



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 you are all keeping safe and in good spirits especially in these trying times. If you need any assistance during the lockdown please call our Welfare Officer, Roslyn Hutchinson on 0408237678 or email the sub-Branch hornsbyrslsb@gmail.com. The office is not manned due to the lockdown restrictions but we are monitoring the sub-Branch emails. Given the current COVID infections, I doubt if we will be able to meet until December. However, the Committee continues to meet via Zoom.

Over the past few months the Committee has applied for 5 grants:

1. Annual application for a Club Grant.
2. War Memorial Grant - Refurbishment and repair to the Hornsby War Memorial.
3. Ku-ring-gai Council Grant to help offset the cost of the set up of the Veterans Well Being Centre - Hornsby.
4. Volunteers Grant - to assist the training of volunteers for both the sub-Branch and the Veterans Centre.
5. Australia Post Grant. To fund the future mental health first aid courses.

The Mental Health First Aid course scheduled for the 28 & 29 August has been cancelled. The next course is on the 16 & 17 October pending the COVID results over the coming weeks.

The Department of Fair Trading has finally cancelled the Hornsby RSL sub-Branch Youth Club Incorporation. This has been a long process and I thank Kerry Vivian for her assistance and persistence with the cancellation. The Hornsby Gymnastics Centre is now a stand-alone Incorporated Association with no links to



the Hornsby sub-Branch. On closing the Hornsby RSL Youth Club, all monies remaining in the bank account were transferred to the Gymnastics Centre to offset the cost of new flooring for the Gym.

The Veterans Well Being Centre - Hornsby now has a web site (<https://veteranswellbeingcentre-hornsby.org/>). Please visit the website. There are useful links on the web site for assistance in these times of need. The Veterans Centre is currently working with the Hawkesbury to Hills Lifeline centre at Gordon to set up a referral service for veterans.

RSL NSW State Congress has been postponed until 6 & 7 December 2021. The Congress will be held in Newcastle.

The Committee will keep you updated on when we can meet again including the Coffee & Chat sessions.

Keep safe. Looking forward to catching up with you when we can.

Regards

George Main

Welcome

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

- John Ellis. John served for more than 20 years in RAN including service during Malaya and Vietnam conflicts.
- William Laidlaw. William served as a signaller during his National Service in 1967-69.
- Debbie Rogers. Debbie has transferred from ANZAC House.

Vale

It is with sincere regret that we must announce the passing of Iain Booth, Ralph Newton and Kenneth Knight AM.

Iain served in the RAN. His time in the Navy included service in Vietnam and the Far East Strategic Reserve. He was also a former Treasurer of this sub-Branch and, for a period, our Parade Marshall. He passed away on 26 June 2021.

Ralph was born on 19 July 1924 and served with 8 Squadron RAAF during World War 2. He passed away on 4 July 2021.

Kenneth was born on 8 February 1927. He served for two years in the RAN in the final years of World War 2 primarily on HMAS Condamine with shorter stints on HMAS Shropshire; HMAS Norman and HMAS Queenborough. Kenneth passed away on 16 July 2021.

Lest We Forget.

News and Activities

Issues and Activities.

Afghanistan

As this newsletter goes to print, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated rapidly to the point where the Taliban has again seized power in that country. RSL Australia is concerned that those who served in that theatre over the past 20 years will be feeling significant frustration and disappointment at this turn of events. Our sub-Branch is able to assist veterans who may be struggling with a range of emotions at this time. In the event that you, or someone you know, need immediate mental health support, you can contact:

- Lifeline Australia – 13 11 14
 - Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467
 - Open Arms (current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families are able to seek this free and confidential support) – 1800 011 046
 - ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (for current serving ADF personnel and their families) – 1800 628 036.
 - Safe Zone Support (for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families) – 1800 142 072.
- When you call Safe Zone Support, you do not need to identify yourself if you do not want to.

