



# 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 welcome you all into our new year of activity. All should have received the 2026 Calendar of Events; I trust you have all populated your diaries with those dates. Your attendance at each activity is not only good for your wellbeing but is also helpful for the whole veteran community; providing contact, support and encouragement for those struggling with many issues in life.

I am aware of a number of our members who are struggling with various health issues at present. My thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. Please let an Executive Member or our Welfare Officer, Phil Loomes, know of any health and wellbeing issues that you or your mates are experiencing.



Our March AGM (2026) is the election AGM for the Sub-Branch Executive and Committee for the next three years. We already have vacancies in the Committee and Executive, and a number of the existing team will be retiring in March. I have just issued the Call for Nominations to the whole range of appointments necessary for us to continue operating as a Sub-Branch and to ensure that we can continue to provide the support and activities valued by you and the local veteran community. If you want to discuss how you might become involved, please call me (0418 307 219) or other members of the Sub-Branch Executive.

As you consider possible candidates for these positions, I remind you that Affiliate Members can also serve on the Committee or on the Executive as Secretary or Treasurer.

The Executive and Committee are already starting into the preparation for ANZAC Day. The Zellers are preparing for our fund-raising sales and would dearly like some "apprentices" to understudy and learn the

ropes. We have locked in our guest speaker for the Dawn Service and will soon be engaged in the coordination of event and traffic management approvals, logistics and Gunfire Breakfast arrangements etc.

Thanks also to Phil White and George Main who are our representatives on the Northern Metropolitan District Council (NMDC) and the annual State Congress. This is also an election year for executive positions on the NMDC, where Phil is also the Secretary/Treasurer.

At the recent Gemas Day Parade at Suakin Barracks, Pymble, I was pleased to meet and welcome the new Commanding Officer of 2/17 RNSWR, LTCOL Simon Roeder. Both he and the RSM, WO1 Matthew Hall, are as keen as we are to develop a strong relationship between our local services units (includes Infantry Battalion, Artillery, Army cadets and Air Force cadets – all in one depot) and the RSL. We hope to organise some visits to inform and hopefully recruit more members; the future of our Sub-Branch depends on such strong ongoing relationships.

Best Regards,  
Neil Turner

## Welcome

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

- Merylyn Hall. Merylyn served for seven years with the Royal Australian Air Force.
- Jason Lowe. Jason completed his national service in 1967-69 and then continued to serve as part of the Army Emergency Reserve until 1975.
- David Wrightson. David was a member of the Royal Australian Navy for 10 years including service in Kuwait.
- Vanessa Dwyer. Vanessa is an Affiliate Member and wife of Michael Dwyer.

## Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must acknowledge the passing of two of our centenarians, Robert Stewart and Edward Bell.

Robert was born on 20 August 1924. He served in the Pacific with the RAAF during World War 2. Robert passed away on 8 November 2025.

Edward was born on 4 August 1923. He served with the RAF during World War 2. Edward passed away on 24 November 2025.

## LEST WE FORGET

## News and Activities

### Issues and Activities.

#### Listening tour

Members will be aware of the Listening Tour being conducted by RSL NSW from 12 February to 19 May 26. It is an opportunity to join Acting RSL NSW President Vince Williams and the ANZAC House team for an open discussion about the future direction of the League in NSW, when the 2026 Listening Tour travels around the state. The closest two dates for Hornsby sub-Branch members will be

- 25 March Central Coast;
- 19 May Sydney CBD

Other dates and locations may be suitable to some members and further details including specific locations are to be found at <https://rslnsw.org.au/listening-tour/>

### Donations in 2025

The sub-Branch had a very successful year of fundraising in 2025 and was able to donate \$14,000 to RSL LifeCare Veteran Services during the last 12 months. Many thanks to our service and auxiliary members who contributed to this great result. In particular, we must recognise the great work by Dulcie and John Zeller in organising the fund-raising activities. Dulcie and John are looking to step back from this role and, as Neil has mentioned, are seeking 'apprentices' to take over this work in 2026.

