

**THE RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF
AUSTRALIA
(NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH)**

Annual State Congress

**AGENDA
2017**



**To be held at
Albury Entertainment Centre
525 Swift Street, Albury NSW
Starting at 9.00 am
Tuesday 23 May 2017**

AGENDA

**ANNUAL STATE CONGRESS
TUESDAY 23 & WENESDAY 24 MAY 2017**

- (A) Wreath Laying Ceremony
- (B) Pledge of Allegiance to the League
- (C) Official Opening of Congress and address by:
His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd)
Governor of New South Wales
- (D) State President's Report
- (E) Awards and Presentations:
 - Meritorious Service Medal
 - Certificate of Merit
 - State President's Shield - Trophies
- (F) Other Addresses (to be confirmed)
- (G) Conclusion of Official Opening
- (H) The appointment of timekeeper and tellers
- (I) For notice - State Secretary, Returning Officer
- (J) Appointment of Scrutineers
- (K) Appointment of Suspension Committee
- (L) Minutes of Annual State Congress 2016 to be confirmed.

- (M) State Treasurer's Report
- (N) Annual Report 2016
- (O) Financial Statements and Auditor's Report
- (P) Adoption of Reports
- (Q) Adjournment for lunch
- (R) DVA Forum (including DVA Motions)
- (S) Motions as listed in the agenda
- (T) Congress Session Times:
 - Tuesday 9.00am – 12.30pm and 2.00pm – 3.30pm
 - Wednesday 9.00am – 12.30pm and 2.00pm – close

CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONDUCT OF CONGRESS

BY-LAW NO. 10 items 36 to 43 - CLAUSE 21.2, 24.1, 31.3 and 39

MEETINGS

STATE CONGRESS

36. Standing Orders of State Congress
 - (a) Wreath Laying Ceremony.
 - (b) Pledges of Allegiance.
 - (c) Addresses.
 - (d) Awards and Presentations.
 - (e) Confirmation of Minutes of previous Meeting.
 - (f) Congress Appointments.
 - (h) Reports.
 - (i) Agenda.
 - (j) Conclusion.

State Congress Session Times

37. Each session of State Congress shall be structured to allow maximum time for the business of Congress and also allow an adequate break for lunch.

Standing Orders

38. No suspension of Standing Orders shall be permitted unless matter is one of immediate urgency and of vital importance to RSL NSW.
39. Notwithstanding anything contained in this By-Law, no Suspension of Standing Orders shall be permitted in respect of any motion which is not submitted in accordance with the Constitution unless the same is of an urgent or of an emergency nature and has been signed by the President and Secretary of the sub-Branch which has submitted such motion except where the matter arises from the meeting of State Congress in session.
40. At State Congress when Suspension of Standing Orders is required, the subject matter of the motion, in writing, shall be handed to the chairman, who will then hand same to Suspension Committee for recommendation.
41. If motion is recommended by Suspension Committee, it shall be read to Congress

and question of Suspension decided without debate.

42. If Suspension is permitted by State Congress, then the motion will be debated and voted upon in the normal manner.
43. No amendment shall be permitted to any resolution appearing on the Agenda for State Congress, amending, adding to or rescinding the Constitution or any part thereof.

BY-LAW NO. 13 - CLAUSE 21.2

STATE CONGRESS SUSPENSION COMMITTEE

1. The State Congress Suspension Committee shall be nominated and elected annually at the first working session of State Congress each year.
2. At least five State Councilors and/or State Congress Delegates shall be nominated and elected from persons in attendance at the State Congress.
3. The elected State Congress Suspension Committee shall nominate a Chairman from its members.
4. The State Congress Suspension Committee shall meet during State Congress as required to consider motions handed to the State Congress Chairman who shall hand same to State Congress Suspension Committee for recommendation.
5. The State Congress Suspension Committee shall only deal with motions submitted in accordance with the Constitution that are:
 - (a) of an urgent or of an emergency nature.
 - (b) of vital importance to the RSL NSW.
 - (c) are fully justified matters arising from business at the State Congress in session.
6. All motions submitted to State Congress Suspension Committee shall be in writing on District Council or sub-Branch official letterhead signed by the President and Secretary of the District Council or sub-Branch submitting the motion with the exception of item 5 (c) above.
7. If a motion is submitted from the floor of State Congress and is approved by the State Congress Suspension Committee for debate, it shall be placed on the Agenda for discussion of State Congress. The said motion or motions shall be printed by facilities at the State Congress venue for distribution to the delegates present for perusal prior to a motion or motions being discussed.
8. Any District Council or sub-Branch motion submitted to the State Congress

