



SITREP



RSL Hornsby (Sub-Branch)

Supporting veterans in the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai area



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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

By the time you receive this copy of SITREP we will have held our first General Meeting since May and the last General Meeting for the year.

It was great to catch up with you all again and to enjoy a meal together. With COVID restrictions lifting we can look forward to a bigger and brighter year ahead (subject to currently emerging Omicron COVID-19 variant). I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, the members for your continual support this past year and to wish you and yours all the best for the festive season. Looking forward to 2022.

I'd like to offer a special thank you to our Committee who have been working hard and long hours this past year even during the COVID crisis. The Committee has been meeting regularly to ensure that the wheels of progress continue to turn and that the sub-Branch operates as close as possible to normal during COVID.

Thank you Committee.

During the past 12 months your Committee has been working on the following projects and initiatives:

1. The resumption of our successful Coffee & Chat meetings for 2022. These Coffee & Chat meetings will continue next year as John Zeller has lined up an extensive list of speakers. Morning tea is included at no cost to attendees.

2. Due to the COVID restrictions the Committee were unable to provide Mental Health First Aid courses until late in the year. The last course for this year was held at the Anzac War Memorial in Hyde Park on the 23 - 24 Oct 21. The course participants were a mixture of serving ADF personnel, past Veterans and family members of Veterans. More courses are planned for next year in conjunction with Open Arms.
3. The Committee has been working with the Gordon branch of Lifeline to develop a service especially designed to assist Veterans and their families in need. The service is now up and running and is called "Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service". The Lifeline office is located at 4 Park Avenue Gordon. Call 9498 8805 during business hours, or if you are experiencing a personal crisis call 13 11 14.
4. The Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby, the Hornsby sub-Branch and Hornsby Legacy have combined forces to investigate the feasibility of opening a combined service centre in the Hornsby CBD for local Veterans and their families. More to follow in the new year.

The Grant applications submitted by the Committee during the year have had mixed results. The Club Grant and the War Memorial Grant were successful. However the Australia Post Grant to fund our mental health courses was not successful. We are still waiting for a response on the other two grants.

The RSL NSW annual Congress will proceed on the 6 & 7 of December however due to the current COVID restrictions the Congress will be a virtual Congress. Delegates will log in from either their home or sub-Branch.

Once again, all the best for the festive season and keep safe.

Regards
George Main

Welcome

Since the September edition of SITREP, the sub-Branch has welcomed two new service members:

- James Allan serving with 1/15 RNSWL including service on Operation Resolute.
- Chloe Kendall serving with the Army Reserve.

Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must announce the passing of William (Bill) White, Frank Fayers, and Peter Rath Am.

Bill was born on 23 December 1919. He served as a sapper in the New Zealand Army during World War 2 with service in North Africa and Italy. Bill passed away on 12 July 2021

Frank Fayers was born 19 June 1924. He served in the Merchant Navy during World War 2. Frank died on 19 September 2021.

Peter Rath Am was born on 4 April 1934. He completed his national service with the RAAF during the 1950s. He passed away on 21 October 2021.

Lest We Forget.

News and Activities

Issues and Activities.

Remembrance Day



With the impact of COVID receding, there was a degree of optimism that we would be able to conduct a traditional Remembrance Day commemoration. However, the weather gods intervened and threatened rain so Plan B was implemented. At short notice, the commemoration was moved to the auditorium of the RSL Club. The catafalque party was provided by Barker College and the Federal Member for Berowra, the Honourable Julian Leser MP delivered the address. We thank all who supported the commemoration with a special acknowledgement for the support provided by the RSL Club.



REMEMBRANCE

SERVICE

LOYALTY

Christmas Meeting

In what was almost a rerun of last year, our first meeting since May 2021 turned out to be our annual Christmas function. It was a well attended function with a great meal provided by the Club. A highlight was the presentation of a cheque for \$1500 by Pennant Hills Rotary for veterans support. These funds represented the proceeds from sales of memorabilia including poppies crocheted by members of the Auxiliary.



Members catching up after a long absence



President of Pennant Hills Rotary and sub-Branch member, Kaye Carter presents Treasurer Dulcie Zeller with the donation.

Annual Donations

Hopefully, by now, all members will have received correspondence from our Honorary Secretary advising that RSL NSW has determined that Members are no longer required to pay annual subscriptions and our sub-Branch is also no longer required to pay capitation fees to RSL NSW.

