

Respecting, supporting, and remembering our veterans and their families.

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 Financial Year



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Introduction

The Returned & Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) (RSL NSW) ABN: 78 368 138 161 is incorporated under an Act of NSW Parliament – RSL NSW Act 2018 (NSW) No. 48 (Act).

RSL NSW is a charity, the purpose of which is to respect, support and remember veterans and their families. It performs its work with a commitment to good governance, accountability to members and transparency.

In the 2022/23 Financial Year, sub-Branches provided countless hours of volunteer support to veterans and their families in NSW. In addition, RSL NSW sub-Branches and other donors, provided over \$3.1 million to enable its partner charity and related entity RSL LifeCare to:

- Provide \$682,516 in financial assistance, supporting essential services for veterans and their families.
- Provide \$397,000 in disaster assistance.
- Assist 341 veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Provided 5,128 nights of accommodation.
- Help 816 veterans to lodge 4,460 DVA claims.
- Facilitated 220 veterans or partners receiving assistance from the RSL Veterans' Employment Program and training opportunities.
- Lodge 207 new VRB appeals, complete 291 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mediation discussions and represent 37 full VRB Board Hearings.
- Guide 84 veterans through horse handling and riding courses.

As at 30 June 2023 RSL NSW had 315 sub-Branches throughout NSW and had 27,544 members.

Aside from its sub-Branches, the RSL NSW Family in 2022/2023 included:

- Anzac House Trust
- RSL Australian Forces Overseas Fund (known as AFOF)
- RSL Custodian Pty Ltd
- RSL LifeCare
- RSL NSW Auxiliaries
- RSL Youth Clubs
- RSL Day Clubs

More information can be found on the RSL NSW website - www.rslnsw.org.au.



President's Report

Ray James OAM, GAICD, JP

I am delighted to present the Annual Report for RSL NSW for the fiscal year 2022/23. It is with immense pride and gratitude that I share our achievements, challenges, and the strides we have taken to serve our veterans, their families, and the wider community.

Executive Summary: The past year has been one of transformation and growth for RSL NSW as we continue to implement the RSL NSW Strategic Plan 2021-2026. We have witnessed significant accomplishments and continued our commitment to upholding the values and principles that define the Returned and Services League of Australia. As a testament to the dedication of our dedicated member volunteers and ANZAC House staff, we have effectively managed the impact of the ongoing global events while advancing our core mission.

Key Achievements:

Support Services for Veterans: RSL NSW sub-Branches have donated \$3.1m to RSL LifeCare in response to an increased demand for free services and support. Our donation has assisted the opening and ongoing operation of Veteran Wellbeing Centres in Nowra, Wagga Wagga, and Newcastle. The Australian Government has awarded grants to RSL LifeCare and RSL NSW to develop business cases for Veterans' and Families' Hubs in the Hunter, Tweed, and Queanbeyan. Our members continue to volunteer their time to connect veterans and their families to support and services, and foster mateship and camaraderie including facilitating grass-roots events as a part of the RSL NSW Sport & Recreation Program.

RSL NSW has been at the centre of the League's response to the work of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. This has included drafting multiple submissions, daily summaries of Public Hearing blocks, engagement activities with Royal Commission officials, and assisting to establish the National Forum for Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) in an effort to establish a peak body for the ESO sector. The RSL NSW Royal Commission has referred more than 50 veterans and their families to assistance in providing submissions.

Advocacy and Legislation: The RSL has been at the forefront of advocating for veterans' rights and wellbeing. Together with RSL Australia and other State Branches, RSL NSW established the Ex-Service Organisation Forum to address the emerging outcomes of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and continues to collaborate with other ex-service organisations and government bodies, we have successfully lobbied for demand-driven funding to support veterans' wellbeing, legislative reform for the veterans' entitlements scheme and improvements in claims administration, and improved access for veterans to health services.

Community Outreach: The RSL has continued its efforts to strengthen ties with the wider community. We have actively engaged in various major events and local initiatives, including commemorations, school programs, and community events, to foster a deeper understanding of the sacrifices made by our veterans and promote the spirit of mateship. Our members report record attendance at Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day commemorations, which reassures me that Australians are committed to recognising the service and sacrifices that veterans have made to protect their freedom.



President's Report (cont)

Ray James OAM, GAICD, JP

Transformation: Implementation of the Strategic Plan has continued at a great pace, with parts of the program finishing or being integrated into business-as-usual activities at ANZAC House. Some of the key successes include the state-wide rollout of governance and compliance training for all sub-Branch office bearers, successful pilots for the use of the RSL LifeCare Veterans Services Customer Relationship Management system for RSL NSW volunteer advocates and for the District Support Officer role, successful Marketing and Communications and Member Recruitment strategies (resulting in a large uptick in new and younger members) and improvements to the RSL NSW website, sub-Branch Portal.

