visits

by Noeleen Lincoln, RSL TAS

It has been a busy month in Tasmania. Scottsdale RSL military museum showed off the only ex-Australian Defence Force Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter in the state at its official opening on Friday 9 October 2015. The helicopter, affectionately dubbed the Huey, was unveiled as the new centrepiece of the museum.

Over 5,000 of these helicopters were used during the Vietnam War to carry Australian troops into the jungle and return, resupply them and carry out the wounded and dead.

RSL sub-branch president Bruce Scott was the driving force behind the acquisition of the helicopter and has worked for over three years on this project. "Every man and his dog applied for this, but we got lucky - we've got the only one in the state," he said. Mr. Scott served in Vietnam between 1969 and 1970.

The whole project cost \$360,000 and this was funded with a combination of State Government funding and RSL fundraising efforts. The museum is open from 10am to 4pm, seven days a week. For more information visit RSL Tasmania's Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/RSLTasmaniaBranch>

Rear Admiral Ken Doolan visited the King Island Sub Branch with RSL Tasmania State President Robert Dick and CEO Noeleen Lincoln from 14 - 16 October. The trip included a visit to the Sub Branch rooms and a visit to the Island's hospital and aged care facility where they met and spent some time with a number of war widows and a WW2 veteran. Sub Branch President, Scot Wright arranged a dinner for the members which was well supported. The King Island Sub Branch is small but its members remain dedicated to the League core values in a community which really looks after one another. King Island - one of Australia's best kept secrets.



Celebrating our Centenary

by Sam Jackman



Telling our Story

Since commencing in the role of RSL National Chief Executive Officer in April this year, Sam Jackman has drafted a strategy that will take the organisation into the future. The key to executing this strategy is to tell our story better and help people understand that the RSL is not shaped by its clubs, poker machines and ANZAC day services. This is a story about an organisation that is still as vital today as it was 100 years ago.

In the last 20 years over 70,000 men and women have been deployed to the Middle-East. This means the need for our services is growing and the new generation of veterans will require different things from the RSL.

Relevancy is the key to the RSL's future and new media channels and ways to interact with our members are being established this year. Sam says, "The mode of delivery may have changed but the need for our services has not changed". One of the ways we will start our centenary celebrations next year is with a documentary, screened in prime time on Channel 9. It will feature stories from each RSL Branch that show how the RSL is helping veterans of all ages and their families across Australia.

Convoy to Cape York

by Peter Smith

RSL Victoria is one of the major supporters of the Young Veterans' drive to raise awareness for health and wellbeing of younger veterans. The convoy started in Melbourne on 1 October and will reach Cape York to commemorate Remembrance Day on 11 November.

The Young Veterans work with the RSL and other ESOs to connect serving and ex-service personnel with activities that promote greater wellbeing. One of the ways this is being achieved is to facilitate participation in recreational activities such as the drive from Melbourne to the Cape.

The Young Veterans are supported by RSL Victoria and in particular the Dandenong-Cranbourne RSL Sub-Branch. They commenced their convoy from the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne and will visit several Sub-Branches along the way.



The team are driving two Land Rovers that will stop at many towns and visit RSL branches, schools and community groups as they make their way to Cape York. We encourage you to meet the convoy and join in the events in your town. They will arrive at Cape York on 11 November 2015 to commemorate Remembrance Day.

You can find the route the convoy is taking, access videos and see photos of the trip at the RSL Young Veterans Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/YoungVeteransRSL/timeline>