



SITREP



RSL Hornsby (Sub-Branch)

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



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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

We are nearly halfway into this new year. The last three months have seen two major events for the new year. Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 22 March marked not only the beginning of another administrative year for the Sub-Branch but also the beginning of a new triennium for elected positions within the Sub-Branch. Apart from John Zeller stepping back from his role as Vice President (but still staying on the Committee), there were no major changes to the composition of the Executive and Committee. We are looking forward to some of our newer and younger members stepping up to take on some roles in the near future.



The RSL Club has been working with our Executive to employ a part time administrative assistant (her time will be shared between the Club and the Sub-Branch) to carry some of the administrative load currently carried by the President, especially with a vacancy in the role of Honorary Secretary. The person has been identified and is currently employed by the RSL Club. I will be briefing her into the role over coming weeks.

The other major event was of course our ANZAC Day Dawn Service and other ANZAC commemorations around the area. As an overview of ANZAC Day, I can report:

- Invitations were sent to 34 schools and 60 other community organisations;
- 59 different organisations, including 25 schools, laid wreaths at the Dawn Service;
- Attendance was estimated to be 4,000 to 5,000, including 1200 or more marchers; we noted that the numbers are increasing each year;

- Catafalque Party and Flag Attendants were provided as a combined effort from cadets of 226 ACU and 304 SQN AAFC;
- Guest speaker, CMDRE Melinda Barnes RAN, spoke well and was well received by all attendees;
- Gunfire Breakfast and refreshments in the RSL Club were (as always) well received;
- Thanks to the RSL Club for great support: Financial support to cover expenses for Audio/PA, marquees and chairs; access for fundraising, Gunfire Breakfast etc;
- Dawn Service was broadcast by Radio HHH, both direct and later in the day; and
- Sub-Branch Executives participated in 21 external other commemorations; commitments ranged from just attending and representing, through to guest speaker and/or conducting a full service.

At our May General Meeting, we were pleased to welcome to the Sub-Branch five new Service Members (including two transfers). One of our new members, Martin Ryan, gave a great presentation of his pre-ANZAC Day march to the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra as the unknown/un-named veteran. The Enduring Spirit of the ANZAC March was over 300Km, commencing from the Commando Memorial at Holsworthy and visiting a different memorial/cenotaph each day, arriving at the AWM on the eve of ANZAC Day for the Last Post Ceremony. The March was also intended to raise much needed funds for the 'Sallyman' (The Salvation Army Red Shield Defence Services) organisation, which provides practical, emotional, and spiritual support to Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel; the Australian Government/ADF has decided to no longer support the organisation financially.

I again urge you all, as you are able, to take part in our veteran community activities, general meetings and veteran lunches, Coffee and Chat and even Ten Pin Bowling Extravaganzas. Your involvement encourages others and builds the supportive links that work towards veteran wellbeing, including your own.

Best Regards,
Neil Turner

Welcome

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

- Stuart King. Stuart is a long serving member of the Australian Army including operations in the Solomon Islands.
- Martin Ryan. Martin served in the Australian Army from 1985 to 2013 including operations in Afghanistan and East Timor.
- Lynne McDonald. Lynne is an affiliate member who has transferred from Cumberland sub-Branch.
- Ross Richard. Ross served in the Australian Army from 1967 to 1969 and has transferred from Kirribilli sub-Branch.
- Punam Wahan. Punam currently serves in the RAAF.
- Alan Brien. Alan served in the Australian Army from 1967 to 1969 and has transferred from the Five Dock sub-Branch.
- Scott Norrington. Scott served in the Australian Army from 1982 to 1999.
- Marcus Kumar. Marcus is currently studying at the Australian Defence Force Academy.
- Duncan Fletcher. Duncan served in the Royal Australian Navy from 1963 to 1969 including operations in Borneo and South Vietnam.

Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must acknowledge the passing of two of our centenarians, Horace Taylor and Joseph Hobbs

Horace (Jack) was born on 4 September 1925. He served in New Britain and Bougainville as a driver in 2/1 Australian General Hospital during World War 2. Horace passed away on 18 March 2026.

