

Policy and Ritual for Use at Funerals of Veterans

The following provides guidance and the essential elements to ensure the protocol and dignity of the Tribute is maintained.

- (i) The New South Wales Branch of the League has a Standing Policy that, when requested, a deceased veteran, regardless of League membership is accorded the RSL Funeral Tribute, without exception to time, day or season.
- (ii) As a policy, when a request for the RSL Funeral Tribute is made, the sub-Branch representative is to contact the Officiant to liaise regarding the type and timing of the Tribute, keeping in mind the deceased's family wishes. This is imperative to ensure that the Service flows with dignity and respect to the deceased and the bereaved.
- (iii) In the case of a Church only service, followed by a private committal, it is important that the conduct of the RSL Funeral Tribute is cleared with the Officiant. It must be clearly understood that The Rector, Minister, Priest, or Pastor has a primary duty to his congregation and their wishes. Additionally he/she has to balance this with the wishes of the bereaved.
- (iv) Except in the case of a burial the final act, regardless of the type of Service, is the Religious Committal recited by the Officiant. In the case of the Church only service this is when the casket is placed in the hearse.
- (v) It is the practice at funerals for RSL members, and other veterans, that the Australian National Flag (ANF) or other Ensign as appropriate to Service be placed on the casket. The Union flag portion of the ANF, i.e. the First quarter or Canton is placed on the casket to cover the left shoulder of the deceased. In some cases, it may be requested that the crucifix on the coffin be not covered by the ANF. In this instance the ANF should be folded back. Poppies are also used in the Funeral Tribute and may be purchased from State Branch. The Secretary of the sub-Branch issues poppies (where available), which shall be worn in the coat lapel by Ex-Servicemen.
- (vi) To re-iterate, prior communication with the Officiant is to be made to ensure that there is no variation in the minds of the Officiant and the RSL Representative or of the Veteran's family and relatives of how the service is to be conducted. Also, so that the wishes of the bereaved are met.

- (vii) The League salute when marching shall be given by placing the hat or hand over any medals worn on the left breast, and at RSL Meetings and gatherings the salute to the fallen shall be given by standing at attention with head bowed.
- (viii) There are several circumstances where the conduct of the RSL Tribute can be performed.

(1) ***RSL funeral tribute involving a church service and graveside committal***

The following procedure is for guidance only dependent upon the location and ability of those attending, and of any local custom not contrary to the Aims & Objects of the League.

- (i) The attendance of members of the RSL at the Church Service is at each member's discretion.
- (ii) Prior to the arrival of the Hearse at the cemetery the RSL members and other ex-service persons should assemble at a certain spot so that poppies can be issued and the form of Tribute outlined.
- (iii) The Tribute party should form up in fours (two's if necessary) and then march to the Hearse forming lines on either side of the Hearse as it proceed to the gravesite. The forming up place is likely to be within the Cemetery, this is the safer place keeping in mind the protection of members in trafficable areas.
- (iv) When the hearse stops the Tribute party continues on to form an avenue through which the casket is borne to the gravesite.
- (v) As the casket passes, each man in succession shall fall in behind the last mourner, as such mourner reaches him. At the grave, one file proceeds to the right and the other to the left to form up on three sides of the grave.
- (vi) Immediately before the committal, is the appropriate time for the RSL Funeral Tribute, as long as this is the agreed place in the Service.
- (vii) Form of Tribute
 - (a) An officer of the sub-Branch steps forward and says,

“Their bodies are buried in peace and their names liveth for evermore”
 - (b) An officer of the sub-Branch takes a place at the grave and delivers the RSL eulogy.

- (c) An officer of the sub-Branch steps forward and says:

**“O valiant hearts who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame,
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the Land you loved.”**

- (d) If desired, and a Chaplain or Church Representative is present, a prayer shall be said at this stage.

NB The casket is still on the bearer supports for the RSL Tribute and is only lowered after the flag is removed

- (e) The sub-Branch President, or officer of the sub-Branch, holding a poppy in his hand then continues:-

“The hour has come for rest. This poppy - an emblem of sacrifice, the symbol of a life offered in the service of one’s country - is a link between our comrade and us who remain. We place it here - in remembrance.”

- (f) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch, drops his poppy on the casket, followed by the other RSL members in turn saying their own form of farewell or the words, **“Our Beloved Comrade.”**

- (g) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch, then says:-

“The Ode will now be recited followed by the *Last Post*, Silence and *Rouse*. Please be upstanding”

- (h) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch then says:-

**“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.”**

ALL REPEAT

“We will remember them.”

The President, or officer of the sub-Branch then says:-

“Lest we forget.”

ALL REPEAT

“Lest We Forget”

Then follows:-

“THE LAST POST”

SILENCE

“ROUSE”

- (i) The Religious Service will then continue with the Committal being said by the Officiant.
- (j) Dispersal.

