

District Support Officer (DSO)

Analysis and Final Report

Strategic Plan Goal 5, Initiative 5.9

May 2023



RSL
NSW

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Executive Summary

The RSL NSW Strategic Plan 2021-26 proposes the establishment of a full-time cadre of staff (district coordinator) in place by Dec 2023. From 1 June 2022 to 10 March 2023, RSL NSW completed a District Support Officer (DSO) Pilot to test the viability of the position working with District Presidents and ANZAC House in supplying support to sub-Branched and their members.

The aim of the pilot was to determine whether a District Support Officer (DSO) could provide support in Constitutional and regulatory compliance matters, communications, training and the use of IT platforms, financial support, connecting veterans to services and the Strategic Plan. The test area covered the Riverina and Western District Councils chosen for their distance from Sydney, size, and compliance issues identified by ANZAC House. The Terms of Reference for the pilot were developed and approved by the District Council Rationalisation Steering Committee.

The pilot demonstrated the value of a paid staff member supporting District Councils and sub-Branched with governance, training, and communications. The DSO worked with sub-Branched to meet governance requirements and enhance regulatory compliance by supporting them with sub-Branch Annual Returns (SBAs) and ACNC Annual Information Statements (AISs). The DSO worked closely with some of the sub-Branched to improve IT usage, increase understanding of ICT systems, and encourage take up of online meetings. The DSO was able to act as a conduit to supply information from the District Councils to sub-Branched, to ANZAC House and vice versa.

The DSO worked with ANZAC House and District Presidents to improve communication with sub-Branched by attending District Council meetings, sub-Branch meetings and other sub-Branch activities. This led to improvements in inter-sub-Branch interactions but required substantial travel for the DSO during the pilot, as the two Districts chosen are the largest by distance in NSW. This added significantly to travel costs and posed risks for the safety of the DSO. Consideration should be given to providing DSOs with a suitable lease vehicle, particularly in rural areas.

While this was the case, the DSO struggled at times with muddled reporting lines, and could be perceived as an ANZAC House employee, separate from the District Council. The difficulties for one DSO working across two District Councils were also evident, with compliance, training and communications activities hindered by competing priorities. It is recommended that the District Support Officer (DSO) position be amended to reflect a position as a paid District Secretary, focussing on the needs of the District Council, particularly regarding governance, training, and communications. It is recommended that one of these paid District Secretaries is assigned to each District Council, but not multiple DCs, to reduce conflicting interests, and improve trust and consistency. It is also recommended that the cadre of DSOs state-wide is supported by a dedicated Support Manager within the ANZAC House Business as (BAU) team.

When analysing the pilot, the PMO considered the viability of transitioning the program to BAU and the feasibility of rolling out DSOs to DCs statewide. A review of the ANZAC House FY 2024-26 budget forecasts, when compared to the costs of the DSO position during the pilot

position and the requirement for a dedicated Support Manager to oversee the DSO team, show that a transition to BAU for the DSO program is not viable with 23 District Councils. As such, the statewide rollout of DSOs is contingent on the rationalisation of District Councils.

Following feedback from both District Presidents and other stakeholders directly involved in the pilot, the PMO recommends undertaking a second pilot, comprising of two District Support Officers, one in a Metro Area, and a second in a Regional/Rural area. These would take into consideration lessons learned, the differences in logistical requirements, and work as paid District Secretaries for the District Presidents within those Districts, focusing upon key areas as stated in the updated Position Description.

Summary of recommendations

1. The role description for the District Support Officer (DSO) position be amended to reflect a position as a paid District Secretary (**Annexure A**).
2. If the above recommendation is approved, change the Constitution so the role of District Secretary is a non-voting position.
3. Each DSO should be assigned to one District Council.
4. That a designated Support Manager join the ANZAC House Business as Usual (BAU) team to support the DSO/s.
5. DSOs based in large geographic District/Districts areas be supplied with a suitable lease vehicle.
6. Requirements for the DSO position to work out-of-hours be reflected in the position description, and reflected in their salary/pay, either with out-of-hour working enhancements and/or time in lieu.
7. That the statewide rollout of DSOs is contingent on District Rationalisation. If the number of Districts is not reduced, the program cannot transition to BAU.
8. Conduct a further 12-month pilot with two DSOs, one in a Rural area, and one in a Metro area to clarify the different requirements, logistical issues, and further confirm ongoing requirements for when/if RSL NSW were to move forward with DSOs.