Joseph was born on 12 December 1923. He served in Europe with 462 Squadron RAAF during World War 2. Joseph passed away on 5 April 2026.



News and Activities

Issues and Activities.

ANZAC Day 2026

As Neil has noted in his message, the sub-Branch led our traditional Dawn Service commemoration for ANZAC Day 2026 at Hornsby Cenotaph. It was very well attended with representation from service clubs, youth and community groups as well as many local schools. All joined with our veterans to remember service and sacrifice during conflicts past.

The following photos provide an overview of our Dawn Service. Hornsby RSL Club provided some of these photos on its Facebook page and several other photos have been AI enhanced to improve clarity and resolution. No content has been changed. Further photos are available on the sub-Branch Facebook page.





ANZAC Fundraising

Our fund raising associated with ANZAC Day was particularly successful with over \$9,000 being raised by the Auxiliary and sub-Branch volunteers, to support veteran services locally and further afield. A special thank you to all who contributed for their efforts.

As a consequence of this great effort , the Committee has agreed to increase the planned mid-year contribution to RSL LifeCare Veteran Services from the budgeted \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Welfare Notes

Veterans in Australia can access a wide range of welfare, health, and financial support services primarily through the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and RSL NSW. Support is available for current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families.

REMEMBRANCE

SERVICE

LOYALTY

The key welfare and support services that are available as follows:

- **Income Support:** The DVA provides compensation payments, including disability compensation, service pensions, and incapacity payments for those unable to work due to a service-related injury or illness.
- **Veteran Payment:** A temporary, taxable payment for former ADF members who have submitted a claim for a mental health condition, assisting while the claim is processed.
- **Mental Health Care:** Free mental health care is available for all veterans, along with counselling and support for families through Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling.
- **Housing and Homelessness Support:** Assistance is available for veterans facing homelessness or looking for housing. The Veterans' Acute Housing Program helps with emergency accommodation.
- **Veterans' Home Care (VHC):** Provides services to help veterans live independently, including domestic assistance, personal care, and home/garden maintenance.
- **Health Services:** The Veteran Card (Gold or White) provides access to medical, mental health, and pharmaceutical benefits.
- **Rehabilitation and Compensation:** Programs for rehabilitation and compensation for service-related injuries.
- **Social Support:** Programs like the Wellbeing and Support Program (WASP) are available for vulnerable veterans.

Our Welfare and Support Officers are here to assist.



The Hornsby RSL sub-Branch in conjunction with the Hindu Council of NSW are providing (FREE) vegetarian meal ingredients for veterans and families in need.

For more information on the above services please contact The Hornsby RSL sub-Branch. Email: info@hornsbyrslsubbranch.com.au or Telephone: 02 94766680.

Upcoming Dates

June	Tuesday	9th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	10th	10.00am	10 Pin Bowling Club – L2 “the Attic”
	Sunday	28th	11.00am	General Meeting & Veterans Luncheon
July	Wednesday	8th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Tuesday	14th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Sunday	26th	11.00am	General Meeting & Veterans Luncheon
August	Wednesday	12th	10.00am	10 Pin Bowling Club – L2 “the Attic”

“STAND DOWN MONTH” - * NO COMMITTEE, GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON

Heritage

Snippets from the Past.

In the December 2023 edition we included a story about members being reunited with the equipment they used on active service. One of these was Ron Slater whose OV-10 Bronco now resides in the Mitchell Annex of the Australian War Memorial. Subsequently, Ron sent through a copy of an article written by a mate of his, Ken Mitchell, recounting a mission flown in



March 1970 in the same type of aircraft. The original was published in the Air Force Association Newsletter March 2026 and is entitled "Another Day at the Office".

For some the language and terminology may seem a little dated but for others it should bring back a few memories. The article has been reproduced as written in the Air Force Association newsletter albeit slightly shortened for space reasons.