(2) ***RSL funeral tribute involving a church service only – with committal at the church***

The following procedure is for guidance only dependent upon the location and ability of those attending, and of any local custom not contrary to the Aims & Objects of the League.

- (i) The attendance of members of the RSL at the Church Service is at each member’s discretion.
- (ii) Prior to the commencement the Church Service the RSL members and other veterans should assemble at a certain spot so that poppies can be issued in the form of Tribute outlined.
- (iii) The Tribute party should form up in a group on either side between the rear of the hearse and the Church entrance. The casket is brought into the Church between the Tribute party with members adopting the RSL salute for these occasions. The Tribute party should then follow the family into the church **Flexibility has to be allowed due to the variation of situations.**

NB At the end of the Religious service and before the committal is the appropriate time for the RSL Tribute, as long as this is the agreed place in the Service. The committal in these instances is when the casket is placed in the hearse.

(iv) Form of Tribute

- (a) An officer of the sub-Branch steps forward and says,

“Their bodies are buried in peace and their names liveth for

evermore”

- (b) An officer of the sub-Branch delivers the RSL eulogy.
- (c) An officer of the sub-Branch steps forward and says:

**“O valiant hearts who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame,
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the Land you loved.”**

- (d) If desired, and a Chaplain or Church Representative is present, a prayer shall be said at this stage.
- (e) The sub-Branch President, or officer of the sub-Branch, holding a poppy in his hand then continues: -

“The hour has come for rest. This poppy - an emblem of sacrifice, the symbol of a life offered in the service of one’s country - is a link between our comrade and us who remain. We place it here - in remembrance.”

- (f) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch, places his poppy on the casket, followed by the other RSL members in turn saying their own form of farewell or the words, **“Our Beloved Comrade.”**
- (g) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch, then says:-

“The Ode will now be recited followed by the *Last Post*, Silence and *Rouse*. Please be upstanding”

- (h) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch then says:-

**“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.”**

ALL REPEAT

“We will remember them.”

The President, or officer of the sub-Branch then says:-

“Lest we forget.”

ALL REPEAT

“Lest We Forget”

Then follows:-

“THE LAST POST”

SILENCE

“ROUSE”

- (v) Immediately prior to the conclusion of the Service, members should reform outside the Church and form two lines as the casket is returned to the hearse conducting the same protocol as for the entrance.
- (vi) The Religious service will then conclude with the committal being said by the Officiant.

(3) *RSL funeral tribute at a chapel*

- (i) Prior to the arrival of the Hearse the RSL members and other veterans should assemble at a certain spot so that poppies can be issued and the form of Tribute outlined.
- (ii) The Tribute party should form up in two lines on either side of the entrance to the Chapel and between the rear of the hearse and the front door of the Chapel. As the casket is carried into the Chapel, between the two lines of the RSL Tribute party, members adopt the RSL Salute for these occasions. **Flexibility has to be allowed due to the variation of situations.**
- (iii) After the mourners have moved into the Chapel the RSL Tribute party files into the Chapel to line both walls of the Chapel. If seating is available or required because of infirmity members maybe seated.
- (iv) Immediately before the committal, is the appropriate time for the RSL Tribute, as long as this is the agreed place in the Service.
- (v) Form of Tribute
 - (a) An officer of the sub-Branch takes a place at the Lectern and says:-

“Their bodies are buried in peace and their names liveth for evermore”
 - (b) An officer of the sub-Branch takes a place at the Lectern and

delivers the RSL eulogy.

- (c) An officer of the sub-Branch steps forward and says:

**“O valiant hearts who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame,
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the Land you loved.”**

- (d) If desired, and a Chaplain or Church Representative is present, a prayer shall be said at this stage.

- (e) The sub-Branch President, or officer of the sub-Branch, holding a poppy in his hand then continues:-

“The hour has come for rest. This poppy - an emblem of sacrifice, the symbol of a life offered in the service of one’s country - is a link between our comrade and us who remain. We place it here - in remembrance.”

- (f) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch, places his poppy on the casket, followed by the other RSL members in turn saying their own form of farewell or the words, **“Our Beloved Comrade.”**

- (g) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch, then says:-

“The Ode will now be recited followed by the *Last Post*, Silence and *Rouse*. Please be upstanding”

- (h) The President, or officer of the sub-Branch then says:-

**“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.”**

ALL REPEAT

“We will remember them.”

The President, or officer of the sub-Branch then says:-

“Lest we forget.”

ALL REPEAT

“Lest We Forget”

Then follows:-

“THE LAST POST”

SILENCE

“ROUSE”

- (vi) The Religious service will then conclude with the committal being said by the Officiant.
- (vii) Dispersal.