



SITREP

RSL Hornsby (Sub-Branch)

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



Email: info@hornsbyrslsubbranch.com

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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

These last few months have been extremely busy for many of us within the Sub-Branch community. We have now emerged from the ANZAC Day period, and I want to begin by thanking all of you who assisted in many and various ways to make the commemoration of ANZAC Day 2025 all that we hoped it would be.

The Dawn Service, being our central focus as a community commemoration, went very well and was very well attended; best estimates were around 3,000 in attendance. We must have had close to 1,000 marching up from the War Memorial Hall. We were very appreciative of the War Memorial Hall Committee having the Hall on standby in case of wet weather; however, we were certainly blessed with the weather; the rain waited until we were all safely inside for the Gunfire Breakfast. Thanks to the Hornsby RSL Club for hosting the Gunfire Breakfast; I understand that 1,000 meals were served.



A special thanks to all those involved in fund raising, whether at Railway Stations, Club Foyer or shopping centres; and even at the Dawn Service. Behind those scenes was months of effort by John and Dulcie Zeller in selecting and purchasing merchandise/tokens; setting up the trays, handling the funds and acquitting as they went; thank you both from the whole veteran community.

At our February General Meeting, the Sub-Branch Executive presented a refreshed strategic plan which outlined our Sub-Branch purpose that must be to support current and former members of

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the ADF (veterans) and their families. The refreshed focus on veteran wellbeing required re-alignment of some executive functions to support that purpose; with George Main returning to the Executive as Vice President - Veteran Welfare/Wellbeing, allowing George to concentrate his energies on that area. Welcome back George, after a very distressing period on the family front. Following that focus on veteran welfare, we have made a submission to RSL NSW to have the Veterans Wellbeing Centre Hornsby included in the Veterans Support Fund so that we can continue to make financial support contributions to the Centre. We only seek approval to fund our initiative locally and are not seeking RSL NSW funds as such. At times, RSL NSW seems more concerned with top-down control than with actually supporting initiatives to assist veterans locally.

I also want to encourage more members to become involved in veteran wellbeing and welfare. You might consider doing the online Veteran Wellbeing Support Officer course provided by RSL NSW. For those interested in that, please contact George Main or Phil Loomes for details and other ways that you might assist.

On a more relaxed note, we are planning to start a guitar learning program that supports mental health and wellbeing, as a further addition to the Sub-Branch Sport and Recreation offerings. The program is government funded and conducted by Noro Community Music. Noro has already briefed the Committee and has spoken to our recent Coffee and Chat group. The program, which teaches how to play and enjoy playing the guitar, supports those experiencing PTS/PTSD and other mental health conditions; but you don't have to be experiencing any of those to join the program. If you are interested, please contact John Zeller ASAP so that we can finalise the initial group. We are still looking for more volunteers to assist the Committee in expanding our activities and in supporting veterans.

On behalf of the whole Executive, we wish you all good health and safety for times ahead.

Best Regards,
Neil Turner

Welcome

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

- Ms Karren Pope. Karen is a member of the Auxiliary.
- Mr Brett Chandler. Brett was member of the RAN from 1979 to 2025 including service in the Middle East.
- Mr Charles Compton. Charles is currently serving in the Australian Army at the School of Infantry.
- Mr Craig Torrens. Craig is an affiliate member and spouse of Alexandra Torrens.
- Mr Mitchell Blackmore-Cram. Mitch is currently serving in the Australian Army at the School of Infantry.
- Mr Mick Amarasinghe. Mick has been serving in the Australian Army since 2001.

Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must acknowledge the passing of Donald Ritchie, Graham Scott and Victor Seaglove.

Don was born on 7 January 1934. He completed his National Service in the RAAF. Don passed away on 14 February 2025.

Graham was born on 20 February 1945. He was a sapper in the Australian Army 1965-1967 (17 Const Sqn) including service in South Vietnam. Graham passed away on 14 February 2025.

Vic was born on 13 October 1933. He completed his National Service in the Army in 13 NS Battalion. Vic passed away on 10 May 2025

While this section usually focuses on sub-Branch members, we should also acknowledge the passing of George Main's son, Jared, on 4 April 2025 after a long battle with medical issues. Our thoughts continue to be with George and his family.