Challenges Faced:

Changing Demographics: As the demographic landscape of veterans evolves, we have faced the challenge of catering to the unique needs of newer generations. To address this, we have actively sought input from younger veterans, including the Young Veterans Committee, to ensure our programs remain relevant and inclusive. This year, the average age of our membership is now 71 and the average age of new service members has fallen to 56.

Funding support: After extensive negotiations with our members and particularly the District Presidents' Council, RSL NSW has established the Veteran Support Fund. RSL NSW sub-Branches will nominate initiatives that meet our charitable purpose to receive state-wide funding, and, in turn, the League will receive recognition for the work that it does to support veterans and their families.

Future Outlook:

As the League in NSW moves forward, it remains dedicated to the cause of our veterans and committed to supporting them through every phase of their lives. The year ahead will see us continue to advocate for legislative improvements and foster stronger connections within the community.

Moreover, RSL NSW will invest in training and professional development for our staff and volunteers, ensuring that our organisation remains at the forefront of veteran support services.

This will be my last Annual Report as I retire from my role as President. I extend my deepest appreciation to all our members, volunteers, staff, our partner charity RSL LifeCare, and the wider community for their unwavering support in making this year a resounding success. Our achievements would not have been possible without your tireless dedication and commitment.

As a dedicated member, I am committed to working with my fellow volunteers to continue to honour the legacy of our veterans and embrace the future with a determination to create a stronger League for the future.

Lest We Forget.



Chair's Report Sophie Ray FAICD (GDLS, BA (Hons) / LLB (Hons)),

As I look back on the 2022/23 financial year, I am pleased that the renewal within RSL NSW has reached a point where the Board can now focus on its strategic oversight role. This reflects the hard work and success of the ANZAC House staff and our members bringing our Strategic Plan to fruition and embedding the new processes, procedures, and culture in the day-to-day activities of the League. While there is still a way to go, it is heartening that this Board will hand over to the next President, Board, and CEO with such strong frameworks in place.

The Board again met bi-monthly for alternate in-person and online full-day meetings. In March, the Board came together for a strategy session with the RSL NSW Executive Leadership Team, where we reviewed the progress of the Strategic Plan initiatives and set priorities for the remainder of the calendar year. In between Board meetings, the Directors attended Board Committee meetings, held joint meetings with the District President's Council, met with the Young Veterans' Committee, attended Joint Working Group meetings with RSL LifeCare, and represented RSL NSW at commemorations, in meetings with both levels of government and other ESOs, and in many conversations within sub-Branches and at District Council meetings. The Board thanks all RSL NSW members for their engagement and commitment, and particularly thanks all the volunteers who take on leadership roles within sub-Branches, Districts, and Board Committees.

The Board has also continued to work closely with the Board of RSL LifeCare to ensure that the objectives of the two organisations are aligned. In November, the RSL NSW Board approved the appointment of Mr Ewen Crouch AM as the Chair of RSL LifeCare Board. In March, the RSL Lifecare CEO presented the RSL LifeCare Strategic Plan, and we had some useful discussions about collaboration between the two organisations.

As we move into the period of three yearly Board elections, the Board looks toward the next chapter in the RSL NSW story. At Congress, we will farewell our President, Ray James OAM, who has come to the end of his term on the Board, several Directors, and our CEO, Jon Black. I will have more to say about their contribution at that time but suffice it to say that it is in no small part because of their enormous and unstinting efforts that RSL NSW is now in a sounder financial, governance, and cultural position than it has been for many years. I am grateful to Ray, Jon, and our directors for their hard work, passion for the organisation, and leadership in the face of significant challenges.

On behalf of the Board, I also thank the ANZAC House team, whose dedication to the organisation and supporting veterans goes well above and beyond what should be expected, and often goes unnoticed. And finally, on behalf of the Board, I thank every member of the RSL NSW community, including families. RSL NSW is dedicated to supporting you, but without your involvement, commitment, and energy, the League in NSW would not exist. I look forward to continuing to work with you, the new Board, President, and CEO, to build on the strong foundations that we have, collectively, put in place for the future of RSL NSW and to support all veterans and their families throughout NSW.



CEO's Report Jonathan (Jon) Black CSC, GAICD

After four years, despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19, members of the RSL in NSW have responded to the challenge - adapt and change to be strong and relevant for younger generations of veterans, and their families.