Suspension Committee and subsequently rejected by State Congress Suspension Committee shall be returned to originator of motion for submission (if still required) through the sub-Branch and/or District Council and NOT referred direct to State Council.

9. The State Congress Suspension Committee shall be empowered to reword or rephrase all motions submitted to State Congress Suspension Committee for recommendation to State Congress.
10. The State Congress Suspension Committee may seek further verbal explanation from originators of motions submitted for consideration of State Congress Suspension Committee.
11. The State Congress Suspension Committee shall be empowered to consider a motion of extreme urgency, arising from business of the State Congress in session, seeking change or amendment to the Constitution and make recommendation to State Congress.
12. The Chairman of the State Congress Suspension Committee may be called upon by the Chairman of State Congress to give reasons for State Congress Suspension Committee recommendation to State Congress.
13. The State Congress Suspension Committee shall not be required to give reasons at State Congress to originators for rejection of any submission to State Congress Suspension Committee.
14. State Congress Suspension Committee recommendations accepted by State Congress shall be included in State Congress Minutes and referenced with other resolution/s of similar content or intention.

BY-LAW NO. 11 - CLAUSE 21.2

STATE CONGRESS AGENDA COMMITTEE

1. The State Congress Agenda Committee shall be appointed annually by State Council, normally at its June Meeting.
2. Branch Legal Advisor and State Secretary may attend to offer Legal and Constitutional advice.
3. At least four (4) State Councillors will be elected as State Congress Agenda Committee.
4. The State Congress Agenda Committee will nominate a Chairman from its members.
5. RSL NSW staff support shall be available as required.
6. The State Congress Agenda Committee shall meet to consider agenda items from

State Council, District Councils and sub-Branched in the last week of September and the first week of March each year.

7. The State Congress Agenda Committee shall be empowered to re-word or re-phrase ANY motion/s submitted for inclusion in future State Congress Agenda. Any re-wording or re-phrasing shall not alter the original intention of the motion.
8. Motions deemed to being ruled out of order or irrelevant to the RSL NSW shall not be approved by State Congress Agenda Committee for inclusion in the State Congress Agenda.
9. Such items or motions mentioned in (7) above, shall be returned to the originators with explanation.
10. Motions submitted by sub-Branched, District Councils or State Council for the State Congress Agenda without supporting details and argument shall not be approved by the State Congress Agenda Committee for inclusion in the State Congress Agenda.
11. That the supporting argument of a motion for State Congress be included in the Agenda and the State Congress Agenda Committee summarise the supporting argument so as not to exceed a half of A4 size page.
12. Resolutions from RSL National Congress and RSL National Executive amending the National Constitution and requiring the Constitution to be amended and subsequently adopted by State Council shall be included in the State Congress Agenda for confirmation of State Congress.
13. State Congress Agenda motions referred to in 11.12 above shall be grouped in Constitution Section of State Congress Agenda, with special comment if required, and showing State Council as sponsor of motion.
14. Motions submitted for State Congress Agenda and which are covered by RSL National Standing Policy or RSL NSW Standing Policies, shall be set aside in a special section of State Congress Agenda and noted with applicable Standing Policy reference number.
15. Such motions as referred to in 11.13 above shall only require confirmation of State Congress Delegates in attendance.
16. Any motion submitted to the State Congress Agenda Committee with the exception of 11.7 mentioned above may be referred to State Council for necessary action if the State Congress Agenda Committee considers such action appropriate.
17. Motions of similar content or intention shall be grouped into one common motion under names of originator.
18. All motions listed in the State Congress Agenda shall show the name of originating

sub-Branch and District Council.

