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12 December 2019

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18/12

Hello Again Jon,

I indicated that I would not write to you again. However, I feel that I can better present the main point I have been trying to make which is:

***For the RSL movement to survive and flourish it is 100% essential that it receives the emotional and financial support of the general public.***

In this presentation I will be repeating some of the points previously raised with you so that my thoughts and suggestions are contained in this one document.

Whilst doing my National Service recruit training at Kapooka about March 1966 I trod on a rusty nail and the wound became infected. I spent a week or so cleaning windows at the barracks whilst other recruits were learning drill movements. Just after recovering, and about the time of my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, I joined other recruits of the 13<sup>th</sup> Platoon C Company on a march out parade for recruits who had commenced their training 6 weeks earlier.

During that parade there were some rifle drill movements I had not learned. I stuffed up the whole platoon. After the parade the platoon sergeant, Sgt Enchong, screamed into my left ear whilst I was standing to attention eyes front. He said '*Burrett - you know what I'm going to do to you. I'm going to get a brace and bit, drill a hole into your stupid head and get some mad dog to fuck some sense into you.*' Hopefully I've improved a bit since then but I have little doubt that after reading this submission some people would like to echo the same words!

You have previously read the **ANNEX 'A'** attachment. I have repeated it here so that others who may read this submission can gain an insight into why I have written this document and, hopefully, give me some credibility for doing so.

I agree that helping past and current service members should always be our main objective. However, the current focus of the RSL movement, and the way it is projected to operate in the future, makes it virtually impossible to provide the benefits to the extent desired.

## 2.

Most aspects of the State Congress revolved around assisting past and current service members and their families. It was stated that the goal of RSL NSW was to reinstate it as being **the** pre-eminent leader in providing welfare benefits. With due respects recent and past history has shown that the RSL movement has little chance of achieving this objective.

**A major change to the thinking as to why the RSL movement exists and a change in direction is needed now.** RSL management **must** appreciate that the role of the RSL movement has progressively changed over the past 60 years.

When Australian Defence force personnel wear a uniform they do so to proudly serve Australia. However, from basic training through to the toughest battles their major focus is to work as a unit team and to assist their mates. I have previously emphasized that of all of the veteran welfare associations the RSL movement is **the only one** that conducts community commemorative services and works with communities to establish and maintain memorials and museums.

People who wear a RSL badge are **also serving Australia** by keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their local communities in addition to assisting their mates with welfare and other benefits. **Much more emphasis must be placed on this serving Australia aspect of the RSL movement's reason for existence.**

The RSL movement and sub-Branches **must** give greater emphasis to serving and becoming involved with local communities. **Without community support all of the welfare goals of the movement will NOT be achieved.**

The RSL movement and sub-Branches **do** assist to keep to keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive by conducting commemorative services etc. Every sub-Branch is different but I believe many operate as 'Old Boys Clubs' and don't do nearly enough to embrace the general public. This is where I believe the majority of problems exist within the RSL movement and a major change in attitude is absolutely **essential** to the survival of the movement and sub-Branches.

To support the above statements please consider the following reasoning:

### **Why Does the RSL Movement Resonate with the General Public?**

During the Congress you correctly stated that the RSL logo is widely recognised. This being the case I pose a number of questions:

**Q:** Who recognises the logo? **A:** The general public.

**Q:** Why does the general public recognise the RSL logo? **A:** They are aware that the RSL assists veterans and their families but **a vast majority** associate with the RSL movement because:

**a. millions** have ancestors who fought in conflicts and/or

**b. they** respect and honour the Australian heritage engendered in 'The Spirit of Anzac' and the service and sacrifice of past and current Defence Force members.

**Q:** When does the general public most associate with the RSL movement and their local sub-Branch? **A:** At Anzac & Remembrance Days and similar services as well as with local war memorials and museums.

### 3.

**Keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive is what distinguishes the RSL movement from all other veteran welfare associations.**

This statement of **fact** encourages the following comments and reasoning:

1. The RSL movement **must** capitalise on this distinction by concentrating on **giving the general public what THEY want from the RSL** i.e. remembering all those that have served by the conducting of commemorative services and the updating and maintenance of memorials and museums.
2. **The more the RSL can connect with the general public and local communities the more money it will raise to support welfare objectives.**
3. If the RSL movement does not connect with the general public there is a very real chance that many sub-Branches, particularly the smaller ones, will fold and the survival of the RSL movement as a whole is seriously threatened.
4. Communities can maintain their civic pride and heritage by conducting their own commemorative services and maintaining memorials and museums **without** having an RSL sub-Branch. This is a trend which has already commenced.
5. RSL NSW has already acknowledged the importance of keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive by operating from Anzac House. This fact needs to be reinforced.

**Why the RSL movement will never again be the pre-eminent veteran welfare association.**

There are countless examples of **fact** to back this statement.

During the State Congress you clearly pointed out that there were more members leaving RSL NSW than those joining. There are two basic reasons for this, namely:

1. As evidenced by those attending the Congress membership is ageing. You correctly pointed out that, within 10 to 15 years, many current members will have died or have become incapacitated.
2. The difficulty in attracting younger service members. In this respect I make the following observations:
  - a. If a younger service person attends a sub -Branch meeting all they see is a bunch of older people who appear to be out of touch with what they've been through and their needs. The smaller a sub-Branch is the more relevant is this statement.
  - b. Some sub-Branches, a number located close to military establishments, have had some success in attracting currently serving or recently served members. However, I believe a majority of these people join to use the RSL to assist them to gain benefits. Because of family, job & social pursuits they have little time, or interest, to join fund raising or 'Spirit of Anzac' activities. (One lady rang our local RSL Sport Recreation Club seeking assistance to obtain a White Card - she expressed no interest in joining the sub-Branch).

#### 4.

- c. Younger people gravitate to organisations, other than the RSL, which to them appear to be more in touch with their experiences and needs.

In summary the RSL has had some success in attracting younger service members and should continue to do all it can to recruit them. However, with so many other organisations offering similar services **RSL management must face the reality that it is unlikely that sufficient younger service members will be recruited to replace our dwindling older members.**

The common theme of **all** organisations providing welfare assistance (including the RSL) is that they were created to assist mates. Following are a few examples:

1. Queensland RSL appears to have accepted the reality of the difficulty in attracting younger members. They were a founding member of Mates4Mates.
2. If you ring the DVA the first topic mentioned on their message service is that if you're distressed with a mental health problem and need assistance to contact the Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling Service on 1800 011 046. They don't recommend you contact the RSL! Open Arms was created by the Vietnam Veterans' Federation and was formerly known as the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service.
3. **If** the RSL had done a good job in pursuing its mission 'to respect, support and remember veterans and their families' since Day 1 there would have been no need for others to form competing organisations. Legacy could be another example.
4. I first sought assistance in the year 2000. My Vietnam mates suggested that the Vietnam Veterans' Federation was better equipped than the RSL to assist me. The VVF assistance was instrumental in me obtaining a Special Rate pension and Gold Card in 2006.
5. The Alliance of Defence Service Organisations. Constituted in 2010 'to fight for a fair go for Australian Defence Personnel, Veterans & Families. It was formed as a result of the constituent organisations desire to work in a more cooperative and coordinated manner. The Alliance comprises:
  - The Defence Welfare Association (DFWA)
  - Naval Association of Australia (NAA)
  - RAAF Association (RAAFA)
  - Royal Australian Regiment Corporation (RARC)
  - Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA)
  - Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA)
  - The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Service Men and Women
  - The Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia
  - Partners of Veterans Association of Australia.
  - Royal Australian Armoured Corps Corporation (RAAC)
  - The National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association Australia (NMBVAA)
  - The Defence Reserves Association (DRA)
  - The Australian Gulf War Veterans Association
  - Military Police Association Australia (MPAA)
  - Australian Army Apprentices Association
  - The Australian Commando Association
  - The War Widows Guild.