News and Activities

Issues and Activities.

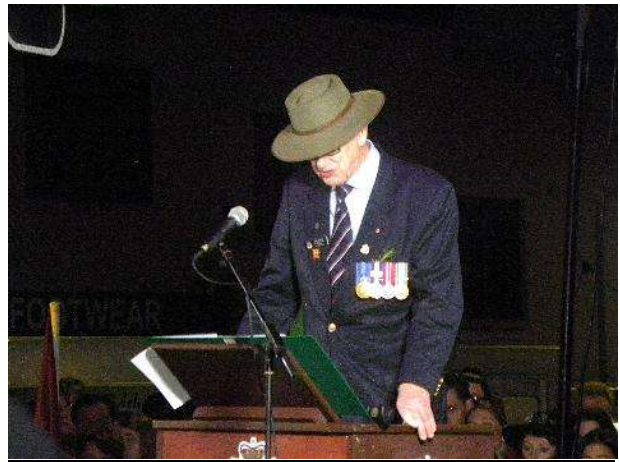
ANZAC Day 2025

The sub-Branch led our traditional Dawn Service commemoration for ANZAC Day 2025 at Hornsby Cenotaph. As Neil has noted, it was well attended with representation from service clubs and youth groups as well as many local schools. All joined with our veterans to remember service and sacrifice during conflicts past. The address was given by Captain Glen Price RAN.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the many organisations that assisted and supported the service, and the excellent Gunfire Breakfast provided by Hornsby RSL Club. A prominent feature of our Dawn Service was the CDC bus in a special ANZAC Day livery. The bus driver, Samantha, is the daughter of one of our members, Don Woolley. It was great that they could both be part of our ANZAC commemoration. The sub-Branch appreciates the ongoing support from CDC Buses.

The photos on the following photos provide an impression of our Dawn Service





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Fund raising results

In his message, Neil made reference to the fundraising efforts in the leadup to ANZAC Day. In total, \$7,656 was raised to support the delivery of veteran services. Again, many thanks to all of those involved.

Based on the successful fundraising in the leadup to ANZAC Day, the Committee has approved a donation of \$5,000 to RSL Life Care Veteran Services. In addition, as part of our ongoing support to Veterans and their families, we have donated \$500 worth of shopping vouchers to the National Centre for Veterans Healthcare at the Concord hospital. The vouchers are used by Veterans at the NCVH to purchase small items such as toiletries and food items during their stay at the Centre.

Welfare Notes

The Hornsby RSL sub-Branch in conjunction with the Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby provide advocacy and welfare assistance to Veterans and their families. If you have recently discharged, or are a veteran in need, we are here to help. We can connect you with the services you need. We offer free advice and guidance. If you are having issues with claims, or need welfare support, call us. We have a large network of support organisations available to assist. Contact us at either:

Hornsby RSL sub-Branch Office
0294766680 or Email:
info@hornsbysrslsubbranch.com.au

Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby Office
0427937717 or Email:
support@veteranswellbeingcentre-hornsby.org

Wellbeing and Support Program (WASP)

WASP is a free voluntary Department of Veterans Affairs program which can help a veteran adjust to life after service. It assists with access to health care and can connect the veteran and family with local services. Guidance is also given about DVA support services and how to apply for them.

Each participant has a DVA case manager and a community case worker to support the veteran and family. They will work together to help develop wellbeing goals and work towards them. The program runs for up to 12 months with the aim of connecting participants with local services in their community. Further assistance can be arranged if necessary.

The program is open to any veteran who may benefit from the extra support the program provides. Alternatively, if the veteran just need help returning to work, the DVA rehabilitation support program may be more suitable. Consult the DVA page on Rehabilitation to find out more.

Please consult the DVA website or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) between 8 am and 5 pm Monday to Friday.

Other support

All veterans and their families can access Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling. They offer free and confidential 24/7 counselling. Call 1800 011 046 or go to Open Arms to get support or find out more.

