



SITREP

RSL Hornsby (Sub-Branch)

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



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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

I hope this Newsletter finds you all safe and well. The festive season is behind us and 2022 is off to a flying start. Unfortunately, COVID will still have an impact on our daily routines. Hopefully, you were able to attend our first General Meeting for the year on the 27 February.

A revised 2022 Calendar of Events will be issued shortly. The dates for the March and November General Meetings have been re-scheduled as the Hornsby RSL Club are unable to accommodate us on the last Sunday of these months. Our next Coffee and Chat meeting will be held on the 9 March and our Annual General Meeting is has been rescheduled to the 20 March.

The Hornsby RSL sub-Branch in conjunction with the Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby will be conducting Mental Health First Aid courses this year. The venue will be the Anzac War Memorial Hyde Park and Open Arms will be providing the instructor for each.

The Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby has applied for two Department of Veterans Affairs grants. The first grant application is to fund a part time Advocate - Welfare Officer for both the sub-Branch and the Veteran's Centre. The second grant application is to fund the production of two videos which will provide information to assist young Veterans and their families transitioning from the Services.

The Hornsby War Memorial will be assessed by the International Conservation Services who will determine what repairs are required. Funding for the assessment has been provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs NSW. The company will also provide a detailed report on the War Memorial for the Department of Veterans Affairs NSW and the Hornsby Council. This assessment is required prior to applying for a Grant to repair the Memorial.



The Gordon branch of Lifeline now provides a service especially designed to assist Veterans and their families in need, the "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.

Once again, all the best and keep safe.

Regards
George Main

Congratulations

It's not often that we get the opportunity to do this! Congratulations and birthday wishes to Stan Yeaman on his 100th birthday on 11 March. Well done, Stan!



Welcome

Since the December edition of SITREP, the sub-Branch has welcomed a new service member, Nadia Teong. Nadia served with the Army Psychology Corps including deployments to Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands.

Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must announce the passing of Ronald McKenzie. Ron was born on 31 May 1924. He served in the RAAF during World War 2 as a Radio Direction Finding Operator. Ron passed away on 14 December 2021.

Lest We Forget.

News and Activities

Issues and Activities.

ANZAC Day Commemorations

Normal ANZAC Day commemorations are anticipated this year, the next variant of COVID permitting. This means that our regular Dawn Service will be conducted at the Hornsby Cenotaph and our preceding Sunday march will also resume. However, because of how the calendar falls this year, the Sunday march must be held on Sunday 24 April. While this is a bit unusual, moving the Sunday March forward a week clashes with Easter Sunday.

Final details will be given at our meeting on 20 March. Details will also be included in the sub-Branch website and Facebook.

Donations

Readers will recall Neil's letter to all members concerning the payment of annual subscriptions. RSL NSW had determined that Members are no longer required to pay annual subscriptions and similarly, the Sub-

Branch is no longer required to pay capitation fees to RSL NSW on behalf of members. In lieu of the annual subscription, our Sub-Branch has invited members to make a regular donation equal, at least, to the now discontinued \$35 subscription. Our reserve funds are finite and the sub-Branch needs a regular source of income to continue its work supporting the local veteran community and to support the wider charitable activities of RSL NSW. For those who pay tax, regrettably we understand that these donations are not tax deductible.

Unfortunately, to date, the response has not been encouraging. We believe that the intent to donate may have fallen between the cracks, as members have been focusing on the Omicron outbreak and holiday festivities. We would encourage those members, who have not yet donated, to take action now to help us continue the work of the Sub-Branch.

Payment details for the donations can be found in the News Section of the Website and will be included in the Secretary's follow-up letter on this subject.

Welfare Notes

Unfortunately, the sub-Branch has been advised by Hornsby RSL Club that the Welfare Officer position will not be filled. As George has noted in his message, the Committee is currently looking at ways to deliver the support previously provided by Ros Hutchinson.

Auxiliary Update

Covid and other health problems have impeded the activities of the sub-Branch Auxiliary. The usual fund-raising activities in the lead up to ANZAC Day are anticipated but a meeting planned for March will determine what can reasonably be achieved.