## 5.

The Alliance states that it represents over three million members of Australia's Defence family on national advocacy and representative matters to the Australian Federal Parliament and political parties. Its objective is to provide a stronger voice on issues impacting the conditions and wellbeing of currently serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families to the Australian Government, Parliament and all Australians. **Why didn't Alliance members approach the RSL to assist them in preference to forming a new association?**

6. Soldier On is another recently formed organisation gaining in prominence. As well as Defence Force personnel it also assists those who served in a national security capacity such as Australian Border Force, Australian Federal Police and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In 2018 it was assisting 1400 individuals.
7. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other organisations who provide welfare assistance to current and ex-service personnel and their families.
8. Whilst there is still much room for improvement the DVA is becomingly increasingly proactive in the provision of, and assistance with, welfare benefits.

In concluding this section I would like to make the following observations:

1. It was organisations like Open Arms, Soldier On and Mates4Mates who became more proactive in assisting defence personnel transition from military to civilian life. The RSL has **since** adopted many of their ideas into the welfare benefits it provides.
2. With so many current and recent ex-serving personnel electing to join other organisations there is very little chance of the RSL movement becoming the pre-eminent veteran welfare organisation. However, this should not prevent the RSL movement endeavouring to provide the best possible welfare benefits to those that they do have the opportunity to assist.
3. Where the RSL will be successful is to provide and concentrate on **nationally recognised** services **not** provided by other organisations. As well as commemorative services the involvement in the Invictus Games and Veteran Sport Australia are good examples.
4. **The RSL movement is competing with all other organisations to raise funds to provide welfare benefits.**
5. If the RSL cannot attract a sufficient number of younger service members it poses one basic question which is '**How will the RSL movement survive and what should be its future direction?**' I'll attempt to answer this question.

### **The 'Old Boys Club' Attitude. What is it and why it must be eroded!**

Most of the 270,000 men and women who returned from World War One had physical and emotional injuries. They had experienced situations which their friends and relatives back home had, understandingly, little chance of relating to. The diggers sought solace by having a few drinks with their mates. The

## 6.

comradeship with their mates at these meetings, plus a desire to help their mates, led to the formation of the RSL movement and sub-Branches.

The early sub-Branches were definitely 'Old Boys Clubs' with an ingrained 'us and them' mentality. They were only open to those who had seen overseas active service. WWI sub-Branch members did not initially welcome those who served in WWII and many members of the late 1960s and early 1970s did not initially welcome Vietnam vets into their sub-Branches. In relation to this topic I would like to make a few other observations:

1. From the early years until today many veterans join unit associations and do **not** join the RSL. They may march at Anzac Day services with their unit but go to a unit function after the march.
2. The only time the RSL movement involved the public was to let the public watch them at Anzac Day marches. It is only in more recent years that descendants of veterans have been permitted to join the actual marches.
3. Over the years membership restrictions have been progressively, **but begrudgingly**, relaxed e.g.
  - People who enlisted in Defence Forces but did not serve overseas were admitted as Service Members
  - People who served with Defence Forces of other countries were admitted as Service Members.
  - Females were accepted as Auxiliary Members mainly to assist with fund raising.
  - Currently serving members of the Defence Force admitted as Service Members.
  - At each sub-Branch's discretion Affiliate Members were admitted.
4. It has been my experience that many sub-Branches exist to uphold military traditions and, as such, desire to continue operating as 'Old Boys Clubs'. They have little appreciation that wearing an RSL badge means that they are also serving Australia and their local community; not just their sub-Branch members. Many sub-Branch committee members see themselves as being a class above the general public in respect to military matters and thrive on a sense of power (an 'us and them' mentality).

A sub-Branch with an 'Old Boys Club' attitude can be easily identified. Amongst other things they **don't**:

- Actively attempt to attract Affiliate Members.
- Involve the community as much as they should in the planning and conducting of commemorative services.
- Invite the public to join them at breakfasts and luncheons after commemorative services.

At **ANNEX 'A'** I mention that I was instrumental in having a plaque unveiled in Lithgow to honour a further 762 Lithgow people who had died during or returned from World One. It wasn't until the last minute that the Lithgow City RSL sub-Branch supported the plaque project and invited me to speak at the unveiling of the plaque at the Centenary of Armistice Day Remembrance Day service. I then set about promoting the event in the local media and had the names of those on the plaque displayed at local clubs and the Lithgow Library.

## 7.

I then contacted local schools and invited them to lay a wreath and organised for the local Lions Club to provide a free sausage sizzle and drinks after the service. The Lithgow sub-Branch did not agree with the sausage sizzle and their members went to their rooms after the service for a luncheon. They also informed me that it was not up to me or the sub-Branch to approach schools and that it was up to the schools to approach us. It is only recently that Lithgow has accepted Affiliate Members.

Over 200 members of the public attended the service including representatives from all schools who laid wreaths. The sub-Branch informed me that they have lucky to get 50 people to attend Remembrance Day services. I've mentioned this situation to emphasize the difference between embracing the public and maintaining an 'Old Boys Club' attitude.

Sub-Branch committee members, and the RSL movement as a whole, must climb down from their high horse and realise that it is their duty to humbly serve the general public as well as their member mates. If they don't the RSL movement is doomed to failure.

### **WHAT THE RSL MOVEMENT MUST DO TO SURVIVE AND PROSPER.**

The basic answer is that it must do all it can to better connect with and embrace the general public. This section outlines some ideas as to how this may be achieved. Some of these may be considered radical but a major change to the direction and thinking of the RSL movement **is well overdue.**

**Upholding 'The Spirit of Anzac'.** As previously mentioned the main reason why the general public associates with the RSL movement is that they connect with 'The Spirit of Anzac' and the honouring of veterans.

In an attempt to keep up with other organisations providing welfare benefits a core reason for the existence of the RSL movement and what makes us unique appears to have been largely ignored by those making decisions.

It should not be necessary but I feel that management, and anyone else reading this article, needs to be reminded of what is 'The Spirit of Anzac' and why we commemorate Anzac & Remembrance Days and say 'Lest we forget'. I wish to emphasize the following points prior to detailing my suggestions.

The original ANZACs announced Australia and New Zealand to the world as being strong, independent nations to be admired. A British historian, H.P. Willmott, stated that the Anzacs came to be regarded as the finest soldiers of the war. Qualities that endeared Australians to the world were that they were well trained, worked hard, brave, had a laconic sense of humour and a second to none sense of mateship. This is the 'Spirit of Anzac' which makes an Aussie and are the qualities that we all should aspire to uphold.

The original Anzacs laid the foundations upon which every Australian service person since has endeavored to uphold. It is hard to imagine the hardships they endured. They were living like rats in holes, clinging, precariously to a mere foothold on enemy territory with only death out in front and the only retreat the Aegean waters that washed into Anzac Cove. There was never security, never

## 8.

rest, never respite. The stench of death and disease could be smelled on ships anchored a kilometer off shore.

With the exception of World War Two POWs Aussie troops have never faced such horrendous conditions over an extended period as did the Gallipoli Anzacs. Even in France & Belgium conditions in respect to uniforms, food, billets and equipment improved and have continued to improve in subsequent conflicts.

The battle of Lone Pine is regarded as the most significant battle of the 8 month Gallipoli campaign. 800 Aussies were killed and 1400 wounded between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1915. 7 of the 9 Victoria Crosses awarded to Gallipoli Aussies were won at Lone Pine. For several weeks prior to the battle the men dug trenches which brought them about 100 yards closer to the enemy. The top foot of these trenches was unlimbered the night before the battle. They sweated in 40 degree heat and wore foul, vermin infested, woolen garments. Because of the poor diet of bully beef, hard biscuits, jam, black tea and too many onions a third of the men had dysentery and scurvy as well as fly blown wounds. This was the condition of the men **before** the battle.

I want you to imagine how the men must have felt at 1730 hours on 6 August 1915 knowing that they were going to face relentless rifle and machine gun fire as soon as they scrambled out of their trenches.

