



National President's Newsletter No 4 of 2014

- 1. New RSL National Strategic Plan.** Following up on the promise made in my last Newsletter of keeping members informed of progress, a meeting in Sydney on 23 May decided to rename the RSL National Executive the RSL National Board, and to appoint and fund a National Communications Manager. The options of employing a person or of contracting to an expert communications company are being explored with the object of finalising an appointment as soon as possible.

The aim is to vastly improve the way in which the RSL communicates with members, the Government, news media representatives other important stakeholders and more broadly the Australian people. This task will include the way in which we keep all informed about what all segments of the RSL achieve. It will also provide news media representatives with a single point of contact for all RSL inquiries with the National Communications Manager thereafter ensuring that the most appropriate RSL officer deals with each inquiry.

Progress was made in compiling other aspects of the new RSL Strategic Plan and after further work the Board will review progress with the aim of settling on a final draft at a further meeting scheduled to be held in Melbourne on Monday 25 August 2014.

- 2. Revision of the RSL National Constitution.** Work on this essential reform continues with assistance from *pro bono* experts. The aim is to craft a document which reflects contemporary company governance legislation and which is written in such a way as to allow it to take account of present and future Commonwealth and State legislation. Please be assured that there is no intention of amending the basic objects of the RSL. These are as relevant today as they were when the RSL was established in 1916.

The approach being taken on legal advice is to craft the revised Constitution, allowing the authority of the Constitution to provide for the creation of Policies, which in turn will allow for the creation of procedural



documentation authorising action. This reflects best practice and has the distinct advantage of being much more flexible in dealing with change. The aim is to circulate a draft of the revised Constitution to Branches and Sub-Branches for comment before the end of 2014.

- 3. Revision of RSL National Tribunal.** As a separate exercise in updating the way the RSL is governed and goes about its business we are undertaking a comprehensive review of the National Tribunal. The present system is cumbersome, slow to react, places unnecessary stress on those whose cases come before the Tribunal and is overly demanding of time and resources on all involved. There is also concern amongst those who in good faith volunteer their time and energy to sit as members of the Tribunal about several aspects of their involvement.

In undertaking this revision the aim will be to not only streamline the system of dispute resolution but also to go as far as is sensible and practicable in sorting out matters in the localities in which they arise. We have not set a timeframe for the completion of this work but will progress it as soon as possible, keeping all informed.

- 4. The ANZAC Centenary.** On 21 April 2013, the then Government released the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board Report to Government and announced that it would accept all of the Board's 25 recommendations. To support the implementation of the Board's recommendations, the then Government provided an additional \$25 million for the Anzac Centenary on top of the \$83.5 million committed in the 2012-13 Federal Budget. A significant recommendation by the Board was the national ANZAC Centenary Travelling Exhibition for which the then Government provided \$10 million to allow planning to proceed.

With the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War now less than 6 weeks away RSL members are not unreasonably asking when further details of the ANZAC Centenary Travelling Exhibition will be released. This important part of commemorating the ANZAC Centenary is the only activity which will reach out to all in every State and Territory. Of equal importance the Travelling Exhibition will allow those living in rural and regional areas to be involved in this nationally important homage to the



many families who paid an enormous price to protect and preserve our freedom and liberty 100 years ago.

I will continue to urge that details of the ANZAC Centenary Travelling Exhibition be made public. This would be an enormous help to RSL Branches and Sub-Branches in their planning. Of equal importance, it would allow all to visualise what the planning has achieved and provide great encouragement to donate to the ANZAC Centenary Fund launched by Prime Minister Abbott on 12 December 2013.

- 5. RSL Annual Budget Submission.** RSL members will be aware that veterans' affairs issues raised by Sub-Branches then adopted by State Branch Congresses and the National Conference determine the issues and the priority each is accorded in our annual budget submission to Government. In a recent decision the Board of RSL National decided there was a need to put these budgetary submissions into perspective – and that to do this our next submission would be accompanied by an explanation of what the RSL has achieved and plans to achieve for the ongoing wellbeing of service and ex-service personnel, their families and their dependants.

As all the 2014 State and Territory Branch Conferences except that for Western Australia will have been held by early July and as the timing of both the Western Australian Branch Conference and the National Conference are not scheduled until late October which is too late in the year for the timing needed for our annual budget submission, it is planned that this document will be prepared for consideration by the RSL National Board at its meeting scheduled for Monday 25 August. It is expected that items for inclusion from the Western Australian Branch will be brought forward to this meeting by the Western Australian State Branch President.

- 6. RSL Money.** Details of the benefits to be obtained from RSL Money can be accessed at the RSL National Web Site www.rsl.org.au . Since the launch of the RSL Money brand at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra on March 6, the RSL Money products have been introduced to over 1600 people. Australian Defence Credit Union (ADCU) presentations on the



credit card, deeming and Sub-Branch account products at both the New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory RSL Branch 2014 Conferences have provided excellent feedback. Interest evident at both these events continues to grow as the products are introduced nationally. Since the inception of RSL Money, ADCU advises they have approved approximately \$195,000 in credit cards, 15 deeming accounts and 10 Sub-Branch accounts.

It is planned that RSL Money products will be introduced to delegates attending the Victorian and South Australian RSL State Branch conferences in July.