COVID Lockdown strikes again

Here we go again. Sydney has been locked down from the end of June. Its impact has disrupted the activities of the sub-Branch. Our July meeting had to be cancelled and as George has noted, the July Coffee Club was also postponed although the Committee continues to operate albeit remotely via Zoom.

Unfortunately, the public commemorations of VP Day and Vietnam Veterans Day also had to be cancelled.

Getting the Jab

Hopefully by now, members have received their immunisation against COVID infection. If there are any members who have been unable to arrange an injection and need assistance, please contact the sub-Branch or our Welfare Officer.

Welfare Notes

Our Welfare Officer, Ros Hutchinson advises that the following may be of interest to members:

- The Honourable Andrew Gee MP was sworn in as Minister for Veterans' Affairs & Minister for Defence Personnel on 2 July, 2021 replacing the Honourable Darren Chester MP.
- The Royal Commission into Defence & Veteran Suicide was announced on 8 July 2021. Mr Nick Kaldas APM, Hon James Douglas QC and Dr Peggy Brown AO have been appointed as the Commissioners. The Royal Commission is to provide an Interim report by 11 August 2022 and a final report by 15 June 2023.

Upcoming Dates

Regrettably, with the current COVID restrictions, regular sub-Branch activities have been suspended. In the event that the situation improves, updates will be posted on the website and Facebook.

Heritage

Readers may have seen a recent press release which advised that the Federal Government requested an independent review by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal of unit recognition for ADF personnel who served in the Somalia conflict. This decision followed representations from the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment Association. The Tribunal will consider if the service of all ADF units during the Somalia deployment through 1992-95 meets the eligibility criteria for the Meritorious Unit Citation. 1 RAR

did receive a CGS commendation after its return from Somalia. In 2009-2010, representations from Commander 3 Brigade led to the Tribunal considering the case to upgrade the CGS Commendation to a Meritorious Unit Citation. The Tribunal did not support the upgrade. However, this review has a broader focus than the 1 RAR Battalion Group's role and will consider a possible award for all Australian personnel deployed to Somalia.

Somalia was a pawn during the Cold War. But with the end of the east/west confrontation, its long-term dictator, Major General Mohamed Siad Barre, who had ruled Somalia from the late 1960s, was deposed by a coalition of opposition groups in January 1991. After Barre's departure, the country quickly degenerated into clan based civil war. In 1992, the UN attempted to organise relief to alleviate critical food shortages in the country. However, this initiative floundered as law and order degenerated because of the actions of violent gangs.

The UN deployed personnel to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in July 1992 and by October, this included a 30 person Australian Movement Control Unit. However, the UN force had no enforcement capability and the situation continued to degenerate with famine killing around 300,000 people.

In November, the US announced that it would lead a force which would enable the distribution of humanitarian relief. The force, ratified by the UN Security Council under the name United Task Force Somalia (UNITAF). Australia contributed a battalion group based on 1RAR. It deployed to Somalia in January 1993. Its primary tasks were to maintain security within its area of operations around the town of Baibo, protect aid convoys and support the distribution of aid. HMAS Jervis Bay and Tobruk supported the deployment and Tobruk remained on station supporting the Australian contingent. Conditions improved with the protection of the strong force so that by May 1993, UNITAF was replaced by UNOSOM II which had a mandate to rebuild the state. The 1 RAR Group was withdrawn in mid-May but the Movement Control Unit remained supplemented by a group of air traffic controllers. This Australian contingent was finally withdrawn in November 1994 although some sources suggest that the final ADF detachment did not leave Somalia until 1996.



Two images from the Australian War Memorial showing the diverse nature of the Somalia operations, the protection and security roles of the 1 RAR Battalion Group and the movement control mission.

Around 1600 ADF personnel served in Somalia. One soldier was killed accidentally and three were wounded.

Submissions to the Tribunal will finish on 31 August.

Editor's Note

Any feedback on content and style is appreciated. Please take care and thanks for reading.
Phil