19. In the case of sub-Branch motions not endorsed by District Council, the motion shall be noted 'UNENDORSED' following the originating sub-Branch name, with Congress to decide whether to hear the motion or not.
20. Only motions originating from sub-Branches, District Councils and State Council shall be included in the State Congress Agenda.
21. Matters seeking opinion of State Congress, where possible shall be circulated to sub-Branches or published in Reveille prior to State Congress with full details and requirements.
22. The closing date for receipt of motions from any source for consideration of the State Congress Agenda Committee shall be the first day immediately following the conclusion of the February State Council Meeting.
23. The official printed Agenda for each Annual State Congress shall list and group motions and other detail as required in the following order of business:-
 - (a) Index
 - (b) Congressional Election Details
 - (c) Rules and Procedures of Debate
 - (d) Motions covered by Standing Policies (in same section order as motions for debate).
 - (e) Motions for debate shall be in one of the following Agenda sections:-
 - (i) Constitution
 - (ii) RSL National Constitution
 - (iii) Veterans' Affairs Matters
 - (iv) Social Security and Tax
 - (v) Defence Service Homes
 - (vi) RSL NSW
 - (vii) ANZAC, Commemoration, Ceremonial and Memorials
 - (viii) Defence and Foreign Affairs
 - (ix) Security
 - (x) Population
 - (xi) Education
 - (xii) Australian Youth
 - (xiii) Aged Care in the Veteran Community
 - (xiv) General Standing Policy on Various Matters

The above Agenda Order of Business may be altered from time to time when

matters of an urgent nature are required to be dealt with earlier than that listed in (e) above but shall be the exception rather than the rule.

24. The official printed State Congress Agenda shall be distributed to sub-Branches at least six (6) weeks prior to the holding of State Congress.

***** IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR DELEGATES *****

This Congress will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution, By-laws and Regulations of The Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch), and in particular By-law 10.

All Delegates on addressing the Congress shall announce their name and the name of the sub-Branch or District Council, for which they are a Delegate.

The recognised Delegates at this Congress are in accordance with sub-Clause 21.7 and consist of State Council and one Delegate representing participating sub-Branches and District Councils.

Delegates must display their voting paddle when addressing Congress. The Alternate Delegate will only be permitted to speak if the Delegate is not in attendance.

No Delegate will be permitted to speak more than once on a motion before the Chair.

No Delegate who has moved or seconded or spoken to the main motion shall be permitted to move "That the motion be put."

No amendment shall be permitted to any motion on the agenda, which seeks to amend the Constitution.

All Constitutional Motions require a two-thirds majority.

Questions will only be permitted concerning motions on the Agenda.

This Congress will elect a Suspension Committee which will conduct its activities in accordance with By-law 13.

When nominations are called for the appointment of Timekeeper and Tellers, Scrutineers, or Suspension Committee, members are requested to only be appointed to one committee.

2017 ANNUAL STATE CONGRESS MOTIONS

STANDING MOTION

1. State Council

Membership fees

“That in accordance with RSL NSW Constitution – Clause 16.7 & By-Law No. 2 – item 43 – the annual subscription for 2018 be \$35.00 and that the breakdown for the annual subscription be as follows:

Capitation fees to RSL NSW be \$22.00

Capitation fee to RSL National be \$5.00

and the retention fee to RSL sub-Branch be \$8.00.”

Supporting Argument

Under the RSL NSW Constitution and By-Laws adopted at the 2011 Annual State Congress it is a requirement that Congress determine the Annual Subscription for each year.

CONSTITUTION

2. Central Southern (Warilla)

Sub-Branch Auditors and Audits

“That clause 36.2 of the Constitution of the Returned and Services Leagues of Australia (New South Wales Branch) be amended as follows: delete \$100,000 and insert \$250,000.”

