



SITREP



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President's Message

I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and in good health. As time passes and we move into a new "normal", I guess we will have to wait and see exactly what the new normal will be.

While we still cannot have formal meetings, your Executive and Committee remain in touch to ensure we are doing all that is needed, administratively and personally. I would continue to encourage members with internet access to arrange to have the State Branch communications sent direct to your email account. In this way you will be able to be kept abreast of all that is happening in a timely manner.

Please let us know if you are experiencing any difficulties during this isolation period. We will do whatever we can to ensure you have all you need, even if that is just a phone call. We need to stay connected and there are different ways we can do this. Fortunately, some of the restrictions are being lifted and by the time you receive this newsletter life should be on its way to some form of normality.

RSL NSW has recently announced that the Annual State Congress, previously scheduled for October 2020 will now be held from 6 to 8 December 2020. The venue at Newcastle, the Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre, remains unchanged.

Finally, I would like to congratulate everyone who was able to participate in ANZAC Day commemorations in and around their homes. Of all the Anzac Day services I have attended over the years, I must admit that the Dawn Service in my driveway was the most moving. My wife and I held lighted candles and waited for the sun to rise. On the stroke of six o'clock we played a recorded Last Post and recalled our time apart in 1969 when I served in Vietnam. It brought us both to tears. Tears of joy and happiness.

Vale

It is sincere regret that we must announce the passing of two members, Leo Burke and Sydney Keith.

Leo was born 18 January 1933 and served in the Army as a gunner with the 9th Heavy Anti Aircraft Regiment. He passed away on 20 April 2020.

Sydney was born on 8 January 1925 and served in the 2nd AIF with the 13th Australian Small Ships Company. He passed away on 25 April 2020.

At the AGM in March, we advised members of the deaths of Ian Ruston on 4 November 2019, Allan Head on 23 February 2020 and Lindsay (Barry) Ellis on 13 March 2020. However, as our numbers at that meeting were seriously depleted, we have included their names in this SITREP for the information of those members who were unable to attend the AGM.

News and Activities

Issues and Activities.

As George noted, our activities have been severely curtailed by COVID-19 regulations but we continue to plan for activities once these restrictions have been eased. For example, the sub-Branch plans to introduce a relaxed Coffee Club meeting every Wednesday morning. It is the first step in a broader outreach to service personnel and veterans in the northern suburbs. Sub-Branch members are encouraged to attend. The actual start date will be advised separately.



Committee Meeting outcomes.

With the AGM behind us, the Committee is adopting a project-based organisation in terms of roles and responsibilities. Individual members of the Executive and Committee are allocated specific responsibilities for which they are accountable to the Committee and Members of the sub-Branch. The Executive Team provides oversight of the responsibilities allocated to individual members of the Committee. Sub-Committees continue but only where the objectives are best served by collaboration, oversight and co-ordination. The full list of roles and tasks will be uploaded to the website shortly.

The Committee is continuing to move forward with the initial elements of the sub-Branch's Strategic Plan with a focus on improving communications with the wider veteran community in our local area. The Coffee Club mentioned previously is one of these initiatives.

Youth Clubs activities.

Youth Club activities have been severely curtailed due to the pandemic restrictions but some gymnastics staff have been conducting online classes for youth club members in the Kindergym, Recreational and Competitive Levels Program.

Upcoming Dates

Because of the Covid 19 restrictions there will be no sub-Branch meeting in June. These will be resumed as soon as restrictions are eased.

Heritage

Snippets from the Past.

April and May are significant months in Australia's military history. As always, we commemorate ANZAC Day on the 25 April albeit this year in a very different manner. We have also just marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe). For the many Australian servicemen serving in European theatres, this was a significant event but for Australia as a whole, the war in the Pacific was a much greater focus. For example, three days after VE day, the 6th Division captured Wewak as part of the last major campaign on mainland New Guinea

Between April 1915 and May 1945, many events occurred which have become significant in our military history. Events such as the two Battles of Bullecourt in 1917, the Ludendorff Offensives in 1918, the defensive battles against the Germans in 1941 in Greece, Crete and Tobruk, the dark days of 1942 after the fall of Singapore and successful operations at Wewak and Tarakan in 1945.

We also remember more recent anniversaries in April and May including the Battle of Kapyong in Korea in 1951 and the defence of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral in South Vietnam in 1968.

These and many smaller actions had impacts throughout Australia including our own local area. For example, of the eight memorials in Hornsby Shire, the Hornsby Memorial alone commemorates 16 individuals who died in April or May during the four years of World War 1. More details can be found on the Hornsby Council's website ([Local War Memorials](#))

Memorabilia Collection.

Members will be aware that we are working towards building a collection of 'then and now' photos that can be displayed sequentially on a single screen in the vicinity of the Memorabilia Display. The images below are two samples of those already collected.



Members can help by emailing two photos to Phil White (white.phil.gail@gmail.com). If members don't have access to a smartphone with camera or a computer and scanner, please phone Phil on 0410501536 and discuss the best way to transfer the photos. We recognise that these photos may have strong sentimental value and, for that reason, we recommend that members do not send them by the normal mail service.

The lack of either 'then' or 'now' images is not a 'show stopper'; we can work with a single photo as this photo of Peter demonstrates.

The images have been uploaded to the Photo Gallery Section of the sub-Branch website (in the folder RSL Hornsby sub-Branch Heritage). When the restrictions are eased, we will be working towards incorporating them into the Memorabilia Collection.



Embarrassing Memories

Following on from our President's photos of bogged tanks, it seemed appropriate to include another less than flattering memory. The photo opposite was taken at Coonabarabran, NSW in 1977 and shows a very sheepish young sapper officer (yours truly) trying to explain to the Commander 1 Task Force, then BRIG D.M. Butler, why the bloody Forest Mill Saw was not working, yet again! Others present include the very unimpressed OC and 2IC of 1st Field Squadron, MAJ Peter Thorp and CAPT Terry Jones. The US officer is MAJ George Schoener on exchange and, at the time, Operations Officer of 1st Field Engineer Regiment. The Forest Mill Saw was probably a great piece of equipment when cutting soft northern European timbers but wasn't up to the task when faced with NSW Ironbark.



I'm sure there are many other similar embarrassing photos out there. Please feel free to send them to the Editor together with some background for inclusion in future editions.

Editor's Note

This is the first edition of the sub-Branch's newsletter in its new format. Our intention is to publish it quarterly at the beginning of June, September, December and March. We welcome input from members by way of anecdotes from their days in uniform or as 'Letters to the Editor'. Either way information can be sent to The Editor via email to info@hornsbysrslsubbranch.com or via snail mail to:

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Thanks for reading.
Phil White