Background

RSL NSW is a member-based veterans' charity, founded in 1916. For over 100 years, we have supported veterans and their families through effective advocacy, camaraderie, and commemoration. RSL NSW also connects veterans and their families to specific support services through our network of 320 sub-Branches around New South Wales and through our partner charity RSL LifeCare, which provides support with DVA (Department of Veterans Affairs) claims and advocacy, financial and housing assistance, counselling, homelessness, employment and training, wellbeing through equine therapy and community support.

RSL NSW is implementing its Strategic Plan for 2021 – 2026 to realise its vision of ensuring by 2026 that every veteran in NSW knows what the RSL stands for, what it does and wants to be involved as member. RSL NSW is making a \$15 million plus investment in its future to achieve this vision.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan's initiatives will be managed as a program of projects to ensure that the members' benefits are achieved in a pragmatic, prompt and commercially efficient manner. The Program is arguably the largest change initiative RSL NSW has undertaken in the last 50 years and is essential for it to remain a relevant and effective advocate for veterans in NSW.

Priority Initiative 5.9 of the Strategic Plan requires that RSL NSW:

Establish a cadre of full-time staff to support and train volunteers in sub-Branches to build the capability of RSL NSW including fulfilling full-time coordinator function to support each district.

The District Support Officer (DSO) is closely tied with the District Rationalisation initiative 5.10 (with Board approved Terms of Reference, supported by an independent person, rationalise the number of Districts on a sustainability and efficacy basis, and ensure sustainable RSL presence in all centres by combining unsustainable sub-Branches as Chapters or amalgamating as larger sub-Branches).

The District Support Officer Pilot

From 1 June 2022 to 10 March 2023, RSL NSW completed a District Support Officer (DSO) 12-month Pilot to test viability for the implementation of ten District Support Officers. As envisioned before the pilot, the position description for the DSO as approved by the District Rationalisation Reference Group (**Annexure C**) was to be the first point of contact for all inbound enquiries within a given District. This role was to ensure that each interaction is met with a consistent professional standard acting as an ambassador for the RSL NSW brand. This role was to work for the District Council and directly with RSL NSW sub-Branches and members to meet their needs, answer their questions, and supply essential support.

The two District Councils (DCs) chosen for the DSO pilot were the Riverina and Western Districts, which hold 42 sub-Branches (19 and 23 respectively) and a total membership of 1,813 (750 and 1063). The test area chosen was larger in size than the suggested post-rationalised DC under Initiative 5.10 of the Strategic Plan. Riverina and Western DC were proposed as the test areas as they have sub-Branches that require significant support to:

- Comply with annual reporting.
- Utilise Information Technology (IT)
- Connect across large distances.
- Communicate with ANZAC House
- Manage the transition of sub-Branches to Chapters or facilitate their closing.

There was no need for the DCs or constituent sub-Branches to alter their normal operations or meeting schedules during the pilot. The DSO sat within the Member Services section of ANZAC House and reported directly to the State Secretary, while working with all teams in ANZAC House. In December 2022 reporting lines changed from the State Secretary to the RSL NSW CEO with the pilot being refocused, including the DSO updating District Meetings and sub-Branch meetings on the Strategic Plan.

Objectives

The aim of the pilot was to determine whether a District Support Officer (DSO) could provide RSL NSW entities and members the following support:

1. Constitutional Compliance
2. Regulatory Compliance
3. Communication
4. Use of IT Platforms
5. Financial Support
6. Strategic Plan

A more expansive list of these objectives is provided at **Annexure D**.

Key Working Relationships

Position Title / Group	Nature of Work and Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District Council & sub-Branch Executive Support Coordinator• Sub-Branch Advisory Manager & State Secretary RSL NSW, entities, members, and sub-Branches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directly supports these stakeholders.• Reports to and is accountable for this position. Works extensively with these positions.• Broadly supports and assists with requests for information and assistance as needed.