Supporting Argument

1. Firstly, this Amendment reflects inflation over the years since this amount was changed to \$100,000.
2. Secondly, since the issue of Circular 10/16 dated the 28th of April 2016, which says that the State Branch will no longer assist sub-Branches with their Annual Financial Audits, unless this Amendment is approved many smaller sub-Branches (from a financial point of view) will struggle to abide by the Constitution in relation to Audits.
3. Audit fees are not reasonable for many sub-Branches which may be Asset Rich (Land, Buildings and Investments) but Liquid Assets scarce, we are obliged to ensure our Assets are maintained at current values, so we must ensure our Fixed Term Assets maintain their value and still operate efficiently with ever increasing costs but not necessarily increasing returns.
4. As a Charity we must ensure monies are available to ensure we carry out our true mission and not just a Financial Milk Cow to Professional Identities that charge whatever they wish for their services.

Supporting Argument

The argument being that the current interpretation fails to cover all Officers as shown in paragraph 16:1 (d) of the Constitution: - Re - appoint, engage, discharge or suspend 'ANY OFFICERS'.

With current investigations of State Councillors and the circumstances surrounding the investigation, State Council was powerless to act in the best interests of the League.

RSL NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

VETERANS' AFFAIRS MATTERS

5. Hunter Valley (Cessnock)

Payment for Psychologist Services

"That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) request RSL National to make representation to the Federal government that the payment to Psychologists for services to DVA White and Gold Card holders be raised to an amount equal to or greater than the Medicare payment."

Supporting Argument

The Federal government states that it recognises that mental health is a major problem for serving and ex-service personnel and is implying that it is doing all it can for veterans.

Too many of our veterans and ex-service personnel have mental health issues. The ever increasing number of cases of PTSD, depression, alcohol dependence, relationship breakdown and suicide is both staggering and saddening.

With the increased awareness of mental health issues, the importance of treatment, especially with ex-service personnel, it is unbelievable that the DVA payment schedule for Psychologist Services is less than the Medicare payment schedule making it harder to find a good Clinical Psychologist that accepts DVA White and Gold Cards.

There is not always a Psychiatrist available and a good Clinical Psychologist can provide effective and comprehensive treatment for complex issues often relevant to veterans and ex-service personnel. The payment from DVA for a 50+ minute in room session is \$101.45 and the Medicare payment is \$124.50. As a DVA Card holder you can still access the service through Medicare but you only have up to 10 visits in a calendar year.

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) rates are currently recommended at \$232 a session, most Private Practices range in cost from \$150 to \$200.

If the Psychologist accepts the DVA Card the service is on an as needed basis and not limited to just 10 visits.

It is our belief that if the DVA Payment Schedule was increased to be equal to, or preferably better than that of the Medicare Schedule, and the Psychologists were informed about benefits of accepting DVA Cardholders, more Psychologists would be available and it would be easier to find a good local Psychologist who can provide quality treatment on an as needed basis.

6. Eastern Metropolitan (North Bondi)

Review of NSW Government Travel Concessions for Veterans

“That RSL NSW make official representations to the NSW Government, and in particular, Transport NSW, to review their current conditions for the provision of discounted transport for members and ex members of the Australian Defence Force and provide concessions for those veterans with a disability or impairment covered by both the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act and/or the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988.”

Supporting Argument

Currently, NSW Transport states that the following conditions must be met to qualify for discounted NSW Transport:

You are eligible to apply for an Ex-Member of Defence Forces Transport Concession Entitlement Card, if you meet the following criteria:

- *You are residing permanently in NSW.*
- *You are a war veteran from Australia, New Zealand or a WW2 Allied Nation with reciprocal pension rights with Australia, and*
- *You have been rated by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) as having a service-related disability of 10 per cent or greater for which you receive a disability pension, or*
- *You receive periodic payments or have received a lump sum payment from DVA for permanent impairment compensation and your overall impairment points determined under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (Cwlth) for injuries or diseases related to overseas warlike or non-warlike service are at least 10 points.*

The specification of MRCA excludes those veterans who have received a lump sum payment from DVA under the previous *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA)*.