However, to continue to fund our support to veterans and their families, the Committee are encouraging members to make a voluntary annual donation. Suggested amounts for your voluntary donations are

- Auxiliary donation \$15
- Standard donation: \$35
- Gold level donation: \$50
- Platinum level donation: \$100

Regrettably, RSL NSW advises that, despite their best efforts, donations to the RSL are NOT tax deductible.

Welfare Notes

Those who attended our November General Meeting would be aware that, regrettably, our Welfare Officer, Ros Hutchinson has retired. Ros has provided wonderful support to our sub-Branch and we will miss her.

We understand that the RSL Club is unlikely to replace her in the near term and, consequently, the Committee is currently considering options to cover the services that she delivers. It is very likely that the solution will involve a number of individuals providing complementary part time services.

Upcoming Dates

2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Month	Date	Time	Event	
JANUARY	"STAND DOWN MONTH" - * NO COMMITTEE, GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON			
	Wednesday	12th	10.00am	Coffee Club
FEBRUARY	Tuesday	8th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Sunday	27th	11.00am	General Meeting & Luncheon
MARCH	Tuesday	8th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	9th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	27th	11.00am	Annual General Meeting & Luncheon
APRIL	Tuesday	12th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Sunday	24th - ANZAC SUNDAY > Hornsby "March & Service" *March Form Up by 10.30am, for the Cenotaph Service at 11.00am		
	Monday	25th - ANZAC DAY > Hornsby "Dawn Service" * March Form Up by 4.45am, for the Cenotaph Service at 5.00am		
	* NO GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON *			
MAY	Tuesday	10th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	11th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	22nd	11.00am	General Meeting & Luncheon
JUNE	Tuesday	14th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Sunday	26th	11.00am	General Meeting & Luncheon
JULY	Tuesday	12th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	13th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	24th	11.00am	General Meeting & Luncheon
AUGUST	"STAND DOWN MONTH" - * NO COMMITTEE, GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON			
SEPTEMBER	Tuesday	13th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	14th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	25th	11.00am	General Meeting & Luncheon
OCTOBER	Tuesday	11th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Sunday	23rd	11.00am	General Meeting & Luncheon
NOVEMBER	Tuesday	8th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	9th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Friday	11th REMEMBRANCE DAY Service at the Cenotaph from 10.30am		
	Sunday	27th	11.00am	General Meeting & Christmas Luncheon
DECEMBER	Tuesday	13th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	* NO GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON *			

Heritage

Anniversaries

As noted earlier, our Remembrance Day commemorations on 11 November marked the 103rd anniversary of the armistice with Germany which silenced the guns in Europe and marked the end of the fighting in World War 1.

Afghanistan Precedents



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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We have recently witnessed the sudden and precipitous defeat of the Afghan National Army and consequent restoration of Taliban control over the country. This turn of events has concerned many who served in that theatre over the past 20 years with feelings of significant frustration and disappointment. During Australia's 20 year involvement, over 26,000 Australian personnel served in Afghanistan. This deployment is divided into two operations. Operation Slipper, which saw the bulk of the commitment, ran from 2001 to 2014. It was followed by Operation Highroad, primarily a mentoring and advisory mission, ran from 2015 to June 2021. A further 250 personnel and three RAAF aircraft participated in the evacuation from Kabul in August. 41 Australian service personnel were killed during the conflict and another Australian was killed while serving with British forces.

Australian forces did not suffer a military defeat during its time in Afghanistan and our withdrawal, together with that of our allies, was a part of a political process. However, this has been portrayed by many as a defeat for the United States and its allies and this has been part of the angst felt by many about how events have unfolded. However, in the context of history, this is not the only time that Australian forces have not been defeated in the field but the outcome has been seen as a defeat for Australia and its allies.

Many have drawn analogies with the events at end of the Vietnam War and there are some significant similarities. The Vietnam conflict was also a long running conflict. Australia's involvement in Vietnam began in August 1962 and was formally concluded in January 1973. Almost 60,000 Australians from Army, Navy and Air Force served in Vietnam with 521 dead and over 3000 wounded. Also like Afghanistan, the wind down of Australia's commitment conformed to the general reduction of non Vietnamese forces in the early 1970s. However, the conflict continued for a further two years until North Vietnamese forces invaded South Vietnam, defeated the ARVN and captured Saigon in April 1975.



In both conflicts, Australian forces were no longer involved in combat operations at the time of the final defeat. Rather, it was local forces who were overwhelmed by the enemy, the PAVN and Taliban respectively.

