



# SITREP



## RSL Hornsby (Sub-Branch)

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



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### President's Message

Hi One & All,

Our last General Meeting for this year will be on the 3 December 2023 and I look forward to catching up with you all.

As the year draws to a close, I look back over the last few years and reflect on the current Committee's achievements in addition to its traditional commemorative, fund raising and administrative tasks. In no particular order, these include but are not limited to:

- Instigating the Coffee and Chat meetings and more recently, the Sport & Recreation program;
- Creating the Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby to assist Veterans in our community;
- Facilitating Mental Health First Aid Courses and Resilience training programs for Veterans and their families;
- Reactivating welfare checks;
- Re-introducing our sub-Branch newsletter;
- Developing in conjunction with Lifeline at Gordon, a Veteran specific assistance program for Veterans in our community;
- Documenting and reorganising the Memorabilia Displays
- Introducing a new financial accounting system;
- Engaging a bookkeeper to assist with the daily accounting procedures, data entry and reducing the workload of the Treasurer;
- Attending annual ADF Retirement seminars supporting RSL NSW, and



- Providing funding for and cooking BBQ lunches for the Veterans attending the Pain Management treatment programs at the National Centre for Veterans Health at Concord hospital.

These are only a snapshot of the Committee's achievements and do not include representation at other commemorations such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services at Aged Care facilities and local schools as well as engaging with the broader community through scout visits to the memorabilia displays. The Committee members contribute an enormous amount of their time to the operation of the sub-Branch.

Along with the above, the Committee have met all our financial and administrative requirements for RSL NSW and the ACNC. The Trustees work closely with ETHINVEST to ensure that our share portfolio is sound and returns good dividends.

Our Committee is made up of individuals and, regrettably, in the past months we have seen the passing of two of its members who have been active participants in recent years, Ron Koutchavlis and Tony Mills. Both made significant recent contributions particularly in relation to the Memorabilia Collection.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for a job well done.

And finally, to all sub-Branch members and their families, I wish you all the best for the upcoming festive season.

## Welcome

Since the last edition of SITREP, the sub-Branch has welcomed five new members:

- Mr Shane Marshall. Shane served in the RAAF from 2007 to 2019 including time in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Mrs Sandra White. Sandra is a member of the sub-Branch Auxiliary.
- Mr Rene Olave-Cordero. Rene served in the RAN from 1980 to 1983 on HMAS Advance.
- Mr Joseph Thomas. Joseph is currently serving in the Australian Army.
- Mrs Ruth Murray. Ruth is a member of the sub-Branch Auxiliary.

## Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must acknowledge the passing of Barbara Coward, Ron Koutchavlis, Herbert (Syd) Norris and Tony (Timber) Mills.

Barbara was born on 14 July 1922. She served as a driver in the WAAAF during World War 2. Barbara passed away on 23 September 2023.

Ron was born on 12 May 1945. He served in the Army as a national serviceman including a tour in South Vietnam in 1968/69. Ron also served on our Executive Committee for a number of years, until his failing health began to take its toll. Ron passed away on 26 September 2023.

Syd was born on 24 January 1923. He served in 2nd AIF in the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Field Squadron RAE and other units during World War 2. Syd passed away on 28 September 2023.

Tony Mills was born on 6 November 1956. He served in the RAN for nearly 43 years on many of the Navy's major vessels, and was involved in several operational deployments including Iraq and the Solomon Islands. Subsequently, he served on our Executive Committee for a number of years and had been the NSW President of the HMAS Perth Association. Timber passed away on 18 October 2023.

Lest We Forget.

## News and Activities

### Issues and Activities.

#### Remembrance Day 2023

The sub-Branch commemorated Remembrance Day with its usual service at the Hornsby Cenotaph. It was well attended although numbers were down somewhat on previous years. This year the address was given by the Principal of Asquith Boys' High School, Mr Bryce Grant. Thank you to all who worked tirelessly to plan the activity, set up and dismantle the site and organise the supporting fundraising activities. Thank you also to those external to the sub-





Branch who assisted in the preparation, delivery and post service activities. In particular, we should recognise Hornsby RSL Club, Hornsby Shire Council, the NSW Police Force, RFS, St Johns Ambulance, Barker College Cadet unit, other local schools and volunteer organisations. The following are a few photos of the commemoration.



### Remembrance Day Fundraising

The Remembrance Day fundraising actually started about a week prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> with stalls established at shopping centres and Hornsby RSL Club. The traditional 'poppy and memorabilia' sales at local railway stations took place on the Wednesday and Thursday prior to Remembrance Day. In total, \$8824.30 was raised for the support of Veteran Services by our sub-Branch. Thank you to all who contributed their time and effort to this activity.