A recent example is that a sub-Branch member (former Commando and current Reservist member) was advised by DVA and NSW Transport that despite being rated with a permanent 10% impairment under SRCA they would not be eligible for a discounted transport pass. If that member had the same injuries after 2004 they would be eligible for a concession card as they would have a 10 point impairment under the new MRCA.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND TAX

DEFENCE SERVICE HOMES

RSL NSW

7. Lower North Coast (Wauchope)

Introduction of Three and Five Year Membership Subscriptions

“That members of the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) be permitted to pay their membership in advance for three (3) or five (5) years as an alternative to Life Subscriber. Should the member decease prior to the renewal date, monies paid in advance be retained by State Branch.”

Supporting Argument

A small discount for five (5) year’s subscription paid in advance may be considered. The current Life subscriber payment schedule is cost prohibitive for members and also most sub-Branches.

The advantage to State Branch is that monies paid will allow for greater investment by the League and subscription increases are met relatively short term.

Most RSL Clubs now have three (3) or five (5) year membership and this would allow the members to align their subscriptions with their social membership payments to their Club and bring the League into the 21st century.

8. New England (Tamworth)

National Database

“That RSL NSW Branch lobby RSL National to establish a national database of members who have been banned or who are under investigation for bringing the RSL into disrepute.”

Supporting Argument

Under present arrangements, members who have been banned, or who are under investigation in one State, can apply for membership in another State. There is some co-operation between the States when a member admits to previous membership, but if they apply as a new member and do not admit to living in another State previously, there is very little reason for the State Branch involved to make the check. A National database, accessible only to State CEO’s or their representatives, would allow for a simple check before each new membership is approved. If a person who is under investigation is found to have no case to answer, their name could be taken down immediately.

9. Eastern Metropolitan (Botany)

Ways and Means Committee

“That RSL NSW State Council appoint a Ways and Means Committee to report to the 2018 Annual State Congress on the permanent, protected, centralised storage of NSW sub-Branches records and memorabilia.”

Supporting Argument

The Botany sub-Branch has agreed to have its records and memorabilia catalogued as part of an Archiving Course conducted annually by the University of New South Wales. To the best of our knowledge our records, since inception in 1946, are complete. However, we believe that a neighboring sub-Branch established in 1919 is missing up to 50 years of their records.

Botany's records and memorabilia are stored in a car garage - hardly the ideal place for the preservation of Historical Documents. We have been supplied with a copy of a "Report on the Archives RSL NSW Branch" dated November 1996. It includes an inventory which is extremely detailed. We believe the items catalogued are spread over two floors of ANZAC House. With the proposed vacating of ANZAC House, the future of these archives brings into question the correct recording and storage of all RSL records within the State. HQ do keep copies of the minutes and other correspondence for sub-Branches but these are culled from time to time.

We must ask ourselves of the numerous sub-Branches that have ceased to exist over time what happened to their records and how much history have we lost? The solution cannot be found in local libraries or museums. It is a problem that needs to be addressed on a State wide basis.

10. Far Southern Metropolitan (Belmore)

Account of Expenses for State Councillors

"That State Branch provide a full detailed and itemised account of all out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the RSL NSW State President and individual State Councillors on a quarterly basis, and a statement be furnished to all District Councils."

Supporting Argument

If this motion is accepted it is believed that State Branch will be more accountable and transparent. It will also be good Governance.

11. Far Western Metropolitan (Castle Hill & District)

Strategic Plan

"That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) develop a Strategic Plan."

Supporting Argument

State Branch developed a Strategic Plan in 2011 that was not utilised at any level within the RSL NSW subsequently. This was advised to the Congress 2015.

A Strategic Plan provides the way ahead for the whole organisation and without one it loses its way. Such a plan is needed urgently following Congress 2017 and should be available by October 2017 in time for budget and other planning for 2018. It should cover the period 2018 to 2022 and be reviewed annually.

