

REPLY TO FIRST DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN, 2020-2050

CITY OF NEWCASTLE RSL SUB BRANCH, 13th January, 2020

In overall terms the Strategic Plan is as one would expect. On the first four pages a bit of rhetoric, a reasonable amount of rehashing of what we already know and a reasonable outline of what we should be aiming to achieve in the next five years.

We agree that the RSL, both at State and National level should work very hard to establish the brand as "the go to ESO brand" that is recognized as the only organization who has a) the ability to deliver at all levels into the current and ex service community and b) who is recognized by the wider community as the provider for all commemorative events, regardless of the geographic location. To this extent, the very least that RSL National should be advocating for on a continuing basis is to be recognized as the primary deliverer of (Federal) government services with long term funding to match. This would establish a base across Australia that each state RSL branch could build on to create one, standard series of services available equally to all.

I 6.2

S 7.0

G 5

G 2

G 4

I 4.2, 4.3

4.4

It is well known that the general public has a short memory when it comes to news of any sort. We have successfully moved on from the issues that plagued RSL NSW earlier. Whilst it is true that some people in some sub Branches can't or won't forget, we must only focus on the positive not the negative. We must be open and honest at all times when individuals and/or sub Branches have to be sanctioned for conduct not in the best interest of the organization even if it causes short term pain. Honesty is accepted and then people move on. Tell a lie or hide the truth and people will never let you forget it.

It is imperative that a number of initiatives are undertaken quickly, even if it against some organized opposition, to accelerate the process of renewal and both sub Branch and District Council level. Firstly, the number of DC's need to be reduced by amalgamation, especially in the major metropolitan areas. Empires need to be dismantled. Secondly, with a focus on the metropolitan areas again, small, underfunded, low membership sub Branches should be forced to amalgamate with larger and wealthier sub Branches. Again, empires will need to be removed and amalgamated entities will need to be "managed" via HO oversight to ensure the integrity of the amalgamated entity so that no one group of people within that entity takes "control" of the entity.

G 7

I 7.11

I 7.10

I 7.2

Early in the overhaul of RSL NSW at sub Branch level it should be made clear, with no exceptions, that there are no "opt in or opt out" options on the table. If you don't agree to be part of the process, hand back the charter and the assets. This will create discord in some sub Branches towards HO however if the message is delivered correctly and the entire membership of RSL NSW are fully aware of the message and to whom it was delivered and the resultant reaction, we believe the majority of the membership will be vocal enough to negate the opposition.

I 7.1

G 6

I 6.1

Management of the message is the key to success.

In regard the rural sector, it may be advantageous to create a financial mentor out of a wealthy metropolitan sub Branch where they can be allocated a small, poorly funded, country sub Branch so that the wealthier sub Branch can underwrite all costs incurred by the country Sub Branch. Not as a chapter as distance may work against that sort of arrangement. The rural sub Branch may have the membership to stand alone, not the assets to survive financially.

G 7
S 6c

Annexure A
Part 2
17.16

We also agree that there should be a group investment strategy similar to that outlined in Annexure A, Part 2 with a trial set up as soon as possible for say, 12 months with a select number of sub Branches invited to participate. Full and open reporting at all times of the results by sub Branch should be enough to encourage more sub Branches to be part of the larger investment group. We would also advocate that RSL NSW be the recipient of at least some of the income that would go to the sub Branches from all sorts of investing activities. There are a number of ways this could be done.

1. A levy of say 0.5% on all pooled investment income. Those sub Branches who elect not to be part of the investment group (in whole or part) would be liable to pay say 0.75% of the gross income of their individual investments.
2. All rental income from real estate assets would attract a levy of 5% of the gross income. This would ensure that over time, many of the sweetheart deals between clubs and sub Branches would need to be renegotiated to ensure a market return on the asset. 5% of market rent would not affect the overall income of the sub Branch over time.
3. Those sub Branches that don't/won't/can't spend their income as per the ACNC requirements should be levied at least 50% of the unspent amount. Those sub Branches that spend more than would be expected should be given credits/exemptions from levies to HO as they fall due until the credits are expended. This will encourage spending to the correct level.
4. All fundraising by selling badges/ memorabilia etc at events such as Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and others should be organized by RSL NSW in conjunction with all other state branches. Products to be sold would be agreed upon by all states. This would ensure uniformity of product, lower the unit costs through bulk buying, reduce the unsold portion of the product and so on. It would also ensure that organisations such as Woolworths would be guaranteed to get product different from all the sub Branches which would in part reduce the problems we currently see in some areas between the national supermarkets and the local sub branches.
5. There should be a dividend paid either directly (in cash) or indirectly (by paying staff wages/operating expenses) by RSL Living. The amount should be a % of gross operating surplus as audited or by agreement with minimum amounts set at least 2 years forward on a rolling basis.
6. Any commercial organization using the RSL logo(s) should be paying a licence fee, even if it all goes to RSL National.

17.14

17.5

The issue of finance will always be emotive, especially at sub ranch level however the general membership will have to accept the fact that unless the State organization is fully funded, there may not be a network of sub Branches.

I 1.4
S 3f

The issue of falling Service Membership is one that needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. To that end, this sub Branch is formulating a motion to take to next Congress to widen the scope and definition of Service Member. We should also end the "membership fee" paid by our members however we must also balance that with a reason for our members to sign up each year and remain on the books. It should be acknowledged that those ESO's that don't have membership fees rely almost exclusively on donations and government grants to survive and deliver their services. There is no "membership" base on which to guarantee the longevity of many current ESO's. That fact alone should give the RSL an advantage in that we are in a position to plan further ahead of most organisations re product delivery. It is also a good reason for both Federal and State Governments to deal with the RSL first, not last.

I 1.3
S 7o

I 1.5

Whilst it is a good idea to have Veteran Sponsors, first you need to get them in place. We believe that of more relevance would be the establishment of an organization specializing in matching an ADF member in transition out of the ADF with an employer. There is a lot of negativity in some sectors of the labour market in regard the transfer of ADF skills into the "commercial" market. We need people on the ground who can sell the prospective employer on the transfer of skills and the benefits both on an operation basis for the company and on the well being of the ex ADF member. We, the RSL, are not active enough at any level in this regard. A commercial division within RSL DefenceCare should be set up as an employment agency with the object of not only becoming self funded, but also to return funds back into DefenceCare.

I 1.3
S 1e

I 6.2
S 5f

We agree that there should be more work done at ground level to better explain the difference between the RSI sub Branches and the licenced clubs.

I 7.13

We agree that Anzac House should be relocated to provide a better service to all members and other interested parties. There is no need for Anzac House to be in the Sydney CBD as this is no longer the geographic center of the universe (Sydney) and public transport is now good enough to locate to an area accessible to all both by road, rail, water etc. It would be much better value for money.

I 7.10

In regard to the individual Strategic Goals as presented. There are too many, too much crossover within them, too many "feel good" statements and lots of positives. These positives should be extracted and put together in a readable document with no window dressing. The "hard" decisions such as sub Branch amalgamations, refining of the DC system should be front and center. Members may not like being hit so brutally with the truth however we cannot allow members to not make decisions.

We look forward to the next draft for consultation.

Ken Fayle,

President, City of Newcastle RSL Sub Branch. 13.1.2020