### Welfare Notes

Service-related injuries aren't always visible. It can be challenging trying to overcome injury and trauma and no-one should go through recovery alone; we are here to help. A Psychologist or Counsellor has the skills to navigate you through such complex issues as anxiety, depression, addiction and difficult relationships. There is always hope for recovery given the right treatment.

The Hornsby RSL sub-Branch understands that Veterans Psychology, a veteran support organisation, provides focused services using veteran informed psychologists. These practitioners understand service because they have lived it. To arrange an appointment, you will need a Medicare or DVA referral from your GP. Medicare will cover the cost of the first 5 sessions.

Take the first step and reach out. You can Contact Veterans Psychology directly 1300 040 684 or [veteranspsychology.com.au](http://veteranspsychology.com.au) For further information contact the sub-Branch. We are here to help.

### Upcoming Dates

March	Tuesday	10th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	11th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	22rd	11.00am	<b>Annual General Meeting &amp; Luncheon</b>
April	Wednesday	8th	10am	10 Pin Bowling Club – L2 "the Attic"
	Tuesday	14th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>25th - ANZAC DAY - Hornsby Dawn Service</b>		
<b>* March Form Up by 4.40am, for the Cenotaph Service at 5.00am</b>				
<b>* NO GENERAL MEETING nor LUNCHEON *</b>				
May	Tuesday	12th	6.00pm	Committee Meeting
	Wednesday	13th	10.00am	Coffee Club
	Sunday	24th	11.00am	General Meeting & Veterans Luncheon

### Heritage

#### Snippets from the Past - Battle of the Bismark Sea (March 1943)

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea, conducted from 2-4 March 1943, was a decisive but lesser-known air-sea battle fought during World War II between United States and Australia forces, and the Imperial Japanese Navy. It took place in the Bismarck Sea, north of New Guinea.

By early 1943, Japan sought to reinforce its ground forces in New Guinea, particularly around Lae, where Allied forces threatened Japanese positions. To achieve this, Japan organized a convoy of eight troop transports escorted by eight destroyers, carrying approximately 6,900 soldiers of the Japanese 51st Division from Rabaul to Lae. Allied intelligence intercepted Japanese communications and correctly predicted the convoy's route and timing, allowing Allied commanders to prepare a coordinated attack.



Beginning on 2 March, Allied aircraft launched sustained assaults on the convoy. The attack was notable for its innovative tactics, especially the use of 'skip bombing' and mast-height bombing, which proved highly effective against ships. Fighters provided strafing runs to suppress anti-aircraft fire with the heavily armed RAAF Bristol Beaufighters being particularly effective. The Japanese initially mistook them for the Bristol Beaufort torpedo bombers and turned their ships towards the incoming aircraft but this only ensured a devastating strafing attack on the entire length of each ship. Medium bombers such as B-25 Mitchells and A-20 Bostons (Havocs) attacked at low altitude, releasing bombs that skipped across the water into ship hulls.

Over the course of three days, the Allies maintained relentless pressure. Japanese ships were unable to



escape or effectively defend themselves against the constant air attacks. By March 4, all eight transports and four of the destroyers had been sunk. The remaining destroyers were forced to retreat. An estimated 3,000 Japanese soldiers were killed, many while attempting to escape in the water, while Allied losses were minimal by comparison—fewer than 20 aircraft lost and around 100 aircrew casualties. The allied commanders directed that attacks be made on survivors in the water and life boats. While subsequently controversial, at the time, it was understood that any survivors who made it to Lae

would be pressed into the fight against the Australians in subsequent operations. Only 1,200 Japanese troops reached Lae and a further 2,700 were rescued and returned to Rabaul.

The consequences of the battle were profound. Japan's defeat effectively ended its ability to provide significant reinforcements to New Guinea. It was forced to rely on individual destroyers and barges or slower and less reliable overland routes from Wewak. This severely weakened Japanese defensive capabilities in the region. Strategically, the battle demonstrated the overwhelming superiority of air over naval forces and validated new aerial attack techniques that would be used throughout the remainder of the war.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea was a crushing Allied victory that disrupted Japanese supply lines, safeguarded Allied positions in New Guinea, and reinforced the growing dominance of Allied air power in the Pacific War. It still stands as one of the most significant air-naval battles of World War II.