Key Findings of the Pilot

Despite challenges, the pilot for the DSO position was successful in demonstrating the value of a paid staff member supporting District Councils and sub-Branches with governance, training, and communications. This is reflected in the analysis of the pilot against the pilot's objectives below, and the detailed analysis of the success measures available at **Annexure D**.

Analysis of pilot against objectives

A detailed analysis of the pilot is set out below against the objectives that data was collected. Due to the lack of data collection for certain areas of the DSO pilot it was not possible to analyse the pilot against all the objectives set out for it.

- **Constitutional Compliance**

The DSO aided sub-Branches in meeting reporting compliance requirements, both for RSL NSW with the completion of sub-Branch Annual Returns (SBAs) and ACNC Annual Information Statements (AISs). The DSO attended sub-Branch meetings to explain reporting issues and the requirements to maintaining a sub-Branch. The DSO supported two sub-Branches in becoming fully functional and compliant, those sub-Branches subsequently being removed from the RSL NSW critical list.

- **Regulatory Compliance**

The DSO supported eleven sub-Branches in meeting their regulatory compliance obligations across both the Riverina and Western Districts.

- **Communication**

Throughout the duration of the pilot the DSO spent substantial time establishing relationships with sub-Branches. This was achieved through face-to-face visits, where they met sub-Branch Presidents, Secretaries, and members. Throughout the pilot, the DSO found they were being contacted more frequently, mainly via phone, for clarification on simple matters. These ranged from requests for copies of District Council meeting minutes, to seeking service details of veterans who had passed so the community could honour their memory.

- **Training**

Support was supplied for those members undertaking ATDP Compensation/Welfare training. The DSO was an Advocate themselves and aided these members in a mentoring capacity.

Sub-Branches within the pilot area raised with the DSO that they would like to see more training offered to support them in gaining the knowledge required to take on Committee positions, and it is felt that the work being done on SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) by ANZAC House are a step in the right direction to support this.

- **Use of IT platforms**

The DSO offered support to sub-Branches to improve their IT systems for reporting and compliance purposes, online meetings, advocacy and training purposes. Additionally, the DSO assisted sub-Branches to obtaining required IT equipment, such as supporting Deniliquin sub-Branch to purchase equipment to conduct sub-Branch meetings via Microsoft Teams.

During the pilot period, sub-Branches were offered support would be offered hardware, software, and internet connections through grants so that sub-Branches could be better connected. The DSO reported reluctance from some sub-Branches to take up this offer, due in part to the belief that the portal is being monitored by ANZAC House.

- **Financial Support**

The Western and Riverina areas were heavily impacted by floods in November 2022. The DSO offered support for veterans who were affected by flooding and the DSO worked at the sharp end supporting communities during this time, both in a physical capacity and supporting veterans with access to RSL LifeCare for flood relief grant support and advice.

- **Strategic Plan**

The Analysis for the Strategic Plan was not completed. Despite a refocusing of the pilot in November 2022 to focus more on the Strategic Plan, due to the Christmas break, most sub-Branches not reopening until February 2023, and the DSO resigning from their position in March 2023, it was not possible to collect and collate this information.

Challenges with Reporting Lines and Consistency

Feedback from the District Presidents involved in the DSO Pilot (**Annexure F**) focussed strongly on the challenges for the DSO in having unclear reporting lines, and how this initially affected the DSO's focus on supporting the Districts and their sub-Branches with governance, training and communications issues. This included both reporting lines between Districts and ANZAC House, and competing priorities between the two Districts.

It is recommended that the DSO should be amended to include the role of District Secretary as part of their duties. The original position description would be amended to incorporate this, as outlined at **Annexure C**. This would ensure that Communication from District President Committees, ANZAC House, and sub-Branches is improved as there would be a direct contact working full time hours. They would Collate and escalate feedback from sub-Branches through DC, they would be the first options for sub-Branch questions and approvals, and support sub-Branch compliance requirements.

The feedback also outlined that additional support from ANZAC House, and particularly through the State Secretary's Team, was required. This will be increasingly important as the number of DSOs is increased during the transition to BAU.