If you have not already read **ANNEX 'A'** please do so now. In his diary in respect to 12 Aug 1915 Dad wrote *'Dead are lying on top of each other – fifty-seven of them in one small section of the trench. They had been dead for four or five days: we had to walk over them. I was sick and so were the men.'* Captain Harold Jacobs of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion stated *'The trench was so full of our dead that the only respect we could show them was not to tread on their faces.* Lance Corporal Cyril Lawrence recorded in his diary of the 10<sup>th</sup> August *'The dead were still in these trenches and as you stood on them in the dark, perhaps half a cheek would attach itself to your boot or you would tread on his stomach and his inside just squeezes out of his mouth.'*

Lone Pine is just one example of the horrors faced by Aussie diggers throughout World War One and World War Two for that matter. How can you have lived through such experiences without having some form of PTSD?

To further emphasize why more importance should be placed on remembrance I would like you to **now** read and consider **ANNEX 'B' – SCALE OF SERVICE & SACRIFICE.**

**Keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive must be ingrained into the Constitution and EVERY CENT spent of this goal MUST be accepted as a Charitable Purpose by State & Federal Governments.**

It is suggested that the following sub-Clause to Clause 3 – Charitable Purposes – of the Constitution (or similar wording) be added

- 3.6 to help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in local communities by
  - (a) promoting and conducting Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and similar commemorative services;



## 9.

- (b) educating and reminding schools, community groups and the general public on the importance of keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive and why we say 'Lest we forget';
- (c) working with local communities to ensure that war memorials and war museums are maintained and updated where required, and
- (d) helping to ensure that community RSL sub-Branches survive by encouraging camaraderie between members of each sub-Branch.

Please note that Clause 3.3 states '*providing validation of service and sacrifice by commemorating those who have served and preserving the memory of those who have suffered and died*'. **These words are vague and are not as specific as those suggested above.**

It is noted that Clause 2.6 of the proposed SOPs cover most of the Charitable Purposes suggested in the proposed amendment. Nevertheless, I feel the Constitution should more clearly reflect the reasons for the RSLs and each sub-Branch's existence as outlined in the proposed 3.6 above.

**All** aspects relating to keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive **must** be accepted as a charitable purpose by the ACNC and all other relevant State & Federal Governments. The RSL movement **must immediately** contact all relevant authorities to make amendments to ensure that this is clearly spelt out in appropriate legislation.

I feel that there would be few problems in getting the relevant authorities to accept the suggested changes. I say this because:

1. Fostering National and civic pride is a cornerstone to the success of any government. Keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive is a fundamental way of achieving this.
2. Federal and State governments already spend billions of dollars keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive by
  - a. operating the DVA and providing welfare benefits and assistance,
  - b. establishing and maintaining the Australian War Museum and State and overseas memorials,
  - c. conducting National, State and overseas commemorative services, and
  - d. assisting and promoting numerous organisations who help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their own way as evidenced by reading any issue of Vetaffairs.

Many sub-Branches, particularly the smaller ones, spend a majority of their funds in keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive by promoting and conducting commemorative services, keeping communities aware of the importance of why we must continue saying 'Lest we forget', funding community breakfasts and luncheons after commemorative services, sponsoring school essay competitions etc. and the establishment and maintenance of local memorials and museums.

Camaraderie is vital aspect in helping sub-Branches survive and to continue providing service to their communities.

## 10.

The **major benefit** of ensuring that every dollar spent on keeping the 'Spirit of Anzac' alive in their communities and camaraderie is accepted as a charitable purpose is that **most sub-Branches will be able to comply with the 51% ACNC requirement.**

**If** every aspect of keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive had been accepted as a charitable purpose it is quite possible that RSL NSW would not have insisted upon the cancellation of individual sub-Branch charity licenses as most sub-Branches **would** have been fulfilling the 51% requirement.

### **Fundraising and Restoring Trust between RSL NSW and sub-Branches.**

The decision to cancel individual sub-Branch charity licenses was ill conceived and had a devastating effect, e.g.

- It created a complete lack of trust between RSL NSW and sub-Branches.
- Sub-Branches were unable to raise funds for a year or so.
- Not selling tokens and poppies etc. prior to Anzac and Remembrance Day services eliminated a major source of connection between sub-Branches and their communities.

Whilst sub-Branches are now permitted to apply for individual Charity licenses the circumstances upon which they can raise funds still displays a lack of trust between RSL NSW and sub-Branches. This is because monies raised at Anzac Day and Poppy appeals must be banked into RSL WBI Fundraising Account. WBI retains 60% and 40% is returned to sub-Branches.

The 2018 Poppy Appeal Information Sheet emphasized that the Appeal must comply with NSW Charitable Fundraising Acts & Regulations where the Charitable Purpose is defined '*to support Australian veterans and their families in need*'. This desire for compliance led to the cancellation of individual sub-Branch Charity Licenses and why all funds raised are controlled by RSL WBI. It is also noted that:

- RSL NSW has complete control of Anzac & Poppy Day appeals.
- RSL NSW encourages schools, businesses and other organisations to sell tokens, poppies etc. This reduces the amount that Sub-Branches can raise. **This indicates that RSL NSW is more interested in raising money than supporting sub-Branches.** Allowing others to sell tokens, poppies etc. **must** be stopped if RSL NSW wants sub-Branches to financially survive. On the same topic why does RSL NSW turn a blind eye to Woolworths, Post Offices etc. also selling poppies, tokens and other memorabilia?
- Sub-Branches are not permitted to sell stock obtained from other sources, e.g. The Military Shop.
- Many sub-Branches have elected not to participate in Anzac & Poppy Day appeals. As well as a lack of trust being perpetuated they feel that there is not enough in it for them. They also feel that fees paid by WBI to RSL NSW for administering appeals is excessive.

## 11.

- Even if sub-Branches participate in appeals they are not in a position where they can inform the public that part of the funds raised will be used to help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their **local** community.

In order to regain trust RSL NSW **must** revert to allowing sub-Branches to raise funds as they see fit and to bank monies raised into their **own** bank accounts. In this regard I would like RSL NSW to consider the following:

1. A major reason why sub-Branches had not been complying with various Acts & Regulations is that RSL NSW had not included 'keeping the 'Spirit of Anzac' alive in local communities' as a Charitable Purpose. If this was done most sub-Branches would meet the 51% requirement and there would be no need for current fundraising arrangements with RSL NSW directing that all funds raised must be banked with RSL WBI.
2. I'm confident that most sub-Branches would be amenable to the following being added to Charitable Purposes SOPs:
  - a. RSL NSW receives a mark-up, **not exceeding 20%**, on stock they acquire and send to sub-Branches e.g. if the product cost \$1 RSL NSW would charge sub-Branches \$1.20.
  - b. Proceeds from sales are banked into each sub-Branches bank account.
  - c. From net proceeds (sales less the cost of stock) the sub-Branch gives WBI **20%** e.g. If a product cost \$1.20 and sold for \$2.60 the net profit would be \$1.40. 20% of this would be 28 cents going to WBI with the sub-Branch retaining \$1.12.
  - d. 20% of net money raised from **all** other sub-Branch fundraising activities to go to WBI.

If these suggestions were implemented it would mean that:

- Trust between RSL NSW and sub-Branches would be restored.
- More sub-Branches would participate in RSL Anzac & Poppy Day appeals as well as raising funds from other activities.
- Sub-Branches will be able to honestly tell locals that part of the money raised will be used to help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their local communities.
- **With more sub-Branches selling more stock the end result will be that WBI will receive more money.**
- Having more control over their own destiny will give more incentive to smaller sub-Branches to continue.

RSL NSW could also consider seeking feedback from sub-Branches as to other ways they raise funds and then compile a list of the best suggestions to send to all sub-Branches.

### **Affiliate Membership.**

Current RSL NSW policy is that 'No sub-Branch is compelled to admit Affiliate Members. This should change to 'RSL NSW encourages sub-Branches to actively seek Affiliate Members.'

*Auxiliary*

## 12.

I ask one basic question and that is **'If the number of current Service Members are dwindling and the RSL cannot attract a sufficient number of younger Service Members to replace them where are new sub-Branch members going to come from?'**

During the recent Congress you pointed out that former National President, Bill Keys, had stated the need to have the strength of numbers to add greater weight to any argument put forward by the RSL to the DVA, government departments, the press, social media and anywhere else. If RSL NSW membership is dwindling the weight of any argument RSL NSW puts forward is likewise diminishing.