### Fashion Parade

The Auxiliary's Fashion Parade was held at the Hornsby Memorial Hall on 21 October 2023. It raised \$2320.20 for veteran services, with the 20 cents added after it was found on the footpath outside the hall. The Fashion Parade also included a silent auction of several interesting items including this painting purchased by Neil and Nina Turner.



### RSL NSW Board Election Results

The result of the RSL Board Election for 2023 have been announced. Congratulations to Mick Bainbridge on his election as RSL NSW President. All of the Board election results can be found at <https://rslnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-RSL-NSW-ELECTIONS-FINAL-RESULTS.pdf#msdyntrid=SfgU7wPKU-hCCYzMLO7TNPOZ9TWdzFgF-zAIDRCZwCs>

### RSL NSW State Congress

Steve Hopwood and Phil White attended the RSL NSW State Congress at Newcastle on 22-24 October 2023, as the Hornsby sub-Branch delegates. It was a relatively quiet conference. There were 20 motions considered at the Congress of these, 10 were passed, 4 were defeated, 2 were withdrawn and 4 were noted.

### Welfare Notes

#### Advocacy Support

One issue which was raised at the RSL State Congress was the increasing number of individuals and companies offering 'fee-for-service' advocacy services in dealings with DVA. There were several horror stories of veterans suffering significant financial loss after using such services. Members should be aware that advocacy services offered by RSL Life Care Veteran Services are free. Alternatively, please speak to Phil Loomes if you need this type of support.

### Member Checks

The August round of checks on members over 80 is drawing to a close. To date, we have been able to contact 61 of the 71 members who were 80 or over as at July this year. We have been unable to contact eight of the remaining ten either by phone or email but remain hopeful about the final two. If you are over 80 (as at 31 July) and have not received a call from a member of our



committee, can you please phone or email the sub-Branch with your contact details and someone will call you.

Our intent is to make this an ongoing practice every six months with the next round commencing in February 2024.

## Upcoming Dates

The Calendar for sub-Branch activities in 2024 will be issued to members at our final meeting for this year. It will also be uploaded to our website.

## Heritage

### Snippets from the Past.

#### Reunited

While some of the focus for this year has been to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, for two of our sub-Branch members, veterans of that conflict, it has also been an opportunity to be reunited with the equipment they operated during that conflict.

Ron Slater served in the RAAF primarily with 76 Squadron flying the Mirage jet fighter. However, Ron had also been trained as a Forward Air Controller and, in that capacity, he was posted to Vietnam from August 1969 until April 1970 where he served with the US forces flying the North American Rockwell OV-10 Bronco 14639.



14639 eventually was sent to the Philippines in the early 1990s and then 16 years ago to Australia where it arrived on HMAS Tobruk in a dishevelled state. The Australian War Memorial has been restoring this aircraft which played a key role in the Vietnam War. The Museum unveiled the fully restored Bronco on Vietnam Veterans Day this year to an

audience which included many of the former RAAF personnel who had operated her.



RAAF pilots Flight Lieutenant Ron Slater and Flying Officer Peter Condon with Bronco 67-14639



More images of the event can be found at this AWM site

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/australianwarmemorial/albums/72177720310580562/with/53125623397/>

As a footnote to this story, in 1994, I visited the Philippines as a member of a Joint Services Staff College tour and, as we were taxiing after landing, I was able to photograph two Broncos from the tail of the C130. When the photo was taken, the aircraft had only been in the Philippines for about three years. It's interesting to speculate if 639 was one of these two.



George Main served with A and B Squadrons, 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Regiment during his time in Vietnam. George was a driver and a member of the crew of Centurion 169-043.

SITREP has previously published several photos of the tank's close encounters with the soft boggy ground of SVN, two of which are again reproduced on the following page. The photo on the left shows his tank bogged in an old rice paddy. The tank was stuck in the muck for three days. The photo on the right shows another bog which required four APCs hooked together to tow the tank out.







While undertaking research for the DVA sponsored documentaries about tank crews in Vietnam, George learnt that 169-043 not only survived the Viet Cong and his driving and but also the scrap merchant's blow torch. He located the tank on a property in Oberon, NSW where it has been carefully restored to running condition. As part of the filming, George and the other members of his crew were able to take 169-043 for a drive. A preview of the documentary with more images of 169-043 are on the sub-Branch's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HornsbyRSLSubBranch/videos/1015954966102514>



Incidentally, it seems that any mishaps in Vietnam didn't damage the career of George's crew commander, then Cpl Peter Rosemond, who went on to become RSM of the Army.

### Editor's Note

Please take care and thanks for reading.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your 'near and dear' ones.

Phil