It is recommended that one DSO is assigned to one District Council. It is also recommended that the cadre of DSOs state-wide is supported by a dedicated Support Manager within the ANZAC House BAU team. This would also provide clearer lines of management for the DSOs

and reduce any confusion among stakeholders. It would also improve the consistency across Districts, ensuring that the DCs were supported to uniformly meet their governance, training and communications requirements. It will also ensure the DSO can build the necessary trust with their District Council.

Recommendation 1:

The role description for the District Support Officer (DSO) position be amended to reflect a position as a paid District Secretary (**Annexure A**).

Recommendation 2:

If the above recommendation is approved, change the Constitution so the role of District Secretary is a non-voting position.

Recommendation 3:

Each DSO should be assigned to one District Council.

Recommendation 4:

That a designated Support Manager join the ANZAC House Business as Usual (BAU) team to support the DSO/s.

Tyranny of Distance

At the commencement of the pilot, the DSO utilised their own vehicle to commute between sub-Branched, though due to distances between sub-Branched this proved to be more costly than RSL NSW initially expected. To reduce this cost, the DSO started to make use of a hire vehicle.

This meant the DSO used their personal vehicle to collect the hire vehicle, incurring time and distance charges, and would then drive to their destination. The location of the hire vehicle pickup required the DSO to travel 250kms each way from home to collect a hire vehicle. This also proved to be costly financially, time restrictive, and a WHS issue as employees should not be behind the wheel of a vehicle for more than four hours a day.

Additionally, some sub-Branched did not have internet access and some members do not use IT, which in turn reduced the capability to meet via TEAMS. Where this was the case, the DSO was required to travel long hours to travel from one sub-Branch to another. This would often occur out-of-hours to reflect the working schedules of sub-Branch and District Council volunteers. Any person undertaking the DSO role should be remunerated for out of hours working, reflected in their pay or in the form of time of in lieu.

The 12-month DSO pilot initially had allocated \$8,320 to cover the DSOs vehicle hire, kms and hotel stays. It became evident this would have to be increased substantially, and for the period 1 June 2023 – 10 March 2023, the actual cost was \$23,640.52.

Recommendation 5:

Those DSOs that are based in areas that have large geographic areas be supplied with a suitable lease vehicle to reduce financial costs and ensure that they can abide by WHS measures.

Recommendation 6:

It is recommended that the District Support Officers Position Description reflects a requirement for out-of-hours work, and this is reflected in their salary/pay, either with out-of-hour working enhancements and/or time in Lieu.

Cost and Transition to BAU

The breakdown of costs for the Pilot (**Annexure B**) indicate that across a full 12-month period, the DSO pilot position was projected to cost more than \$113,000. This included more than \$23,000 in travel costs, accounting for the significant distances required to be covered across the two large District Councils.

This cost is a significant factor to consider when planning to transition the DSO pilot position to BAU. A highly conservative estimate for the cost of each DSO position is \$109,000 p.a., accounting for wages, travel, and other incurred costs. In addition to the cost of each DSO position, the required Support Manager position at ANZAC House is likely to require a salary and additional costs of at least \$160,000.

To have a DSO in each current District Council, and a Support Manager position to oversee this network, would represent an annual cost of more than \$2.67 million. A review of the ANZAC House FY 2024-26 Budget forecast shows significant deficits for RSL NSW, due to insufficient revenue for the period. An additional \$2.67 million to support the rollout of the DSO position statewide is simply not viable under this scenario. In effect, if the RSL NSW structure is to retain 23 District Councils, and not undergo rationalisation, the DSO project cannot transition to BAU.

Recommendation 7:

The statewide rollout of DSOs is contingent on District Rationalisation. If the number of Districts is not reduced, the program cannot transition to BAU.

Challenges with Pilot Conduct

Pilot Finished Early

The District Support Officer pilot ran for the duration of a little over 10 months. This has left the PMO (Program Management Office) with some issues:

- Unable to analyse fully the SBA (Sub-Branch Annual) returns against the previous year.
- Unable to collect full data on which sub-Branches do not have internet access, the reasons for not having access, and provision of equipment, services, and training to overcome these issues.