On 2 March I was scrambled out of Lai Khe to support two Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) teams who were about to be attacked. When I arrived at team one's position they were already in contact. I ordered them to throw smoke, identified the colour and immediately rolled in over their heads firing rockets. The team leader radioed, 'Sidewinder, you're on target and they're firing at you.' 'Good', I thought, 'that will take some of the pressure off the grunts on the ground.' I rolled in again and fired more rockets into the VC. The team leader called that he had been hit. He was becoming hysterical, not that I could blame the poor bastard. I calmed him down and got the team moving toward their emergency extraction LZ. By this time, I was also controlling artillery onto the VC and the slicks were on the way to lift the team out.

At this time, I heard the second LRRP team whispering on the radio calling my callsign. Team two was a few clicks (kilometres) away and, as team one was out of immediate danger and about to be extracted, I headed towards the new location. The team leader whispered 'Sidewinder, the VC are getting closer to our position. We are about to make contact.' Team two was in the jungle but not far from a small rice paddy. I instructed the team leader to head 180 degrees to the clearing for emergency extraction. I then asked him to throw smoke as soon as they made contact. The next time the team leader came back on the radio he was shouting and I could hear yelling, screaming and automatic weapons fire in the background. He was definitely in contact! At that moment, I spotted his smoke and called, 'Tally ho your smoke!' before rolling in to fire rockets at the VC. As he was still yelling on the radio when my rockets impacted, I heard their explosions over his radio. The team leader's voice noticeably increased a couple of octaves. The team then broke out of the jungle into the open, firing their weapons and throwing grenades. It's odd what thoughts flashed through the mind at such moments, but mine immediately thought back to Saturday matinees I enjoyed as a kid where the cowboys came backing out of the saloon

bat-wing doors, firing their six guns! This was definitely LRRP team two backing out of the jungle.

The light was beginning to fade because I could see the explosions, gun flashes and tracers, especially the ones aimed at me. I continued to fire rockets into the VC on the tree line to prevent their pursuit of the team. By this time, I had organised the slicks and gunships for extraction, artillery on to the VC positions and called for a couple of air strikes. Another FAC was scrambled to relieve me – I had been airborne for nearly three hours – and he worked the whole area over with bombs, napalm and cannon.

After the mission, I felt physically and mentally drained. During those three hours I could not remember actually looking inside the cockpit to see if the aircraft was functioning alright. Fortunately, it had been. Both LRRP teams were extracted safely back to Lai Khe without serious casualties. I saw them at the debriefing and they were very pleased to be alive.

A Slow Memory

The newsletter that Ron passed to me also included a short article about the venerable Caribou. It will be familiar to quite a few readers who spent many hours in the bowels of this aircraft, primarily because it didn't go very fast. That said, the Pilatus Port was slower, but that's another story. Like many, I clocked up quite a few hours in the back of a Caribou, most of which were uneventful but there was one trip that does stand out.



While I was posted to PNG in the early 1980s, my brother asked me to be best man at his wedding in Sydney. I was able to secure an indulgence flight on the regular RAAF courier between Port Moresby and Richmond. Because the aircraft being used was a Caribou, it was a two-day flight overnighing at RAAF Townsville. The first day's flying from Port Moresby to Townsville was uneventful but, the next day as we were climbing out of Townsville, there was an almighty banging in one engine. The pilot quickly did a U turn and we landed back at Townsville. As we were disembarking the loadmaster quipped, "Jeez, that was lucky, it was the other engine on the way up!". The flight crew predicted a repair time of about two hours but I was a bit sceptical. The last time I had heard a similar noise was when a big end bearing had failed in the family car. I looked over to the other side of the airfield and watched wistfully as a few jet passenger aircraft, much quicker and with definitely more comfortable seats, departed. It wasn't a hard decision to make. I got a lift around to the civilian terminals and purchased a ticket to Sydney and I made it to the wedding.

The return flight to Port Moresby was uneventful but slow! Still, to this day, I have never worked out whether the loadmaster was breathing a sigh of relief, or just winding me up!