By respecting the past, and focussing on the foundations of the RSL's heritage, particularly the importance of mateship, commemoration, and being the voice for veterans, the RSL in NSW has proven it can change to be as relevant now as it was when established.

While the underlying principles of voluntary military service, and human impacts from combat and training are consistent since our ANZAC ancestors, Australia's society has evolved and changed, and thanks to historical interventions by the RSL and organisations like the Vietnam Veterans Association, government responses to support those impacted by service have evolved and improved. However, while this is positive, there is no doubt, as has been uncovered by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, there is immense value in the foundation purpose and principles of the RSL, particularly for mateship or camaraderie, a strong voice, and access to support services.

The RSL NSW Strategic Plan, through the consultative process to establish it, is the members' plan to achieve the change required to make the RSL strong and relevant for the future. The quarterly transparent reporting on its implementation has enabled the League to gather momentum in achieving the Plan's vision, and in doing so will make the RSL in NSW the premier member-based veteran's charity of veterans supporting veterans and their families.

By asking the RSL NSW sub-Branches to work as one, the Plan has challenged decades of limited internal cooperation, to recognise and harness the benefits of combining the collective volunteer and financial resources of the League to achieve its charitable purpose, and vision for the future. The Strategic Plan recognises today's society is so interconnected compared to the past. It also recognises that the general membership had lost confidence in the State-level leadership after the painful judicial inquiry, and trust had to be rebuilt.

Trust and the other RSL NSW values underpin the Strategic Plan, and through an effort to exert transparency and consultative processes, ANZAC House and the Board have been able to rebuild that trust and demonstrate their value by delivering on the Plan.

At its halfway point we can report substantial successes stemming from the implementation of the RSL NSW Strategic Plan. In FY22/23, RSL NSW welcomed 3,075 new members, with total membership sitting at 27,544. In 2022, RSL NSW membership rose by 12.89%; the first increase in 40 years. RSL NSW sub-Branches have embraced the Sport & Recreation Program and are facilitating family-friendly events that foster mateship and camaraderie, across NSW.

The implementation of the new SOP1 and Veteran Support Fund is ensuring that the League in NSW is being recognised for supporting the delivery of services and support to veterans and their families. Governance and Compliance training is now available for all sub-Branch Officer Bearers, strengthening the grassroots structures that underpin our organisation. The Veterans Catalogue pilot had a successful first year and will now move to a new phase to ensure a catalogue is ready and available for use by veterans and their families across Australia.



CEO's Report (cont.)

Jonathan (Jon) Black CSC, GAICD

The hard work of the Strategic Plan is not finished, and the coming years will see several key tasks come to fruition. A pilot training program has begun for Wellbeing Support Officers (WSOs), with the end goal being to have a WSO in every sub-Branch by 2026. Working with RSL LifeCare Veteran Services, RSL NSW will support and uplift its invaluable network of claims and wellbeing advocates, allowing them to provide the best possible services to veterans and their families. Improvements to the administration of RSL NSW will continue to progress, including stronger reporting processes, governance procedures, and commitment to our values and the RSL NSW Code of Conduct.

The RSL has a proud history of advocating for the health and wellbeing of its members, veterans, and their families. RSL NSW pursues this advocacy work doggedly, through the work of Veterans Services and Policy Committee (VSPC) and collaborating with the RSL nationally and other ex-service organisations (ESOs). In this year's Federal Government's Budget alone, RSL saw the successful results of its advocacy with improvements in veterans' access to health care, reform underway of veterans' entitlements legislation, and the provision of demand-driven funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs to meet the wellbeing needs of veterans. Further improvements to the provision of claims and wellbeing advocacy, and DVA's support of volunteer advocates, are a policy priority.

RSL NSW's extensive collaboration with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has set a strong foundation for responding to the final recommendations of the Royal Commission's Final Report, due in June 2024. RSL NSW will advocate loudly and consistently for the recommendations of this report to be implemented by the Government, and to enact them where they relate to the organisation itself.

This will be my last report as I retire later this year. I sincerely thank the team at ANZAC House, a truly amazing team; the NSW State President, Board Chair and other Directors of the Board, and the hardworking volunteers across the State who have been champions of the change they want to see, especially our sub-Branch Presidents and the District Presidents' Council. It's astonishing what can be achieved to support veterans and their families through working together.

I wish the League continued success and ask you to find the courage to complete the implementation of our Strategic Plan. I look forward to monitoring progress as a proud member of RSL NSW.