This Strategic Plan should be developed by an independent facilitator supported by the CEO and no more than four NSW RSL members; two from NSW RSL State Council, and two Presidents of District Councils agreed at a meeting of District Council presidents. All members should have strategic planning experience and not have been involved in the previous 2011 plan.

Progress reports should be provided every three months following the 2017 Congress. Interim approval can be done by the NSW RSL Council by October 2017 for planning purposes for the 2018 with final approval at Congress 2018.

12. Far Western Metropolitan (Castle Hill & District)

Constitution

“That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) review its Constitution bringing it up to date with current practices.”

Supporting Argument

The current NSW RSL Constitution has the following shortfalls:

- 1) Is convoluted and supported by an extraordinary number of either by-laws or regulations.
- 2) Is not expressed in simple English.
- 3) Is not up to date with current practices such as Governance and the various legislations referred to in it.

The Constitution needs to be reviewed and amended to address the above and other problems in it. This review should be led by an independent expert facilitator (not associated with the NSW RSL) and advised by three members of the NSW RSL together with the State Branch RSL CEO.

Nominations for the three members should be requested from District Councils and each District Council may nominate one candidate. Having endorsed a nominee the nomination is to be sent to State NSW RSL Branch where the three members are to be selected, confirmed and notified to District Councils.

Nominees for the review must have experience in preparing constitutions and have recognised governance training.

Interim reports should be provided to District Councils every two months with a final draft revised constitution being provided to the State NSW RSL Council and District Councils three months before Congress 2018. Amendments should be advised no later than one month before this Congress and a final revised constitution presented to Congress 2018 for ratification.

Following this constitutional review the constitution should be reviewed every three years.

13. Far Western Metropolitan (Castle Hill & District)

Recruiting Policy

“That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) develop a recruiting policy.”

Supporting Argument

Recruiting is vital for the survival of the NSW RSL. Without recruiting sub-Branches particularly small sub-Branches will continue to struggle to survive and more of them will be disbanded. To put it mildly this will be a disaster and will result in the ceremonies for ANZAC and Remembrance not being conducted for an ever increasing number of large and small towns across NSW.

There are a range of options including Affiliate Membership that may be able to prevent the demise of sub-Branches. A recruiting policy would identify the options and through professional recruiting and funding there are solutions that could be adopted.

To identify the options and solutions a professional recruiting company needs to be hired to produce a Recruiting Policy. Such a company will cost money to hire but to date well-meaning endeavours by several RSL members have not produced a way ahead. This cost needs to be identified by the RSL

NSW State Council and the report will identify the implementation cost. Both costs will need support from NSW RSL State Council and sub-branches across NSW.

NSW RSL State Council should take the running with this recruiting initiative.

14. Far Western Metropolitan (Castle Hill & District)

RSL Organisational Structure

“That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) review its state wide organisation.”

Supporting Argument

Motion (11) was passed at the 2014 Congress, to carry out a review of RSL Organisational Structure to be completed by 31st December 2014 with recommendations to be presented to the 2015 State Congress. The full report and recommendations have not been presented, approved nor disseminated. This review would be a worthwhile base document in a new review of the State NSW RSL organisation.

With modern technology and communication advances the NSW RSL operations, administrations and structures can be modernised to make it more efficient and cost effective in to the future. A company with expertise in restructuring should be employed to do this review.

Terms of Reference should be developed by mid-2018 by the NSW RSL State Council for the review and a panel of four advisers from RSL NSW should be selected and appointed. Such a panel should have representation from the three tiers of NSW RSL, and the NSW RSL CEO.

The final report should be presented to Congress 2019; however, progressive changes endorsed at meetings of the NSW RSL State Council and District Presidents could be implemented before Congress 2019.

ANZAC, COMMEMORATION, CEREMONIAL AND MEMORIALS

15. Port Macquarie RSL sub-Branch (unendorsed)

September 11 Commemoration

“That the Returned and Services League of Australia (NSW Branch) recommend to RSL National that September 11 each year be prescribed to commemorate the service of all those men and women who served their country in all conflicts from and including the First Gulf War.”