At the Congress there was a considerable amount of discussion about how to attract younger Service Members. There was **no** mention about attracting Affiliate Membership. To me this reflected the desire of NSW RSL executive wanting to perpetuate the 'Old Boys Club' attitude and a lack of desire to embrace the communities it serves.

Relating back to the numbers game I wish to repeat that **millions** of Australians have ancestors who served, mainly in World Wars One & Two. Many of these people are extremely proud of their ancestor's service as evidenced by them attending commemorative services and visiting the AWM and State and overseas memorials. **The RSL should be tapping into this huge source of potential members.**

A number of smaller sub-Branches have already ceased to exist and it is more than likely that this trend will continue. It is highly possible that many sub-Branches ceased to exist because they clung onto an 'Old Boys Club' attitude and failed to attract Affiliate Members to continue 'The Spirit of Anzac' within their communities.

The executive of larger sub-Branches may scoff at the suggestions made about attracting Affiliate Members. However, unless they adopt my suggestions, they too may be faced with the same membership dilemma in the not too distant future.

The Portland sub-Branch has attracted one younger Affiliate Member who is dead keen that 'The Spirit of Anzac' and all that goes with it continues in Portland. He has already taken a leading role in commemorative services. Our current President intends to resign as the workload is becoming too much to handle and no other Service Member is prepared to take on the role. The Affiliate Member would make an ideal President but he is not allowed to become a President, Vice-President or be a delegate at District Council and Congress meetings. Because of this I suggest that the Constitution be changed to read that **if no Service Member is available** an Affiliate Member be permitted to fulfill the role as President or Vice-President and to be a delegate at District Council and Congress meetings.

With no Service Member prepared to take on the role as President it is more than likely that the Portland sub-Branch will cease to exist in 2020. We are negotiating to become a Chapter of the Bathurst RSL sub-Branch.

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### 13.

The RSL should face reality and attempt to attract younger Affiliate Members. To be honest, and to tap into a large source of potential members, traditional and social media should be informed along lines similar to:

1. RSL members are ageing and it won't be long before there are only a few people left to conduct Anzac & Remembrance Day services and to keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their local communities, particularly in smaller towns.
2. The RSL offers Affiliate Membership. If you are a descendant who is proud of your ancestor's service and want to honour their service by keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in your local community you would be most welcome to join your local RSL sub-Branch as an Affiliate Member.

In closing this section I would like to point out RSL NSW has already validated the desirability of attracting non Service Member expertise into RSL management roles by appointing two independent non-executive members to the RSL NSW Board who may or may not be Service Members.

### **SOME WAYS OF BETTER CONNECTING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND KEEPING 'THE SPIRIT OF ANZAC' ALIVE.**

#### **Updating Local Memorials.**

Most communities gather around memorials at Anzac & Remembrance Day services.

For various reasons **hundreds of thousands** of people who served in World Wars One & Two **do not** have their names on a local memorial. Because of this **millions** of Australians, including their descendants to come, will not obtain the pride and satisfaction of **personally** associating with their local memorial. RSL sub-Branches, working with their communities, to correct this wrong will do much to **increase attendances at commemorative services and considerably help to keep 'the Spirit of Anzac' alive for evermore.**

I ask one simple question 'What would impress a school kid the most? A memorial which simply states 'In honour of those who returned from WWI (or WWII)' or one which **names** everyone from their local community who died during or returned from a war? More than likely their own surname, or the surname(s) of an ancestor(s), would be included.'

Early Cenotaphs & Memorials only included the names of those who died. Anyone with the most basic knowledge about the history of the world wars realises that, in many cases, those who returned, and their families, because of lingering physical and emotional problems, suffered more than those who died during their service. Because of this I strongly believe that returned service people have just as much right to be named on memorials as those that died during their service.

As previously mentioned my research resulted in a bronze plaque being unveiled in the Lithgow memorial area naming a further 762 Lithgow World War One heroes. My research was a steep learning curve and I encountered numerous

## 14.

problems with State & Federal Governments, the local Council, National & State & local RSL bodies, the local Family History Society, the local National Trust, State & Federal Local Government Associations, the Australian War Memorial and local service groups.

Most problems stemmed from the fact that **there are no published guidelines to assist communities to update their memorials.** This has led to many communities concluding that the task of updating their war memorial to be too difficult.

The DVA operates the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) as agents for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The OAWG only relates to people who have **died**. They have **absolutely nothing** to do with memorials for people who **returned** and community memorials. Confusion seems to exist where people updating community memorials **incorrectly** think that strict OAWG criteria should apply.

Based on the knowledge I gained during my 4 years of research I'm in the process of writing a book which includes:

- Why the DVA should set up an Office to Honour Returned Service People (OHRS) (or a similar name) with representatives of the instrumentalities and organisations named on the previous page plus a representative of the National Archives of Australia being board members. I envisage the OHRS would combine their considerable expertise to produce a web page and book to guide communities on how to research and update their war memorials. This information would be more accurate and comprehensive than the book I'm writing but I hope my book will be a good starting point.
- The difference between a Cenotaph and Memorial.
- The evolution of community memorials including why so many names are missing or misspelt.
- How to research the NAA, DVA and AWM data bases along with some handy hints. Please note the data bases are set up to assist people to research individuals. They are **not** set up to assist communities to research hundreds or thousands of names.
- A set of guidelines as to who should be included on each communities' memorial e.g. why it's O.K. for a person to be named on more than one memorial – the last thing wanted is for two or more towns to fight over who has the most claim to a certain person being named. I also discuss if a veteran who moved to a town **after** a war should be included on that town's memorial.

### **Change the Ode to Embrace Returned Service People.**

The Ode is the fourth stanza in the poem 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon and relates to those who died in WWI. It has since been adapted to apply to everyone who has **died** during conflicts in which Australia has taken part. First published in the London Times in September 1914 (7 months before Gallipoli) it reads:

## 15.

*'They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old  
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.  
Lest we forget.'*

Whilst it is correct that that the poem is directed to those that died during their service **a lot of people who repeat the words 'Lest we forget' are also thinking of ancestors, or people they knew, who returned (and have since died) as well as those that died during active service. How about you?** They have gravitated to the Ode because there are no other words in official commemorative services specifically relating to people who returned.

Fortunately, the number of descendants of those who returned is far greater than the number of those who died during active service. Isn't it well overdue that the descendants of those who returned are also catered for in the official wording at commemorative services? **If this was done it would give a reason for a lot more people to want to participate in commemorative services and help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive.**

As it is, after the Ode, we may as well be saying the following words:

*'It doesn't matter that we have spurned  
all the brave people who returned.  
Let us forget.'*

The above comments are a bit 'tongue in cheek' because I appreciate that many organisations and individuals are putting in a lot of effort into books, web sites etc. to ensure that returned service people are also honoured and remembered.

In the Nov – Dec 2017 edition of 'Reveille' letters to the editor section Geoffrey Chamberlain of Tocumwal mentioned that the Ode is the finale at traditional funeral services for ex-service people. He pointed out that the first two lines of the Ode are not appropriate as the people being fare welled had grown old and age had probably wearied them. He then suggested a poem that could be used instead of the Ode at funeral services.

The Revd Dr John Bunyan of Campbelltown, in the March 2018 edition of 'Reveille', agreed with Mr Chamberlain. He uses the following wording at funeral services:

*Of those that died in war, we always say,  
They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning:  
We will remember them.  
(We will remember them).*

*And of those that survived, and lived and loved,  
All those that served and now rest in peace:  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,*

## 16.

*At Last Post and Reveille,  
We will also remember them.  
(We will remember them).*

*Lest we forget. (Lest we forget.)*

At commemorative services conducted by the Portland sub-Branch we use the following wording:

*To those who died in war, we will always say,  
They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.  
And to those who returned and have since passed away  
we also honour their service today.  
To both those that died and returned  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them  
(We will remember them)  
Lest we forget  
(Lest we forget)*

I realise that changing the Ode probably does not comply with RSL protocol. Nevertheless, a lot of water has passed under the bridge since Laurence Binyon penned the words in 1914. There may also be some copyright laws that do not permit the change to be made. Nevertheless, I consider it to be highly desirable that many more members of the general public can relate to the Ode.