How RSL NSW is delivering on its charitable purpose

Providing assistance, care and relief for current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families who are suffering from physical or mental health, social disadvantage and isolation, distress, poverty, homelessness or destitution including without limitation those who are elderly.	 RSL NSW member volunteer hours: 450,000+ DVA claim advocacy services volunteer hours: 100,000+ DVA compensation claim services volunteer hours: 85,000+ Wellbeing advocacy services volunteer hours: 15,000+ RSL NSW Liaison Officer at National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare: more than 120 support cases Advocacy of veteran issues through Veteran Services and Policy Committee, NVAC, ESORT, and DC Consultative Forum. Advocacy:
	 Advocated for increase in DVA fee schedules Push for all Reservists to be covered by non-liability healthcare provisions Advocated for streamlining of veterans' entitlements legislation Advocating for reform of veterans' advocacy, including additional advocate mentors under ATDP
Providing support and assistance for current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families including without limitation to obtain compensation, benefits and assistance to which they are entitled and in relation to all aspects of transitioning from military service to civilian life, particularly where the member has been detrimentally affected by their service.	 RSL NSW sub-Branches donated \$3.1 million to RSL LifeCare Veteran Services to deliver the following services and support to veterans and their families during FY22/23: Provided \$682,516 in financial assistance including \$397,000 in disaster assistance Assisted 341 veterans experiencing homelessness Provided 5,128 nights of accommodation Helped 816 veterans to lodge 4,460 DVA claims Facilitated 220 veterans or partners receiving assistance from the RSL Veterans' Employment Program and training opportunities



Providing validation of service and sacrifice by commemorating those who have served and preserving the memory of those who have suffered and died.	 Lodged 207 new VRB appeals, complete 291 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mediation discussions and represent 37 full VRB Board Hearings Guided 84 veterans through horse handling and riding courses RSL Auxiliaries fundraising activities to support veterans and their families RSL Auxiliaries 'Thank you for Your Service Quilts' to recognise service ANZAC House provided: 28 services supported with Cenotaph attendants 7 commemorations conducted directly or indirectly by ANZAC House Coordination and implementation of state-wide commemorations including: ANZAC Day Remembrance Day Victory in the Pacific Day Battle for Australia RSL & Schools Remember ANZAC Indigenous Veterans Service RSL NSW representation on the State War Memorial Fund
Promoting and facilitating the prevention of social isolation as a cause of veteran ill health by fostering and enabling community engagement, social connection and camaraderie by and between former and current members of the Australian Defence Force and their families.	



Doing all other things necessary, ancillary, or incidental to pursuing and implementing its benevolent charitable purpose including without limitation:

- establishing, maintaining and regulating the operation of RSL NSW sub-Branches in New South Wales;
- researching, promoting, and publicly advocating for the interests of former and current members of the Australian Defence Force and their families on matters of public policy;
- c. establishing and maintaining literary, social, educational, and benevolent activities for the benefit, promotion and advancement of former and current members of the Australian Defence Force and their families particularly where the member has been detrimentally affected by their service; and
- d. promoting the defence of the Commonwealth of Australia and guarding the good name, interests and standing of serving members of the Australian Defence Force.

RSL NSW supports the operation of 315 RSL sub-Branches and Chapters across NSW including:

- 121 cases of sub-Branches assisted with governance issues, for example:
 - o 7 transitions to Chapters
 - \circ 4 closures
 - o 30 AIS compliance
 - o 55 SBA support
 - o 25 Budget support
 - extra support provided through 3 sub-Branch admin seminars, reaching over 50 sub-Branches
- 64 sub-Branches supported through the Support and Assistance Fund (total of \$193,082) (excluding Sport & Assistance paid through Support & Assistance Fund)
- 7,249 Support correspondence received from sub-Branches and District Councils
- 3,462 calls YTD to the RSL NSW Support Line (including external)
- Processed 3,075 new members including 2,119 Service members, 531 Affiliate members and 425 Auxiliary members
- Auspice 4 grants for 12 sub-Branches including BEST, Stronger Communities Programme, Saluting Their Services and NSW Regional grant
- 84 Trust Deeds were updated and 151 sub-Branches were assisted with their Trust Deeds
- 56 long service and other certificates processed and awarded
- 4 property transactions processed
- 43 Board, Committee, and Steering Committee meetings conducted
- Continue the RSL NSW Royal Commission Office to support veterans in engagement with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide



 Facilitation of quarterly webinars to provide services and support to veterans and their families Providing direct financial support to RSL sub-Branches through the RSL NSW sub-Branch Support & Assistance Fund 		•	veterans and their families Providing direct financial support to RSL sub-Branches through the
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Governance Statement

RSL NSW is committed to a high standard of corporate governance to ensure the organisation achieves its stated objectives in ways that are transparent, accountable, and effective. Corporate governance arrangements are reviewed regularly by the Board.