Upcoming Dates

Readers are reminded of the following dates for March and April:

- Coffee Club 9 March at 10am
- Sub-Branch Annual General Meeting and Luncheon 20 March at 11am
- ANZAC Day Sunday March 24 April (time TBA)
- ANZAC Day Dawn Service 25 April at 5am

Heritage

The year from hell - 1942

If you think that 2021 was a succession of bad news stories, spare a thought for our parents and grandparents who 80 years ago saw the war move to a point in mid-1942, where many believed that an enemy invasion of Australia was imminent. While some readers may have family who had already experienced the ravages of war in Europe and Asia, and many families had already suffered the devastating personal loss of a member serving overseas, Australia, as a whole, felt relatively safe. That was all to change with the start of 1942.

The previous year had not ended well with the dramatic entry of Japan into the conflict. In addition to the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese had invaded Malaya, sunk two Royal Navy battleships and destroyed most of the Allied air power on the peninsula.

The bad news continued unabated with the start of 1942. The Japanese forces spread through Southeast Asia and the western Pacific. As the Australian War Memorial notes:

The fall of Rabaul on 23 January marked the beginning of a dramatic and traumatic period in Australian history. The island of Ambon fell on 3 February, Singapore fell on the 15th; and Timor fell just five days later. This was followed by the surrender of the Australian forces on Java on 12 March. In just seven weeks 22,000 Australians (including 71 nurses from the Australian Army Nursing Service) had the misfortune to become prisoners of war. The entire 8th Division had been lost. (<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/fallofrabaul>)

On 19 February, the Australian mainland was attacked for the first time when Darwin was bombed. While the raid was reported, the full extent of the raid was not commonly known. It was the first of almost 60 raids against Australia in that year. In addition, throughout 1942, six Japanese submarines operated in Australian waters sinking at least 14 vessels in coastal waters and another three further offshore. Again, this enemy activity was not widely known.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axis_naval_activity_in_Australian_waters)

Despite an apparent success in turning back a Japanese invasion force heading for Port Moresby, at what became known as the Battle of the Coral Sea in early May, things continued to deteriorate. That news was quickly subsumed by the surrender of the US forces in the Philippines. Then, on 31 May 1942, the three midget submarines attacked Sydney Harbour, sinking the depot ship Kuttabul and killing 21 sailors. On 8 June, submarines shelled Sydney's eastern suburbs and Newcastle.

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that while some elements of the Japanese Navy advocated the invasion of Australia, the Japanese Army staunchly opposed the idea. Therefore, the Japanese intent was to isolate the country from its allies and the air and naval attacks on Australia described above were part of this strategy. However, to many, it seemed that the Japanese juggernaut was unstoppable and it seemed that the Japanese were, indeed, preparing to invade. The propaganda poster opposite seemed to sum up the general situation.

Further afield, Allied forces provided no better news. The see-sawing battles in North Africa saw the Axis forces capture Tobruk in mid-June after a short four-day battle. Compared with the successful defence of the port in the previous year, it was a significant blow to morale, second only to the fall of Singapore four months earlier. And on the Eastern Front, German forces were again achieving significant victories in the lead up to the later Battle of Stalingrad.



Although it was not realised at the time, the tide peaked around the end of July. Japanese forces were advancing over the Owen Stanley Mountains toward Port Moresby as well as establishing bases in the Solomon Islands. The Japanese Navy had already suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Midway on 4-7 June, and in PNG in late August/early September, a Japanese landing at Milne Bay was defeated after heavy fighting. It was a similar story on the Kokoda Track and on Guadalcanal where Australian and US forces, again after heavy fighting, gradually pushed Japanese forces back. There were still reverses but the Kokoda Track was cleared by November, Buna and Gona recaptured by late January 1943 and Guadalcanal was secured by February. As 1943 progressed, the Allies moved to offensive operations intended to force the Japanese back towards their homeland.

The immediate threat to Australia had subsided. There would be another two and half years of sustained fighting but the nation never again felt the same level of danger or threat, as it did in the first six months of 1942.