Perhaps someone, with more experience than me, can create wording that incorporates returned service people but does not conflict with RSL protocol or copyright laws.

Any revised Ode should be used at all commemorative and funeral services as well as the recorded messages played at Clubs etc.

### **Other Ways of Connecting with Local Communities.**

No doubt there are many other ways but a few suggestions are:

- Invite the public to join, **and mix**, with sub-Branch members at free breakfasts and lunches after commemorative services.
- Be more proactive in sending invitations to schools and organisations to attend commemorative services and lay wreaths. In the same letter also make them aware that a sub-Branch member is always available to have a chat with them.
- Be more proactive with community groups with the planning and conducting of community services.
- Conduct essay competitions at local schools with topics like 'What Anzac Day means to me.' We did this at Portland and awarded cash prizes of \$75 1<sup>st</sup>, \$50 2<sup>nd</sup> & \$25 3<sup>rd</sup> to each of the 3 schools and also gave a certificate to all who entered.
- Arrange with the local press to publish an article each month summarising the service of a local veteran.



**17.**

- At the Portland Anzac Day service each school child carries a wooden cross bearing the name of a local veteran which they lay next to the memorial.
- Invite school children or other community members to speak at commemorative services.

Perhaps RSL NSW can seek other ideas from sub-Branches and send a summary of these suggestions to all sub-Branches.

**Conclusion**

I appreciate that this is a long submission and I thank you, and others, for taking the time to read and consider it. (In your email to me you **did** ask me to stay engaged).

I also appreciate that you have many other submissions to consider. However, I trust you will agree that this submission is constructive in detailing the current problems with the RSL movement and what needs to be done in changing direction necessary for the RSL movement, particularly RSL NSW, to survive.

It would be nice if you think that this submission is worthy of distribution to all Board members.

I ask you to **personally** acknowledge receipt of this submission.

With sincere best wishes,



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Ian Burrett

**P.S.** I would like to take this opportunity to wish you (and anyone else who may read this in time) a safe and happy festive season.

**MY INSPIRATION AND SOME CREDIBILITY FOR WRITING THIS ARTICLE**

I'm the Treasurer of the Portland RSL sub-Branch which has 17 service members and 5 affiliate members. I served as a Gunner Clerk with HQ Battery 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment at Nui Dat, Vietnam 1967-68.

My Father, 568 Lt Col Athol Frederick (Joe) Burrett DSO MID, was born 21 Jun 1894. Of the 10,000 who landed at Gallipoli on 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> April 1915 he was one of less than 300 still fighting when the war ended. As a 20 year old Sergeant with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion he received a bullet wound to his upper left arm on 27<sup>th</sup> April. After recovering he was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and was one of the officers to blow a whistle to lead the Lone Pine charge. He was the platoon commander, and in the same trench, when John Patrick (Jack) Hamilton won the Victoria Cross. He was promoted to Major and 2IC of the battalion aged 22 years 5 months on 2 Dec 1916. He is probably the youngest Aussie to have risen through the other ranks to achieve the rank of Major. He commanded the battalion on numerous occasions including its last battle at Hargicourt in France 18-21 Sep 1918. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had the dubious honour of having more men killed in action than any other WWI battalion.

My Mother was born on 11 Nov 1915 whilst Dad was fighting at Gallipoli. I was born in 1946 when Dad was 51 making me **very** proud to be one of the youngest sons of an original Anzac.

At the Lone Pine Centenary Service at Gallipoli on 6 Aug 2015 I laid the last wreath and was then allowed to blow a replica of the whistle Dad blew almost exactly 100 years before. This action closed the ABC coverage of the service and featured in Australian press reporting. Touring the battlefields of Gallipoli gave me some small insight into the hell suffered by those we honour.

At the 2019 RSL NSW State Congress it is more than likely that I was the only person present who was a son (not grandson or great-grandson) of an Anzac who landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. My pride, and a desire to remind attendees of a major reason why we were there, inspired me to blow the whistle at the Congress. The original whistle is held at the AWM.

I spent over 1,500 hours and over \$1,500 of my own money researching Lithgow District WWI service people. This resulted in bronze plaques being unveiled on 11 Nov 2018 naming a further 762 Lithgow township and 108 Portland WWI heroes.

**Some Interesting Gallipoli Observations.**

- At Gallipoli 50,133 allied soldiers were killed (British 21,255, French 9,874, Aussies 8,709, Indian 7,894 & N.Z. 2,701). 86,692 Turks were killed. Whilst Gallipoli is regarded as a failure the Turks had about 87 less battalions to fight the remainder of the war!
- As no lives were lost the evacuation was regarded as a victory. My Turkish tour guide informed me that the Turks were well aware of it.
- After the May 1915 Turkish offensive a truce was called to enable opposing forces to bury their dead. Mustafa (Attaturk) Kemal dressed as a Sergeant in a burial party in order to spy out Australian trenches.

**SCALE OF SERVICE & SACRIFICE**

**SUMMARY OF THE HONOUR ROLL AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL**

(Death as a result of service with Australian units – as at November 2017)

Pre WWI (1860-1902)	604	0.59%	(1)
WWI (1914-1921)	61530	59.84%	(2)
WWII (1939-1947)	39652	38.56%	(2)
1947-1975	973	0.95%	(3)
1976 to present	68	0.06%	(4)
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>102827</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>(5)</b>

- (1) Includes South Africa (Boer War) 589.
- (2) Includes people who died as a result of service within a few years after these wars ended.
- (3) Includes Malayan Emergency 39, Korean War 340 & Vietnam War 521.
- (4) Includes Afghanistan 42.
- (5) WWI & WWII combined is 101,182 or 98.4%. All other conflicts 1.6%.**

**OTHER STATISTICS**

	<b><u>WWI</u></b>	<b><u>WWII</u></b>
Population at outbreak of war	4.9m	6.9m
Enlisted	429,000	993,000
Served overseas	330,000	576,000
Died during overseas service	61,530	39,652
Proportion died to served overseas	18.6% ( <b><u>1 in 5.4</u></b> )	6.9% ( <b><u>1 in 14.5</u></b> )

521 of the 60,257 people who served in Vietnam died. This represents 0.86% or **1 in every 115.6**. I don't have the statistics but the number of people who died in conflicts since 1976 compared to those that served overseas would be about **1 in every 3000** or more, or less than 0.08%.

**Note:** Nick Fletcher at the AWM informed me that at least 50,000 of the 270,000 who returned from WWI died within 10 years of their return. Most of these were in their 20s & 30s and many committed suicide.

Not for one second do I suggest that those who served since 1976 were less capable of heroism and deserving of assistance than the service people who preceded them. The summary merely points out the **sheer scale** of service and sacrifice in both world wars.

..... **o0o** .....

**Ian Burrett JP**

9 January 2020

Mr J. Black  
CEO  
RSL NSW  
Anzac House  
5/347 George Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

*2/ Jan  
CEO 2/11*

Hello Again Jon,

It would be most sincerely appreciated if you could add the following ANNEX 'C' to the submission forwarded to you on ~~12~~ Dec 2019.

Thanking you in anticipation.

All the best.

  
Ian Burrett

## WHY THE RSL MOVEMENT MUST DO MORE TO EMBRANCE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

**This Annex exemplifies the major points made in my submission and embodies why I feel I must do all I can to help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive.**

In 2017 the Portland RSL sub-Branch initiated an essay competition amongst local school students with the topic being *'What ANZAC and Remembrance Days Mean to Me'*. Portland is a small town near Lithgow and Bathurst NSW with a population of about 2,500. Because of the cement works, which closed in 1991, we refer to Portland as *'The town that built Sydney'*.

