



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

My apologies for my absence at the July monthly meeting. My wife and I were attending the 1st Armoured Regiment reunion at Port Macquarie. This was the first reunion we have attended in 50 years and possibly our last.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Barbara Coward a happy 100th birthday. I wish you all the best.

The sub-Branch has applied for a grant from the annual Club's Grant program sponsored by Clubs NSW. The Ku-ring-gai Council has offered to pay the \$125 joining fee to allow the sub-Branch to apply for Grants not listed on the Community Grants website. At the moment we only apply for Grants on the Community Grants website.

We are still waiting for the NSW Department of Veteran Affairs to approve our application to repair the Hornsby War Memorial.

The sub-Branch has just conducted a Mental Health First Aid course at the NSW ANZAC War Memorial in Hyde Park on the 27 and 28 August.

Filming for our information video on the Veterans Well Being Centre-Hornsby (VWBCH) and the video on transitioning from the Military is well under way. Our first interviewee for transitioning from the Military was a young female Veteran who served four years. Natalie explained the current process and the highs and lows of transitioning. The National Centre for Veterans Healthcare features in our video presentation.

The Veterans Well Being Centre - Hornsby in conjunction with Lifeline have developed a Veterans specific assistance program for transitioning Veterans. Legacy has provided film footage on assistance to Veterans



post service. Filming for their part of the video has been completed. There are three more Veterans who will share their transition experiences for the videos.

On the 26 July 22, 2HHH agreed to give the VWBCH air time on one of their morning radio broadcasts to promote the videos and the Centre.

I look forward to catching up with you all at our September general meeting.

Regards

George

Welcome

Since the June edition of SITREP, the sub-Branch has welcomed four new members:

- Scott Hodges. Scott served with the RAN for 16 years including service in Afghanistan and on Operation Sovereign Borders.
- Te Aroha Hape. Te Aroha is an Affiliate Member who has transferred from Seven Hills-Toongabbie-Wentworthville.
- Alexandra Torrens. Alexandra is currently serving with the RAAF.
- Sebastian Davila. Sebastian is currently serving with the RAN.

Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must announce the passing of Neil Hawkins and Herbert Anderson.

Neil served in the Army Reserve for almost 20 years in both Corps (RAA) and non-Corps appointments. He passed away on 17 June 2022.

Herbert undertook National Service in the British Army. He passed away on 23 July 2022.

Lest We Forget.

News and Activities

Veteran Wellbeing Centre Hornsby

As George also mentioned in his message, the sub-Branch through the Veteran Wellbeing Centre Hornsby has delivered another Mental Health First Aid Course at the end of August. Anecdotal feedback on these courses is very positive. Further courses will be scheduled in the next twelve months.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report

The Interim Report for Veteran Suicide has been released and is now available. This link should provide you with a copy <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2022-08/interim-report.pdf>

While the publication of the report and reaction has disappeared quickly from the mainstream media, it remains a very important issue for the veteran community and their families. RSL NSW continues to support the Royal Commission and operates an office which can support you if you wish to make a submission. The Royal Commission will accept submissions until Friday 14 October 2022.

<https://www.rslnsw.org.au/advocacy-for-veterans-health-and-suicide/rsl-nsw-royal-commission-office/>

Our Centenarians



George referred to Barbara Coward's 100th birthday in July. The occasion was celebrated at our July meeting. Congratulations Barbara! She joins our other Centenarians, perhaps our "platinum oldies".

Upcoming Dates

Members are reminded of the following dates:

- **Coffee Club.** The next Coffee Club meeting will be held on 14 September 2022 at 10.00am. The guest speaker is Julia Eagles from Neighbourhood Watch. As with previous meetings, bookings are necessary by emailing John Zeller (jzeller@bigpond.net.au)
- **General Meeting and Luncheon.** Our next meeting will be held on 25 September at 11.00am.
- **Fashion and Jewellery Show.** The RSL Hornsby sub-Branch Auxiliary will hold a Fashion and Jewellery Show on Thursday 6 October 2022. More details on Facebook closer to the date.
- **Remembrance Day.** Our usual Memorial Service for Remembrance Day will be held at the Hornsby War Memorial on 11 November 2022. Further details will be posted on our website and Facebook page.

Heritage

Snippets from the Past.