Supporting Argument

We came together on September 11 to remember an event of such magnitude, that it is one of those events in history that when it is mentioned everyone would remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when it happened. We remember not only the horror of watching the hijacked planes that hit the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and another crashing into a field in Pennsylvania, we also remember the extreme courage showed by the fire fighters, police, ambulance officers and other emergency services, so many of whom tragically lost their lives battling to save as many as they could.

September 11 saw the rise of terrorism and is the day the world changed forever. For me, as I watched those events unfold on TV, I knew exactly what this meant. We received the call first thing the next morning and by lunch time we were packed, palletised and being briefed on the situation. I was a signaller attached to C troop, of 1 SAS Sqn and I knew exactly what this meant for me. I was going to war, and in a few short weeks I would be on patrol in the middle of Afghanistan hunting down terrorist cells and their training camps.

For us as soldiers, this one event changed everything. It would change the way we did battle, the weapons we'd use and the type of uniforms we'd wear. Gone were the days when the Aussie digger would wander off to battle in a floppy hat and basic webbing. Now it was all Kevlar helmets, chest rig integrated body armour and up-armoured vehicles. No longer was the enemy the other guy that wore a different uniform and shooting at you, now the enemy could be a guy with a mobile phone 5km away setting off an Improvised Explosive Device, or even a 10 year old girl walking up to a check point strapped with explosives.

We now fought an army of people without conscience, without morals or any respect for human life and who can go from being a terrorist fighter shooting at you one second and then walking away and just melt back into the general population in an instant.

This war became a battle ground for anyone in the world who wanted to wage war against the West. These were not only Afghani Taliban, these were Somalis, Chechens, Indonesians, Iraqis, Syrians and even Australians, Brits and Americans. Then came Iraq and it all started again and once again these insurgents made their way to the new battle ground and the war raged on.

Back at home things had changed, training manuals were rewritten, new equipment needed to be purchased and implemented, even security at the footy, train stations and airports was drastically increased. Afghanistan became the longest war that Australia had ever fought in. War takes its toll on the body and the human spirit, no-one escapes unscathed. People were killed in action, people were returned home severely injured and many others returned never to be the same again, with lives and families left in tatters.

Australian forces were involved in many battles across Afghanistan and Iraq, where many were injured or killed, but for us, there would be no single defining battle, no Gallipoli, no Fromelles, or a Long Tan and thank God for that. What we do have, however; is a catalyst for all that has happened since. So whether you were on the ground in Afghanistan hunting down terrorists and training camps, flying sorties taking out Taliban targets, providing security on the high seas and protecting our ocean coast from would be terrorists, September 11 is our day and we are the Defenders Against Terrorism.

16. South West (Bribbaree RSL sub-Branch)

ANZAC Day Marches

“That the NSW State Branch of the RSL request that all ANZAC Marches be fully supported and well-subscribed to by NSW State and Federal Governments and include the cost of security rather than sub-Branches being billed for security costs.”

Supporting Argument

Local Government Councils spend lots of money on things less important than ANZAC Day Marches.

This matter was brought up as a result of a local government council in the Blue Mountains deciding to cancel ANZAC Day Marches due to the cost involved (they later reversed the decision).

Federal and State politicians love the limelight and usually fully support ANZAC Day but need to be reminded to help cover the costs involved.

Most veterans and their families would be extremely upset if ANZAC Day Marches were cancelled and many have suggested “civil disobedience” and will attend and participate in marches rather than adhere to edicts of Local, State and Federal Government announcements.

DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS**SECURITY****POPULATION****EDUCATION****AUSTRALIAN YOUTH****AGED CARE IN THE VETERAN COMMUNITY****GENERAL STANDING POLICY ON VARIOUS MATTERS****17. Forster-Tuncurry RSL sub-Branch (unendorsed)****Desecration of the Australian National Flag**

“That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) requests RSL National to strongly urge the Federal government to introduce laws making it a criminal offence to wilfully destroy or otherwise mutilate the Australian National Flag in circumstances where a reasonable person would infer that the destruction or mutilation is intended publicly to express contempt or disrespect for the Flag of the Australian nation.”