Tears welled in the eyes of the 5 judges as we read the 35 entries. We wish that everyone who has served and is still serving in our Defence Forces also had the opportunity of reading these entries. Those that died and suffered would know that their efforts were not in vain. It would reinforce their decision to proudly wear an Aussie military uniform. It also reinforced to our ageing sub-Branch members why we exist and why we should do all we can to continue organising ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and other commemorative services.

I would like to quote one stand out entry from Nikera Hann, then a 10 year old year 5 student at Portland Central School.

*'ANZAC Day to me means waking up really early before the sun rises, putting on my warmest jumper and scarf ready to go to the Dawn Service. It means lining the streets with all the other community members. People are talking to their friends and family but, at the sound of the very first drum beat, silence spreads through the community. We watch the cadets proudly march together around the corner, in perfect rows, the cadet leader hollering out orders. This makes me feel nervous but extremely proud.*

*ANZAC Day means getting goosebumps all over my body when the bugle begins to play. The hairs on my head stand up, the lump in my throat aches as I try and hold back the tears. The familiar tune of the Last Post brings images of battling soldiers to mind. The tough times they went through, the pain their bodies took on, the sounds of guns and grenades and all the families they left behind all play on through my mind. Remembering and appreciating every single person that played a part in the war.*

*ANZAC Day to me means returning to the local streets at 11.00, dressed proudly in my school uniform. My rising sun badge pinned to my shirt alongside my sprig of rosemary. I stand by my school mates; we stand as one just like the ANZACs. We march with crosses marked with names of fallen soldiers through the streets lined with people.*

*We march in a parade with lots of other local groups of the town. When the march ends we assemble together and we listen to old war stories passed down from generation to generation. This makes me feel grateful for everything I have and how lucky I am because of the ANZACs. I whisper the powerful words of 'The Ode' at the same time as many other community members, then the magical sound of the bugle playing the Last Post brings back all the same feelings as it did just hours before. The normally chaotic main street is again quiet throughout the moment's silence. Everything soon changes when the Australian National Anthem is played. I look around while I'm singing and the whole town is singing loudly and with so much pride. One song joining so many people together.*

*When the service is over we go home and Dad makes us hot chocolate and we watch the Gallipoli Service on the T.V. I really enjoy watching the service and I hope to be able to go to Gallipoli to watch one someday.*

*ANZAC Day means to me having a barbeque for tea and settling down to watch the ANZAC Day NRL match. The Roosters verses the Dragons. Before the game starts the trophy the teams play for is bought in by an Air Force helicopter and a riderless horse*

## 2.

*parades the field. The bugle and the Anthem are played again and I never get sick of hearing it. At this moment I realise I am not the only person feeling these feelings, paying my respects and being grateful.*

*ANZAC Day means to me remembering and honouring everyone that has ever played a role in any war. It means recognizing the sacrifices that the men and women made for me to have what I have today. It means joining in on ANZAC Day services and experiences so our ANZACs will never be lost in history.*

*That is what ANZAC Day means to me.'*

Another entry emphasised the relevance of ANZAC and Remembrance Days to new Australians, not just those with an Australian heritage. It came from Amel Selimovic, then a 11 year old year 6 student also from Portland Central School.

*'ANZAC Day is a day that I can remember relatives from my family that went to war and it is not just me that can remember. Everyone can remember family members that fought to keep their loved ones safe. Remembrance and ANZAC day to me mean love and respect for the good souls that were lost in battle to protect those who were home awaiting their return.*

*My parents came to Australian from Bosnia in 1994 so were not here to be involved in the wars that Australia fought in. One of the reasons my Dad chose Australia to live in was that it was a peaceful country which I contribute to the selfless acts of all those that went to war.*

*I was born in Australia and on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day I am reminded of how lucky I am.'*

Getting the names of hundreds of thousands added to local memorials will greatly assist to encourage the Nikeras and Amels of the future to participate in commemorative services and to keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive for many years to come.

..... o0o .....

21 January 2020

Mr J Black  
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5/347 George Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Hello Again Jon,

**COMMENTS ON STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 – 2025 (THE PLAN)**

I trust that you have come back refreshed after a pleasant festive season with your batteries recharged to confront the enormous task that confronts you and RSL NSW.

I have had the opportunity to read (and re-read) the 'Constitution Draft'. Whilst it did touch on some of the points I have raised it made little or no mention of some of the main aspects which I consider **essential** for the survival of the RSL movement.

The Plan concentrates on the RSL's core purpose of supporting veterans and their families and how this can be achieved, a desire for the RSL movement to be the pre-eminent ESO and how to attract younger ex and current ADF service people into RSL membership.

GOAL 4 did touch on the necessity of connecting with the public in respect to commemorative activities etc. whilst GOAL 6 embraced the need to build awareness of RSL NSW and its purpose although current members should have been included amongst those who need to be made aware.

The major thrust of my previous submissions is that **keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive should be treated as another core purpose of the RSL and that this, including camaraderie, should be accepted as a charitable purpose by appropriate legislative bodies. NO** mention of this was made in the Plan.

I repeat that I feel that you would have little problem in getting the appropriate bodies to accept keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive as a charitable purpose. Federal, State and local governments also have a vested interest in the survival of sub-Branches throughout Australia. They need them to continue to organise commemorative services which, in turn, engenders local, state and national pride and with such services reminding people that the Anzacs and those that followed them laid the foundations of our National heritage.

By retaining 'supporting veterans and their families' as its **sole core purpose** the RSL is setting itself up as predominantly a welfare organisation **with little recognition as to why many sub-Branches (particularly the smaller ones) exist.**

I would like to reiterate that by having the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac' accepted as another core and charitable purpose it would cover most of the activities **and expenses** currently performed and incurred by most sub-Branches i.e.:

- Conducting Anzac & Remembrance Day and similar commemorative services.
- Updating and maintaining memorials and museums.
- Keeping local communities informed as to why we must keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive and why we say 'Lest we forget' and the need to support veterans and their families.

To add weight to the above argument **ANNEX 'A'** and **ANNEX 'B'** summarises the income and expenditure of the Portland RSL sub-Branch for the 2018 and 2019 financial years ending 31<sup>st</sup> December. **IF** the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac Alive' was accepted as a charitable purpose then **practically every cent of our expenses would be accepted as a charitable deduction and the 51% ACNC requirement would have been easily met.** This, in turn, would mean that **there is a lot less pressure on RSL NSW** in ensuring sub-Branches meet the 51% ACNC requirement.

It is most likely that many sub-Branches, particularly the smaller ones, would have similar incomes and expenses. Please note that in 2018 we terminated our term deposit with the Australian Military Bank. We did so because our main source of income, net proceeds from Anzac & Remembrance Day sales, was withdrawn. (Our net income from Anzac & Poppy Day appeals in 2015 was \$5396.08, in 2016 it was \$4061.15 and in 2017 \$1750.40 was raised on the Anzac Day appeal. Our charity fund raising licence was withdrawn prior to the 2017 Poppy Day appeal.)

Another aspect I wish to cover is in respect to the existing core purpose of RSL NSW i.e. supporting veterans and their families. Only one member of our sub-Branch is engaged in this welfare activity although other members provide hands on welfare support. **The major function of the remaining members is in respect to keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive including fundraising and endeavouring to comply with the enormous volume of RSL NSW circulars and compliance issues.**

We do not have the capacity to have a fully trained pensions and welfare officer. As with everything you learn you need continual hands on experience to be effective. Smaller sub-Branches simply do not have the number of cases to be efficient in this respect. The function of our Pensions and Welfare Officer is simply to know who a person can be referred to for assistance. I note that the Plan **does** embrace this issue. We **must** have access to a comprehensive document which details the situations that arise and to whom we can refer people to. I believe that a majority of sub-Branches are in the same situation as us.