- Having met with RSL NSW CEO and State Secretary in December '22 there was a refocus, pilot stage two put in place, and due to DSO finishing role in March '23 the PMO was unable to gather any data for this period.

District Support Officer Work Beyond Scope

For the duration of the pilot, the DSO worked beyond the scope of their Position Description, supplying Advocacy support for Veterans within the Riverina and Western Districts. Where veterans and war widows who were not accessing support, were logistically unable to access support, did not have internet or mobile access, did not have the required ICT skills, and/or were not aware of support that they were able to access, the DSO provided Advocacy support. In most cases, the DSO did not choose to refer these clients to other advocates or RSL LifeCare Veteran Services.

Additionally, the Western and Riverina areas were heavily impacted by floods in November 2022. The DSO offered support for veterans were affected by flooding and the DSO worked at the sharp end supporting communities during this time, both in a physical capacity and supporting veterans with access to RSL LifeCare for flood relief grant support and advice.

Data restrictions from pilot

Throughout the pilot it became evident that the required Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were not stringent enough to ensure that RSL NSW could collect and collate the data returned. Most returned feedback is qualitative rather than quantitative. We were unable to obtain full financial year data, data on hours spent on each specific area within the Position Description, or data supporting level of training and increase in IT usage. Due to these restrictions the decision had been made to extend the pilot.

As such, consideration should be given to conducting another pilot 12-month pilot in *two* locations:

- Working as a paid District Secretary to the District President. As part of their duties, they will support the District President in an Admin capacity, supply training in IT for sub-Branches, direct veterans to advocacy (RSL LifeCare and others when required), increase sub-Branch recruitment of membership, and ensure that all sub-Branches have internet connection and required computer hardware.
- Operating in one Regional/rural and one Metro location
- Changing the Position Description to highlight lessons learnt from previous pilot and ensure role is fit for purpose.
- Supplying a lease vehicle for the regional paid District Secretary (DSO)
- Ensuring strong Key Performance Indicators are in place for data collection purposes.
- Confirming management structure and feedback requirements

Recommendation 8:

Conduct a further 12-month pilot with two DSOs, one in a Rural area, and one in a Metro area to clarify the different requirements, logistical issues, and further confirm ongoing requirements for when/if RSL NSW were to move forward with DSOs.

Annexure A – Recommended Updated Role Description

In addition to the Key Responsibilities outlined at Annexure C, the District Council Secretary must:

- a) keep or cause to be kept a record of all minutes of meetings of the District Council and all resolutions passed by the District Council and supply a copy of the minutes and resolutions to the State Secretary.
- b) ensure that the record of all minutes of meetings and resolutions of the District Council are available for inspection by District Council Delegates.
- c) conduct all correspondence on behalf of District Council and report from time to time to District Council; and
- d) when there is no separately appointed District Council Treasurer, perform the following additional duties:
 - i. opens a bank account on behalf of the District Council.
 - ii. issue receipts and pay accounts approved by District Council.
 - iii. keep proper records and accounts of all money received and expended by District Council and all property of the District Council.
 - iv. prepare DC 1 and DC 2 on behalf of the District Council if required; and
 - v. pay any affiliation fees due to RSL NSW.

Annexure B – Annual Costs

A9 - District coordinator	
A9 - District coordinator, inclusive of super and all on costs	\$85,000.00
Hire Car or KMs reimbursement	\$12,000.00
Internet connection (working from home)	\$1,200.00
Marketing/Branding/printing	\$1,200.00
Meal allowance	\$4,920.00
Phone allowance	\$780.00
Hotel	\$4,800.00
Total	\$109,900.00
X1 BAU Support Manager	\$160,000

Annexure C – Pre-Pilot Role Description

Key Responsibilities and Duties

Within their District, typical duties of this position were planned to include, however not limited to, the following:

- Supply support and guidance to sub-Branches on matters such as:
 - Constitutional compliance
 - Regulatory compliance
 - Maintaining the member database
 - Accessing and utilising RSL NSW Information Technology platforms
 - Commemoration protocol
 - Fundraising
 - Grants and financial support
 - Recruiting
- Provide support to members and veterans by connecting them with support services such as
 - Compensation advocacy
 - Wellbeing support
 - Membership issues
- Manage responsibility for the stakeholder journey from the first contact through to feedback and any issues that occur along the way ensuring its completion and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Ensure that each enquiry, feedback, or complaint is directed to the right resource. Following the correct escalation procedure where necessary based on established standards.
- Ensure all in-bound and outbound communication logs are up-to-date, correct and concise.
- Supply generic and ad-hoc reports to the organisation to support customer service development and organisational insight.
- Develop rapport and build networks with sub-Branches and members.
- Make recommendations to management to improve stakeholder experience.
- Supply valuable information to other departments on stakeholder and business feedback, resulting in key strategic initiatives to enhance the customer experience.
- Attend staff meetings as needed.

Selection Criteria – Essential

- Demonstrated ability to assess and manage high volume workflow, including the need to escalate issues.
- Experience in collaborating in a small team, specifically showing initiative and prioritisation to resolve issues.
- Customer Service experience
- Demonstrated ability to utilise resources to support stakeholders.

- Excellent stakeholder focused verbal and written communication skills.
- Experience in record management.
- Ability to support confidentiality.

Selection Criteria – Desirable

- Tertiary, TAFE, or similar training in customer service.
- Work collaboratively with other departments and stakeholders.
- Knowledge of RSL NSW and the role of sub-Branches
- Support the values of RSL NSW through volunteering to be involved in commemoration events and fundraising initiatives.

Key Success Factors

- Building positive relationships with sub-Branches and members
- Contribute to team discussions on enhancing service and support to sub-Branches and Members
- Building corporate knowledge to better support sub-Branches and members.

Annexure D – Full Pilot Objectives

The aim of the pilot was to determine whether a District Support Officer (DSO) could provide RSL NSW entities and members the following support:

1. Constitutional Compliance

- a. Sub-Branch Annual Returns.
- b. Sub-Branch budget.
- c. Constitutional approvals under 15.56 (a) – (c).
- d. Ensure all Trustee and Executive positions are filled.
- e. Maintenance and recording of Trust Deeds.
- f. Support workflow process for RSL awards and creation of Chapters.
- g. Understanding and providing guidance with Standard Operating Procedures.

2. Regulatory Compliance

- a. ACNC Annual Information Statement (AIS).
- b. Responsible Persons list is correct on the ACNC Charity Portal.
- c. Compliance with Charitable Fundraising Authority conditions.
- d. Support the RSL NSW Assurance Framework Project.

3. Communication

- a. Each sub-Branch and DC secretary has access to the RSL NSW email account.
- b. Member postal addresses are correct.
- c. Contact numbers are correct for all members.
- d. Email addresses are correct for all members.

4. Use of IT Platforms

- a. Secretaries can access and update information through the sub-Branch Portal.
- b. Support virtual meetings of DC/sub-Branch executives and delegates/members.
- c. Renewing membership through the Portal.
- d. Accessing documents through the Portal.

5. Financial Support

- a. Accessing appropriate grants.
- b. Supporting grant applications and auspicing as needed.
- c. Submitting requests to Support and Assistance Fund.
- d. Requesting project funding through DC to Veteran Support Fund.
- e. Identifying local fundraising activities.

6. Strategic Plan

- a. Connecting sub-Branches with the suite of services.
- b. Sub-Branch sport and recreation programs.
- c. Develop local recruiting programs for sub-Branches.

Annexure E – Success Measures Analysis

The success measures were set against the objectives highlighted in the District Council Support Officer terms of reference, as approved by the District Rationalisation Reference Group. There were six areas of success/project deliverables the pilot focused on, being:

1. Completion of sub-Branch Annual Returns (SBAs) and ACNC Annual information statements (AISs).
 - a. Completion of SBA's '21-22 27 for the fiscal year.
 - b. Completion of SBA's '22-'23 until March 10th (duration of Pilot) 20
 - c. Non-completion of SBAs for both '21-22 & '22-'23 nine sub-Branches.
 - d. 'No data held for ACNC returns.
2. Correct Data recorded in the RSL NSW portal and the Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission (ACNC) portal.
 - a. RSL NSW sub-Branch data is up to date as this was updated for the Veterans Catalogue. The DSO liaised with the sub-Branch Advisory Manager to support West Wyalong sub-Branch in regaining its status.
3. Access and Usage of RSL NSW email accounts by sub-Branches.
 - a. IT access in some sub-Branches is still an issue, due to location they are unable to get standard internet and would have to instead investigate satellite connections.
 - b. Some sub-Branches and/or Office Bearers are still using personal email accounts rather than RSL NSW accounts.
4. The identification and transition of non-viable sub-Branches
 - a. One sub-Branch was supported to become a Chapter in Western DC, and one sub-Branch closed in the Riverina District.
5. Recruitment
 - a. DSO supported the sub-Branches across Riverina and Western Districts to welcome in 155 new RSL NSW members during their tenure.
 - b. DSO recruited members in local areas for sub-Branches through the advocacy work that he did with veterans in the local area.
6. Supporting of Veterans to RSL LifeCare
 - a. There were six Claims Advocacy referrals submitted to RSL LifeCare by the DSO during the pilot period. A caveat to this is that the DSO was a level 3 trained advocate and supported several veterans and a war widow in completion of documentation for submission of benefits and/or pensions.
 - b. The DSO assisted members during the floods connecting them to RSL LifeCare for emergency relief grants and/or DVA, as well as providing hands on support on the ground filling sandbags.

Annexure F – Stakeholder Feedback

A focus group was completed at the end of the pilot to explore observations of our membership more deeply. Feedback was provided by the District Presidents of the Riverina and Western Districts, with email feedback from the RSL NSW President. A summary of the feedback is available below:

- The DSO was supportive of commemoration events (Moama especially), where the sub-Branches were assisted in arrangements from the start to finish.
- The DSO supplied support and advice for advocates in sub-Branches. Due to the location some sub-Branch advocates do not have many clients and so are not up to date in knowledge of the ATDP. The DSO also supplied advocacy to veterans who were not in receipt of their full benefits and walked them through the process.
- Having someone who can attend in a face-2-face capacity at remote sub-Branches was helpful.
- The DSO was able to provide sub-Branches with IT support as some members are not IT literate and therefore are not supplying required reports to ANZAC House online, and not opening incoming emails and circulars.
- Having someone meeting face-to-face helped build trust in the sub-Branches and has, in a small way (due to limited pilot period) built trust within sub-Branches.
- Having one DSO supplying support for two large districts meant there was a lot of travel required, and if this was to be rolled out in the future then regional and rural areas will have to be considered.
- There will be slightly different requirements for Metro and Rural DSOs. Rural will require DSOs with a high level of IT literacy for training purposes as many members have limited or no IT skills. Trust building capabilities will be a factor to consider.
- The DSO supported sub-Branches in becoming Chapters, worked through all required legislation, accounting, change of function to ensure a smooth transition.
- The role requires someone who is good at dispute resolution. The DSO worked with a sub-Branch that had an ongoing issue with a museum and brought both parties together to resolve the issue.
- Concerns were raised over the DSO having “too many bosses” at ANZAC House. This caused the DSO some issues and impinged on their ability to perform their role. The DSO should have been supported via the support team (Ivan) at ANZAC House and then report to the RSL NSW Secretary.
- The DSO provided substantial support during the times of flooding, worked with the communities, and was the conduit between veterans and RSL LifeCare Veterans Services to ensure grant support was provided.
- In rural areas, computer literacy is an issue with some sub-Branches, and some where IT isn’t utilised. The TAFE courses supplied are not fit for purpose. Members are requesting someone physically present to guide them through how to use the ICT equipment. Where the DSO did supply one-to-one training sessions, this helped ensure returns were completed. There is a fear of IT systems in the regions as there is a belief that ANZAC House tracks sub-Branches through emails. The DSO helped improve trust.
- DSO supported sub-Branches with end of year returns and having these completed for end of fiscal year accounts.

- The DSO was important assisting subbranches with the transcribing of paperwork forms to online submissions. Special note that Ivan Brisot supplies the same type of assistance to subbranches (not pensions and advocacy support though) over the phone and during his visits to subbranches.