Supporting Argument

Australian Day appears to be like a magnet to activists and splinter groups all pushing their agendas down main stream Australia’s throat. They maximize public attention by threatening or carrying out acts of disrespect and utter contempt for the Flag of the Australian nation. Last year it was a

Castlemaine artist who invited a backlash by creating an event on Facebook calling for attendees “to chuck another flag on the Barbie”. This year it’s the Green Splinter group ‘Left Renewal’ and the ‘Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance’ urging their followers to deface the National Flag. All done under the guise of “Freedom of Speech” and because currently it is not an offence to destroy or mutilate the Flag.

In Australia there is enormous public support for protecting the Flag. Indeed, people are amazed that there is no law in existence to protect the Flag despite its long history. Australia’s first Prime Minister Edmund Barton announced the winning design of our Flag on 3 September 1901. The Australian National flag was approved by King Edward VII and gazette on 20 February 1903. It took another 50 years until the Flag Act of 1953 was passed making our Flag official.

There have been numerous previous attempts to make desecration of the Australian flag a crime, these were tabled in parliament in 1953, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 2002, 2006 and the latest in 2016. Still nothing has eventuated. What is wrong with our politicians? They know what the vast majority of Australians want, yet they appear to put the rights of minority extremists before those of main stream Australia.

It is a national disgrace that these acts go unpunished and are repeated time and time again.

The Australian flag is the paramount symbol of our nation. Thousands of Australian men and women have fought and died under this Flag in the defence of our nation. Yet the very parliament elected by the people of Australia stand by and fail to pursue every avenue at their disposal to defend the Flag that flies proudly over the parliament of Australia.

The RSL amongst other things was established to promote the interests of former and current members of the Australian Defence Force. They are well aware that when these acts of abomination take place they strike at the heart of every serviceman and woman past and present. Therefore, this matter should be taken to the government as a national priority, and if like other times it fails in its prosecution it should become a “Standing Policy of RSL National” and be taken back again and again, until our Flag flies high and safe and is protected by the laws of the land it represents.

18. Far South Western

Australian National Flag

“That the Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) request RSL National to lobby the Australian Government to have the wilful burning, sullyng or otherwise destroying the Australian National Flag, as a means of protest, publicly or privately, made a criminal offence punishable by a gaol term.”

Supporting Argument

Members of the Far South Western District Council at its meeting on the 5th February 2017 expressed their outrage at the treatment of our national flag at a protest rally on Australia Day in Sydney.

It was appalling to see our flag being spat upon and then burnt by demonstrators who could clearly be identified from the media footage of the incident as being largely of indigenous heritage. It was even more horrifying to see that children were encouraged to carry out this despicable act by their elders. What hope is there for reconciliation in the future if this behavior is bred into the next generation. Members were also disturbed at the lack of criticism that the flag-burning act evoked, either from the media or from the government.

The burning of the Australian National Flag is repugnant to most Australians who hold the flag in high esteem. The wanton destruction of our national symbol should not be allowed to occur without the strongest condemnation from our political leaders. One cannot help but think that if one was to treat the Aboriginal flag in the same way by publicly burning it, there would be an unholy din of protest and claims of racism.

Everyone attending this State Congress have bravely fought under the Australian National flag and most of us even proudly fly, it not only privately, but from every Sub-Branch and Club building in NSW. The National Flag represents the highest and most important National symbol we can have and display and without it there is no unity.

I seek your support in bringing the concerns on this matter to the attention of National RSL and to the Federal Government. All members of the Australian Parliament should be aware that the veteran community takes an extremely dim view of this act of complete disrespect for our national symbol. We all fought under this flag, and we should never allow its desecration to go unchallenged

NEXT CONGRESS

Albury Entertainment Centre, Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 May 2018