The Board's conduct is governed by the RSL NSW Act 2018 (Act), the RSL NSW Constitution, and the Board Charter.

Directors

The following were Directors of RSL NSW in the 2022/23 Financial Year:

Name	Date Appointed
Phillip Bridie	April 2019 – December 2020
	7 December 2020 (current term)
Phillip Chin	September 2017 – December 2020
	7 December 2020 (current term)
Stephen Graham	7 December 2020 (current term)
Jason Hazell	22 August 2021 (current term)
James Hungerford*	11 June 2022 (current term)
John Hutcheson	April 2019 – December 2020
	7 December 2020 (current term)
Ray James	May 2014 – January 2017
	May 2017 – December 2020
	7 December 2020 (current term)
David McCann	7 December 2020 (current term)
Sophie Ray*	June 2019 – June 2022
	11 June 2022 (current term)
Louise Sullivan	22 August 2021 (current term)
*Independent Directors appointed pureu	ant to the BSI NSW Act 2018 (NSW)

*Independent Directors appointed pursuant to the RSL NSW Act 2018 (NSW)



Governance Statement (cont)

Committees

The following Board Committees assisted the Board in the discharge of its duties:

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Congress Agenda Committee
- Nomination, Remunerations and Performance Committee
- Selections Committee
- Young Veterans Committee
- Veteran Services and Policy Committee

Each Committee has a Charter that sets out its role, responsibilities, composition, and structure. The Charters are reviewed regularly by the Board. The Committees report to the Board at each Board meeting and minutes of meetings are provided to the Board.

Conflicts of Interest

All Directors are bound by the conflicts requirements of the Act and the Constitution which guide compliance with all legal, statutory, policy and other obligations.

Directors are required to disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest at the start of every Board meeting, at which time the Board determines an appropriate response which may require a Director to remove themselves from discussions, decisions or votes. In the case of staff, any actual or perceived conflict of interest must be declared to the Company Secretary and entered into the Register of Interests.

Director's Expenses

A record of Director Expenditure for the financial year is available on the RSL NSW website.

Board composition and renewal

The Board via its Nominations, Remuneration and Performance Committee reviews and evaluates its succession planning process on an ongoing basis to assist it to identify the skills and experience of serving Directors and to guide the recruitment of Independent Directors.

Board performance review

The Board reviews its performance at the end of every Board meeting. The review includes:

- the conduct of the meeting and Director participation;
- the content, quality and sufficiency of Board papers; and
- whether the venue and facilities were suitable and conducive to an effective meeting.



July 2022 – June 2023 Board and Committee Meeting Attendance

	Board	Meetings	Audit & Risk Committee		Congress Agenda Committee		Nominations Remuneration & Performance Committee		Selections Committee		Young Veterans Committee		Veteran Services & Policy Committee	
Board Members	Held	Attended	Held	Attended	Held	Attended	Held	Attended	Held	Attended	Held	Attended	Held	Attended
Phillip Bridie*	6	6	6	6	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Phillip Chin	6	6	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	-	5	4	-	-
Stephen Graham	6	5	6	6	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jason Hazell	6	6	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
James Hungerford	6	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
John Hutcheson*	6	6	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	4	0
Ray James	6	6	6	2	1	1	-	-	2	2	5	2	4	3
David McCann	6	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	4	4
Sophie Ray	6	5	-	-	1	1	6	6	-	-	5	4	-	-
Louise Sullivan	6	6	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4

Independent Committee Members

Anna-Leena Risku	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robert Oldfield	-	-	6	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alan Barnes	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-
Sandra Lambkin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-
David Edmond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	5	5	-	-



	Board	Meetings		lit & Risk mmittee		ongress Agenda ommittee	Remu Per	ninations Ineration & formance mmittee		lections mmittee		g Veterans mmittee	&	an Services Policy mmittee
Bronte Pollard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Jonathan Tuckfield	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3
David Anderson	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3
Sarah Watson	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3
Colin Pickstone**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	-	-
Berdene Oxley- Boyd**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-
Kane Hall	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	-	-
Russell Maddalena	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	-	-
Steve Rana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	-	-
John Hopwood	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	-	-

* Phillip Bridie joins Congress Agenda Committee - Aug 2022
* John Hutcheson resigns from Congress Agenda Committee - Aug 2022
** Colin Pickstone resigns from Young Veterans Committee - 2 June 2023
** Berdene Oxley-Boyd resigns from Young Veterans Committee - 2 June 2023