We continue the theme of remembering the events of 1942, this time looking at the world-wide activities of RAAF personnel in 1942. While all three services were refocusing towards the Japanese threat throughout 1942, a significant number of RAAF personnel continued to serve in the RAF and as other Commonwealth air forces across the globe.

The primary reason for this was the Empire Air Training Scheme. At the start of the war, Australia had undertaken to provide 28,000 aircrew over three years. By 1942, this commitment was substantially fulfilled to the extent that the agreement was extended in March 1943 but was effectively ended in October 1944 at Britain's request. The Scheme also included a provision (Article XV) which saw the raising of 17 RAAF squadrons for service in Europe. These were numbered 450-467 (inclusive except 465 which was never raised) and thereafter, frequently referred to as "Article XV squadrons". Four of these operated in the UK as part of RAF Fighter Command, seven in Bomber Command, one in Coastal Command and a further five operated in the Middle East. Nominally RAAF, these squadrons included personnel from all participants in the Empire Air Training Scheme. In reality most RAAF personnel served in RAF squadrons. These include Ron Middleton, flying with 149 Squadron RAF, who was awarded a posthumous VC for his actions on 29 November 1942. He was badly wounded by flak on a raid to Turin, Italy but managed to fly his bomber back to England enabling five of his seven crew to parachute to safety before turning his



doomed aircraft out to the English Channel to avoid civilian casualties. Ron was on his penultimate mission before completing his tour.

By 1942, RAAF personnel were flying operational missions in Burma Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific as well as anti-submarine patrols around South Africa. There was even a detachment of 455 Squadron sent to the Soviet Union for a short period in September of that year to fly anti-submarine and anti-shipping missions. In addition to the Article XV squadrons, 10 Squadron RAAF flew anti-submarine missions from the UK for the duration of the war while 3 Squadron RAAF served in the Mediterranean theatre for the entire war.

As noted earlier, even with its personnel scattered across all theatres of the war, the RAAF was being forced to redirect its primary effort towards the Pacific in 1942. When Japan entered the war in December 1941, the RAAF, like all allied forces, were ill-prepared for what was to come. RAAF squadrons 1, 8, and 21 as well as an Article XV squadron 453 were located in Malaya while 24 Squadron operated out of Rabaul. With obsolete aircraft, these forces were quickly overwhelmed. At least 200 RAAF personnel were captured when Singapore fell.



Following the losses in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, the RAAF desperately sought to re-equip with more capable fighter aircraft. The P40 Kittyhawk started to arrive in the second quarter of the year. However, in the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Darwin it was the US 49th Fighter Group which provided the bulk of air defences in that area while the RAAF Kittyhawk squadrons were thrown into the fray in PNG, initially defending Port Moresby and then helping to defeat the Japanese landing at Milne Bay.

As 1942 drew to close, the situation eased as newer aircraft became available through imports and local manufacture, new squadrons raised and equipped and a few Article XV squadrons were transferred to Australia. The tide of the Pacific War also started to turn and consequently, the focus changed to offensive operations against Japanese bases and in support of allied ground forces. But the RAAF's commitment to other theatres continued until Germany's defeat in 1945. Indeed, by the end of the war, the RAAF was assessed to be the fourth largest air force in the world. Presumably, that assessment was made after the Luftwaffe and the Japanese air force ceased to exist as viable forces.

Memorabilia Collection.

In the last issue, we wrote about "The Dust Sheet", a RAF magazine published during the North African campaign donated by the family of Keith Giles. There are a number of other memorabilia items from Keith on display; so, it seems appropriate to summarise Keith's service during World War 2 and its immediate aftermath. His service is an example of the dispersion of RAAF personnel during the conflict. Keith enlisted in the RAAF in March 1941 but at 36 was probably considered too old for aircrew. Keith had worked as a solicitor prior to enlistment and found himself employed as a Code and Cypher Officer in HQ RAF Middle East. From there, he filled various staff appointments in RAF squadrons in the Middle East and the UK. With the end of the war in Europe, he was posted as the RAAF Liaison Officer to the Missing Research and Enquiry Unit. His work included investigations into the murder of allied airmen who had escaped from Stalag Luft III ("The Great Escape"). Keith was discharged from the RAAF in March 1948 and passed away in 1981.

Editor's Note

As always, any feedback is appreciated. Please take care and thanks for reading.
Phil