In both conflicts, the Australian government was not involved in the decisions leading to the withdrawal. The environment that facilitated the defeat was set up during earlier negotiations between the alliance leader and the opposition force, the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 and agreement between the US and the Taliban in early 2020.

Furthermore, there were similar feelings of frustration and waste at the outcome of these operations. Both were long running conflicts with a degree of controversy. In 1975, as we have heard recently, there were public claims of fruitlessness, waste and defeat.

However, these are not the only two examples of this situation. It is possible to view the start point of our military traditions, the Gallipoli campaign in a similar light. The Gallipoli campaign certainly saw some significant reverses for the ANZAC force and after the failure of the August offensives, the British decided that the campaign could not achieve its objectives. However, at the same time, it is unlikely that the Turks could muster the combat power to eject the invading force. Consequently, Australian forces were still in location on the Gallipoli peninsular. They had not been defeated when the decision to end the operation was taken. In the closing months of 1915, the decision to conclude the Gallipoli campaign was taken by the British cabinet so that the troops could be better employed in other theatres.

While the withdrawal was successfully executed, there was a considerable sense of sadness amongst the troops as they had to leave the graves of mates who had been killed. Certainly there has also been ongoing debate as to the wisdom of the campaign.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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One could also make a similar argument about the surrender of Tobruk in 1942. Australian forces had successfully withstood the Axis siege in 1941 and by 1942 had been redeployed to other battlefields. However, the loss of Tobruk was the result of a direct military defeat which was not preceded by a political decision, or a 'negotiated peace'. Similarly, I have not seen any writings suggesting that there was a sense of fruitlessness or waste amongst the Australian public following the fall of Tobruk. There was perhaps a strong sense of shame at what was the second largest surrender of British Empire forces. However, this was only one of a succession of Allied reverses in Europe and the Pacific in the first half of 1942.

Decisions concerning alliances and the commitment of troops are political ones and beyond the scope of this article. However, once that decision has been made our Defence Forces have performed well, frequently 'punching above its weight'. The Director of the Australian War Memorial during his 2021 Remembrance Day address quoted a Chaplain Rob Sutherland who ministered to our service personnel in Tarin Kowt, Kandahar and Kabul. After three tours of duty,

Chaplain Sutherland concluded that 'Victory or success in Afghanistan is not going to be measured in the way it might have been measured in the past. I think some of our best successes are actually going to be in the people we bring home and, hopefully, the pride they will have in the job that they've done.'

The Director concluded his speech with the words:

"It was not in vain, if we remember.
It was not in vain, because we remember.
It was not in vain, since putting service before self never is.
As the blast wall in Tarin Kowt once read;
'All gave some, some gave all.'
It was duty most nobly done."

The same words equally apply to those campaigns of earlier times with similar outcomes.

Embarrassing Memories

We return to Embarrassing Memories with a contribution from Bill Tripcony.

I was a Naval Artificer Apprentice at HMAS Nirimba (Royal Australian Navy Apprentice Training Establishment) in the 1960s. At this time, some Defence establishments, including Nirimba, kept pig farms to deal with left-over food scraps. At Nirimba, the pig farm was on the far side of the facility and civilians were employed during the week to manage the pigs.

However, weekends were different. Apprentices were assigned to feed the pigs and one weekend, it was my turn to be the "Duty Pig Farmer". I was not very happy about the prospect of having to feed the pigs, muck out their stalls, hose the stalls down and replenish the straw which covered the concrete floor.

On this particular weekend, along with the fully grown pigs, there were more than 30 small porkers in a paddock. The challenge was to get my wheelbarrow through the gate without them escaping. I then had a great idea. I went to the far corner of the paddock, banged on the wheel barrow to attract their attention and then threw a shovel full of the mix over the fence. As this was happening, I called out in a loud voice "Officers and Gentlemen to Lunch".

It worked well, all of the little porkers ran to the far end of the paddock allowing me to open the gate, push the wheelbarrow to the trough and empty its contents without any of the porkers escaping. However, as I walked out of the gate, I saw our Captain and the Admiral walking away. The Captain was there because the Admiral was there. The Admiral was there because his daughter kept her horse on the establishment.

As they left, nothing was said, but for the rest of my time at Nirimba, whenever I had weekend duty, I was the "Duty Pig Farmer".

Editor's Note

Best wishes for Christmas and hopefully a much better 2022. Please take care and thanks for reading.

Phil