Records

Members should ensure that they understand where to access records which may be needed to support claims for veteran entitlement. To assist the information search, Phil Loomes has provided the following guidance:

Personal Records: Air Force / Army / Navy / WW1 / WW2 / Korea / Vietnam	Contact National Archives of Australia: www.naa.gov.au Tel: 6212 3600 Email: archives@naa.gov.au
Personal Records: Air Force – Discharged members that served from 1973 Army – Discharged members that served from 1947 Navy – Discharged members that served after WW2 Health Records: Air Force – Discharged members that served from 1952 Army – Discharged members that served from 1947 Navy – Discharged members that served from 1948	Contact Defence Archives Complete the request for service records form: https://www1.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/service-records Tel: 1800 333 362 or (03) 5258 0675; Email: ADF.Records@defence.gov.au
Health Records: Air Force – Served & discharged prior to 1952 Army – Served & discharged prior to 1947 Navy – Served & discharged prior to 1948	General enquiries: DVA: www.dva.gov.au Tel: 13 32 54 or 1800 555 254 Email: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

Upcoming Dates

July	Tuesday	8th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	9th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	27th	11.00am	General Meeting & Veterans Luncheon
August	Wednesday	13th	10.00am	10 Pin Bowling Club – L2 “the Attic”
“STAND DOWN MONTH” - * NO COMMITTEE, GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON				
September	Tuesday	9th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	10th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	14th	11.00am	General Meeting & Veterans Luncheon

Heritage

The Aitape- Wewak Campaign 1944-45

To mark the 80th anniversary since the end of WW2 in 1945, the last edition of SITREP introduced the series of campaigns undertaken by the ADF in the closing years of the war. Sometimes criticised as unnecessary, these operations, nevertheless, sought to clear substantial Japanese forces from what was then still Australian territory. The Aitape-Wewak campaign was one of these.

For Australia, this campaign began in October 1944 when the 6th Division took over from US forces in the Aitape area. Aitape had been captured by the US Army in May 1944 to provide flank security for its operations at Hollandia (now Jayapura) and, subsequently, towards the recapture of the Philippines. The Japanese still had some 30-35,000 troops in the area but these were in poor condition after the fighting in the Salamaua/Lae area in 1943-44 and a failed counterattack against the US forces in July/August. In addition, they had very minimal logistic support, no air or naval support, and food stocks were in short supply.



The 6th Division commenced offensive operations in November 1944 with the 19th Brigade advancing east along the coast, the 2/6 Commando Regiment advancing towards the Japanese food growing areas in the Torricelli Mountains, 17th Brigade developing defensive positions around Aitape and 16th Brigade in reserve.

The campaign was characterised by extensive patrolling with platoon/company level attacks, challenging terrain and supply difficulties. The Australian operation was supported by RAAF ground attack and reconnaissance elements as well as the RAN later in the campaign. The advance was slow, with brigades being rotated several times.

By early May 1945, the Australians had closed up on Wewak and a cutoff force based on 2/6 Commando Regiment was inserted via an amphibious operation at Dove Bay, east of Wewak, on 11 May. The assault on Wewak commenced on the same day and the township fell quickly. Fighting around the airfield continued to 19 May.



An Australian Bren gun team in action near Wewak in June 1945

Japanese remnants withdrew to the Prince Alexander Mountains south of Wewak where, despite Australian efforts, fighting continued until 11 August when operations were suspended because the Japanese government had begun discussions leading up to the surrender on 15 August.

Two Victoria Crosses were awarded, one posthumously to LT Albert Chowne for his actions at Dagua Airfield on 25 March and PTE Edward Kenna for actions around Wirui Mission on 15 May. The Australians suffered 442 killed and 1141 wounded with a further 145 non-battle deaths. In addition, there were a staggering 16,203 sickness casualties primarily due to a virulent strain of malaria that existed in the north west of PNG. From personal experience, I can confirm that the strain was still active in the area 36 years later.

At our May General Meeting, we were honoured to be joined by centenarian, Gordon Theodore Darlington, a former gunner with 2/3 Field Regiment during the Aitape Wewak campaign. Thanks for coming Gordon!