The Plan stated that *'younger veterans belong to a generation that doesn't easily relate to social clubs, or who rarely joins a member organisation'* and *'Data indicated that very few existing or retiring ADF personnel are joining ESOs as they either only want to access certain services or have the opportunity to support fellow veterans'*. The Plan suggests ways that this may be overcome but because of the ingrained attitude of younger veterans I believe that **RSL NSW has little chance of attracting a sufficient number of younger veterans to replace our existing and dying service members.** At the 2019 State Congress the number of those present under 40 years of age could have probably been counted on one hand.

In my previous submission I outlined that most of the public connect with the RSL movement because they had ancestors who served. Many of these **millions** are very proud of their ancestor's service and would be willing to honour their service by helping to keep the 'Spirit of Anzac' alive in their local communities by joining a local sub-Branch as Affiliate Members **if** RSL NSW promoted a desire and campaign to attract them. **No mention was made in the Plan about attracting Affiliate Members.**

The above paragraph leads to another point and that is that RSL NSW needs to connect with local communities to engender their emotional and financial support in order to survive. GOAL 4 embraces this to some extent but **no** mention was made in respect to engaging with the public to update and maintain local memorials and museums.

I ask you to have another, but more thorough, look at ANNEX 'B' - SCALE OF SERVICE & SACRIFICE - attached to my 12 December 2019 submission. You will note that of the 102,827 Aussies who died as a result of service only 68 (or 0.06%) served since 1976. This point encourages the following comments:

- RSL NSW is concentrating a majority of its efforts on the 0.06% and those that served with them. What about the other 99.04%? I realise that the RSL also



assists Vietnam Vets and the few thousand WWII veterans still alive. The rest have passed on.

- More recent RSL NSW executives have served since 1976 and it is natural that they wish to assist their mates. Every effort is being made to attract those who recently served and those still serving in the ADF as RSL service members. Because of the need to attract younger members I understand why current ADF personnel who have served for 6 months are now accepted as service members. However, this engenders a welfare orientated environment and a mates for mates and 'old boys club' attitude.
- Over the years the RSL has had a few name changes but the word 'Returned' has **always** been first. With ADF personnel who have not seen overseas service being admitted should the RSL name also be changed? Of course not! However, more effort should be made to honour the other 99.04% who died and those that returned and have since passed away. Unless keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive is accepted as a core and charitable purpose we are ignoring and forgetting these heroes and a major reason why the RSL movement exists.

I have previously informed you that **hundreds of thousands** of those that died and served in the world wars have **not** been named on local memorials. It's too late to provide these people with the wide range of welfare benefits now available. However, we can still honour their service by pulling out all stops to ensure each person is named on at least one local memorial. With this in mind I ask that you add the following to GOAL 4: **4h. By 2025 each sub-Branch is engaging with their local community to update its war memorial by naming as many people as possible from their community who have died during or returned from conflicts in which Australia has taken part.** If this was done it would have the following positive benefits:

- Our heroes will receive the long overdue recognition they deserve.
- It would be a wonderful way for sub-Branched to connect (or re-connect) with their local community.
- Commemorative services are most often held at memorials. With more people being named many more locals will be able to personally connect with the memorial and make them want to attend commemorative services. (The existing Lithgow WWI Cenotaph names 136 people. My efforts resulted in a bronze plaque being unveiled naming a further 762 people who died during or returned from WWI).
- The sheer number of names would make people appreciate the extent of sacrifice and service and also encourage people who do not have ancestors named to attend the services.

Consideration could also be given to relocating memorials if the location of existing memorials causes traffic problems during commemorative services.

Please note that the DVA is proactive in providing funds for these purposes. Check out the Community Grants Hub/Department of Veterans Affairs web site. They granted \$6000 for the Lithgow plaque. These facts add greater weight to my belief that the Federal Government would readily accept that the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive should be charitable purpose of the RSL movement.

(Apart from doing guard duties at the wire surrounding Nui Dat 3 nights a week and doing the odd clearing patrol outside the wire I saw no action as such. My name appears on two memorials – one at Goulburn NSW and one at Seymour in Victoria. My service pales into insignificance compared to the years of hell those in the world wars endured. It is simply wrong that I can be so honoured and those who are much more deserving miss out!)

You indicated that the 'old boys club' attitude of many sub-Branched must be eliminated. **By concentrating on becoming a pre-eminent welfare organisation and largely ignoring the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive RSL NSW is itself perpetuating the 'old boys club' attitude. It's major goal appears to be the best 'old boys club' ESO.**

Another aspect that upsets me is that many of the larger clubs do not participate in Anzac and Remembrance Day and other fundraising because they feel that they have no need to raise funds because of their healthy financial situation. They must change this attitude because the participation in Anzac and Remembrance Day fundraising is a major way the RSL movement achieves a profile with the general public.

Because of past events and other factors many RSL members are **not** proud of their RSL badge. This can change if they are made aware that they are serving Australia by helping to keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their local communities. Younger veterans should also appreciate that they are honouring their mates by wearing an RSL badge **and** engaging in activities at sub-Branch level to help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' and their mates' memories alive.

GOAL 7.10 includes '*work with members to ensure sustainable RSL presence in all centres by consolidating unsustainable sub-Branches as Chapters*'. I put it to you that if:

1. keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive is accepted as a core and charitable purpose and
2. every effort is made to attract Affiliate Members

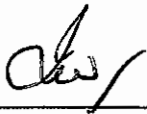
then many small sub-Branches that are currently struggling will have the desire and ability to survive. (Portland included).

Your email to me indicated that my 12 December 2019 submission raised many good points however most of these were neglected in the Plan. Whilst supporting veterans and their families will always be a core purpose of the RSL movement I ask you to take off your mates for mates welfare blinkers and **also** accept the fact that keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive has been and will always be just as an important core purpose of the RSL movement and why most sub-Branches exist. If you do not agree with me please tell me why.

In summary, if keeping the 'Spirit of Anzac' alive is accepted as a core and charity purpose **and** a positive result of attracting Affiliate Members is achieved the RSL movement will be lifted above and distinguished from all other ESOs. You will also have a better chance of achieving all other Plan goals.

**Thanks again for taking the time to consider my sometimes brutally honest input. We have the same goal.**

With sincere best wishes,



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Ian Burrett

14 February 2020

Mr J Black  
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Hello Again Jon,

**BECAUSE THE RSL NSW STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025 DOES NOT ADEQUATELY EMBRACE THE GENERAL PUBLIC I BELIEVE IT IS MOST LIKELY TO FAIL**

It was a pleasure to catch up with Ray and yourself at the 3<sup>rd</sup> February meeting held at the Bathurst sub-Branch. The Strategic Plan and the fact that Ray and yourself are visiting sub-Branches and inviting feedback shows that the RSL NSW Board is passionate in improving the image and service of the RSL movement to ensure it not only survives but thrives in the future.

The Bathurst meeting simply reinforced my belief that RSL NSW fails to recognise what makes it different from other ESOs and what it must do to survive and thrive.

The Strategic Plan is based around its PURPOSE *'To support veterans and their families through access to services that improve their health and wellbeing; assist in transition to civilian life and connection to community and foster camaraderie and commemorative service.'* Its VISION *'By 2025 every veteran and serving Defence member in NSW wants to be part of RSL in NSW for camaraderie, connection to community, and for access to lifelong friendships and support services.'* and its MOTTO *'One RSL acting together, delivering locally'*.

In THE CASE FOR CHANGE section of the Strategic Plan the following statements are made: *'The RSL in NSW must seize the initiative, modernise and earn its position as the leading veteran's organisation. Rather than persist with local self-interest and introspection, it must work as one to be recognised as a leader and the organisation veterans wish to join and become involved with.'* and *'Perhaps above all, the organisation must confidently reassert itself as the leader for the veteran community. The symbol of the RSL in NSW (and in Australia) must be recognisable as clearly and proudly standing for veterans and their families.'*

I do not disagree with the above comments. However, I believe the direction of the Strategic Plan for RSL NSW is that it will be just another ESO, albeit the best. It engenders 'a mates for mates', 'Old Boys Club' and 'us and them' attitude. **The RSL movement is much more than this.** In **addition** to supporting veterans and serving ADF members and their families greater recognition should be placed on points I have previously raised with you, namely:

1. The prime function of, and the major reason why most sub-Branches exist, is the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their communities by conducting commemorative services, updating and maintaining local war memorials and museums and reminding people of why we say 'Lest we forget'.
2. Whilst the general public is aware that RSL sub-Branches assist veterans and their families their major connection with their sub-Branch is through the activities mention in 1. above including Anzac & Poppy Day fundraising. They do so because millions of them are proud of their ancestors who died during or returned from conflicts in which Australia has taken part and the National heritage engendered by the original Anzacs. As well as serving veterans and their families the RSL

movement should recognise and grasp the fact that it is **also** serving the Australian general public.

In the CASE FOR CHANGE the points I make are already acknowledged with the following statements: **'surely the RSL nationally needs to consider what differentiates it from the myriad of ESOs and other charities helping veterans.'** and **'Declining RSL membership in NSW, especially in population stressed rural areas, make many sub-Branches unsustainable. It's critical to maintain a presence in all these areas because the League's charter includes remembering and commemoration. As such there is no area in NSW that should not be covered by the RSL. A new way of delivering an RSL presence in NSW, particularly in areas of low membership, must be found.'**

Keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive is what differentiates the RSL movement from all other ESOs. I put to you that:

1. About 90% of RSL members' time in most sub-Branches is spent on keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in their local communities. About 10% of their time is spent on **hands on** welfare assistance. Not many sub-Branches, particularly the smaller ones, have a fully qualified Pensions & Welfare Officer capable of providing knowledgeable and constructive pensions & welfare **advice**.
2. Over 95% of the general public associate with their local sub-Branch because of its keeping alive 'The Spirit of Anzac' activities in their local community. There are only vaguely interested in the provision of welfare assistance to veterans and their families aspect.
3. At least 95% of the Strategic Plan and its PURPOSE and VISION is directed towards providing support to veterans, current ADF members and their families. Only casual mention was made towards commemoration with no mention made of keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive aspect.
4. The Strategic Plan concentrates of providing services to the **living** with little emphasis placed on remembering the service and sacrifice of the dead. The very soul of the RSL movement revolves around the words 'We shall remember them. Lest we forget'.

**My previous letters to you were basically a blueprint of how 'A new way of delivering an RSL presence in NSW' can be achieved.**

The first thing that must be done is for you and the Board to acknowledge that the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac' is another core purpose for the existence of the RSL movement and deserves **equal** importance with the supporting veterans, current ADF members, and their families aspect. The Strategic Plan and its PURPOSE and VISION must be amended to reflect this.

A major benefit of adopting my suggestion is that it will give members a renewed and relatable purpose for them being members. They will have greater pride in wearing an RSL Badge if they are made aware that they are still serving Australia by helping to keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' and their mates memories alive in their local communities.

The proposed MOTTO is *'One RSL acting together, delivering locally.'* Each sub-Branch operates differently. Some have a strong pension & welfare orientation; others do not. Some encourage Affiliate Membership; others shun the idea of attracting Affiliate Members. Some are financially well off whilst others are not. And the list goes on. With such ingrained differences it's going to be a bloody hard job to get them to act together. I put it to you that the **only** common bond that exists between **all** sub-Branches is commemorative events and other 'Spirit of Anzac' activities which **are** delivered locally.

How can we expect the general public to embrace the RSL movement if we do not embrace what they expect from the RSL? My letters have already suggested how the RSL movement can better connect with the general public. Another suggestion incorporating this aspect could be that RSL NSW issues each sub-Branch with a sign to

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be used at all fundraising events. The 500 mm x 1000 mm sign would read '*Please help your local RSL sub-Branch keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive in our local community and to support veterans and their families*'. As well as encouraging more members to assist in fundraising I can almost guarantee that much more money would be raised. The sign also sets us apart from other ESOs competing for funds.

At the Bathurst meeting it became obvious that Ray and yourself had little enthusiasm in my suggestion that the RSL could better embrace the general public by encouraging them to become Affiliate Members. Ray's and your thoughts were probably similar to a Service Member at the meeting stating he would not want to be part of a sub-Branch if an Affiliate Member was elected as President.

This statement would probably be echoed by many other Service Members. It pointed out that:

1. He wanted his sub-Branch to maintain an 'Old Boys Club' orientation. If his **main** focus is to be part of an 'Old Boys Club' he could join a unit, corps or any Army, Navy or Air Force association. The RSL movement is much more than this although camaraderie will always be an important part of the RSL movement.
2. He had no understanding that the RSL movement also serves the general public.
3. That unless RSL NSW (and the RSL movement as a whole) embraces the general public it is destined to become just another ESO with an 'Old Boys Club' attitude and is heading towards possible oblivion.

At the Bathurst meeting Ray showed little enthusiasm for my suggestion that RSL NSW should actively seek Affiliate Members. He mentioned he was aware of a larger, more affluent club where Affiliate Members joined just so that they could go on bus trips and take advantage of other benefits that the sub-Branch provided to Service and Affiliate Members. Whilst this may be so I question why that sub-Branch is spending so much money on social activities which attracted people to join as Affiliate Members? I appreciate the value of camaraderie but it appears that that sub-Branch is going overboard in this respect.

My reason for actively attracting Affiliate Members was threefold, namely:

1. It would embrace the general public by enabling them to be part of, and assist, an organisation that honours their ancestor's service and sacrifice.
2. It could attract people with a level of expertise which is non-existent with current Service Members (as evidenced by the RSL NSW Board having two independent directors).
3. With millions of Australians having ancestors who died and served the general public is a huge source of potential members to replace our ageing Service Members. They could provide the manpower to enable struggling sub-Branches to survive. The Strategic Plan explained the difficulty in attracting more recent veterans and those still serving in the ADF.

Jon, I once again thank you, **most sincerely**, for finding the time to read and respond to the submissions I have sent you. I would like to comment on a couple of points raised in your latest communique:

1. You stated '*You will need to persuade the membership that the major function (charitable purpose) of the RSL is to 'keep the ANZAC spirit alive*'. I did not state that this was **the** major function. I suggested that this be placed on equal footing with the supporting of veterans and their families core charitable purpose. I do not have the capacity to persuade the membership. What I can do is to try and convince you and the Board that the RSL movement also serves the Australian general public and that the keeping of 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive aspect is **another** core charitable purpose. I want **you** to persuade the membership by including this aspect in the Strategic Plan.
2. In respect to Affiliate Membership you stated that there was a need for smaller sub-Branches to consolidate into larger sub-Branches that comprise multiple chapters.

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Whilst this may be so I feel that by encouraging Affiliate Membership the smaller sub-Branches may survive longer in their own right prior to becoming a chapter.

3. Your point 4. Stated *'Your issue of sacrifice is made with connection to casualties. I think this issue is not well understood by current generations and certainly today's community tolerance for casualties would be so much different than it was in the time of WWI.'* I appreciate that there would be a lot of public connection if a headline appeared in tomorrow's news stating 1,000 soldiers had been killed. I was somewhat surprised and shocked with your statement. It leads me think that you may be hypocritical whenever you utter the words 'We shall remember them. Lest we forget!' Making sure current generations never forget gets to the heart of a major reason why the RSL movement exists and the arguments I have put to you. Remembering what their ancestors went through prompts current generations to attend commemorative services. I have addressed Anzac Day services at schools on four occasions and have listened to school children talk about what Anzac Day means to them. You have read a couple of entries from the 'What Anzac & Remembrance Days mean to me' school essay competition. Why do people visit national, state, local and overseas war memorials? You are wrong Jon. The issue, primarily because of the efforts of sub-Branch members, **is** well understood.

You know I am passionate about getting the names of Aussie veterans (both those that died and returned) who served in all conflicts in which Australia has taken part being named on at least one community memorial. I'm writing a book about it and have the car number plates LESTWF. If RSL NSW does not give my idea of keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive greater prominence this will feature in my book as a major reason why our heroes have not been named on local memorials.

I repeat that we have the same goal. **LEST WE FORGET.**

With sincere best wishes,



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Ian Burrett