



## War Veterans Village [Narrabeen] RSL sub-Branch

Through an active membership we keep the ANZAC spirit alive and growing

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Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am – 12pm.

### WHERE IS YOUR SUB-BRANCH OFFICE?

YOU WILL NOW FIND US IN THE FRONT OFFICE  
LOWER GROUND FLOOR GALLIPOLI BUILDING

### Our May Meeting

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 is our normal meeting day but there is no meeting.

However, we have been invited to an interesting talk "What was in the Cigarette tin" from the War Museum.

10am in Lone Pine Lounge.  
Morning tea follows.

### VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Bob has left on his holiday cruise and the farewell lunch function sponsored by RSL LifeCare was well received and attended.

In Bob's absence I have been asked to fill the role of acting President pending Bob's return and permanent departure.

Discussions are under way that involve NSW RSL and RSL LifeCare and the steps that must be taken to ensure any changes to the form of this sub-Branch's membership structure comply with the current NSW RSL Constitution.

It may be necessary to call a special meeting of members of this sub-Branch at short notice in the near future to put before the members matters that will require decisions to be taken as what is to happen to the structure of our sub-Branch when the current decisions are finalised.

There will be no change to the usual business methods employed by the sub-Branch prior to Bob's final departure.

Roy Parkinson – Vice President

### Re-branding War Widows

Families of Veterans Guild: - Extending Support Beyond Widows.

Australian War Widows NSW has undergone a transition.

It is now known as "Families of Veterans Guild".

The re-branding aims to eliminate barriers for defence families of veterans.

Membership is open to all widows and widowers, Legacy, War, Defence and Contemporary, regardless of the country in which the family member served.

"Families United by Defence Service."

Shirley McLaren OAM

Address Label

READ YOUR EDITION AND ENJOY

### MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Total membership –	132
Life Member	2
Life Subscriber	2
Affiliate	61
Service	51
Associates	16

There is 1 Service Member Application pending

Joshua Dyer (aged 14) was tasked at school to write a poem for Remembrance Day. An hour later (without any help) he produced this.

### ONE THOUSAND MEN ARE WALKING

One thousand men are walking  
walking side by side  
Singing songs from home  
the spirit as their guide  
They walk toward the light milord,  
they walk towards the sun  
They smoke and laugh and smile together  
no foes to outrun.

These men live on forever  
in the hearts of those they saved  
A nation truly grateful  
for the path of peace, they paved.  
They march as friends and comrades  
but they do not march for war  
Step closer to salvation  
a tranquil steady corps  
The meadows lit with golden beams  
a beacon for the brave  
The emerald grass untrampled  
a reward for what they gave.  
They dream of those they left behind  
and know they dream of them  
Forever in those poppy fields  
there walks one thousand men

Joshua Dyer 2019 (aged 14)

Lest we forget

*Thank you, Shirley McLaren, for submitting this article.*

## June Meeting for 2024

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 9.30am in the Lone Pine Lounge.

A visit from RSL NSW (Head Office) and our Northern Beaches District President Bob Lunnon.

Morning tea follows the meeting.

### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Thank you to those members who took on the job of calling some colleagues who are not able or do not attend meetings and other sub-Branch activities. The feedback has been positive with very few seeking assistance acknowledging the receipt of Dispatches which keeps them up to date with what is happening within the sub-Branch.

The next three months are each quite different in terms of our meeting arrangements. May of course sees the War Museum putting on an interesting talk at 10am and we have agreed to forgo a formal meeting that day in order to work in with their initiative. June will see a visit from RSL NSW (call it Head Office!!) and our Northern Beaches District President Bob Lunnon on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> and then July will see us enjoying a delightful Christmas in July lunch in the Dardanelles Lounge. It will then be back to a "normal" general meeting on Thursday August 8<sup>th</sup> in the Lone Pine Lounge.

It is hoped we will have something to report in June/July concerning the anticipated tour of Garden Island Naval facility including the secure areas. We are also hoping to have some updated information on the search for our next President.

A comment was made by several members following our last meeting in April that it was impressive to see such a large contingent of members wearing the sub-Branch polo shirt. The three new members inducted that day purchased their shirts on the spot so our numbers are continually growing who are able to proudly wear our sub-Branch shirt.

Thank you to Bunnings for their support of our Village when they fronted on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April and carried out maintenance and regeneration activities on the area along the Remembrance Walk behind Maintenance. Their staff supported a BBQ operated by the Homes for Heroes fellows and purchased badges and pins in support of the sub-Branch ANZAC Day fundraising activity – thank you again Bunnings.

I will be away for most of May and look forward to catching up with members again at the June meeting.

John Sowden  
Secretary

Ramon Bercovic from Pittwater House, made his presentation at our May meeting of The Young Endeavour Voyage he made in December last year. These are some of his picture memories.



My first look at the boat



Sails set and sailing away



Enjoying the vast ocean from the bow spit



A beautiful morning readying the boat to leave the harbour



Aloft the 30m mast



Furling the large square rigged sails



Captain Libby and I bonding



Getting taught the basics of using the safety equipment before climbing the 33m mast

## PRESIDENT BOB DURBIN – THANK YOU

You will be aware by now that our President of the past 7 years is leaving following his retirement from RSL LifeCare as WAR VETS ANZAC VILLAGE Chaplain. What you may not know is why we, as a sub-Branch, have been so fortunate in having a leader with such experience, knowledge, and long-standing service membership of the Returned and Services League. Bob was presented with the Meritorious Service Medal, the highest honour bestowed on a Service member of the RSL, at the 2023 RSL NSW State Congress and AGM, by the Governor of NSW - Her Excellency the Honorable Margaret Beazley AC, KC.

The citation for this award included:

30 years continuous RSL membership.

25 years outstanding service to the League.

Enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy in 1970 and served for 20 years.

Joined the City of Blacktown RSL sub-Branch in 1990 – held positions of Pensions Officer, Secretary, Welfare Officer, Chaplain, President.

1996-2000 Operations Manager RSL NSW ANZAC House.

2000-2010 Secretary, Parramatta RSL sub-Branch.

RSL NSW State Councilor for 14 years.

RSL Corps of Guards Chaplain.

Delivered over 800 RSL Tributes at funerals (and still counting).

Chaplain to – The Guardians of the Korean War Memorial NSW; HMAS Sydney Association; Tingira Australian Association; Friends and Family of the First AIF Association.

Life Member awarded in 2006.

Australia Day Medallion 2008.

Chair of the RSL Youth Council.

We are thankful having had Bob's leadership since 2017 and wish Bob and his wife Lesley all the very best for his retirement.

Compiled by Secretary John Sowden 31/03/2024



## CONTRIBUTION TO ANZAC DAY BY BUNNINGS AT RSL ANZAC VILLAGE

Thank you to all the Bunnings volunteers for helping to maintain and improve the gardens near Remembrance Walk.

These wonderful people come from most of the Bunnings stores in northern Sydney.

There were area managers, store managers and all manner of willing helpers right across the management structure.

The Bunnings sponsored BBQ on 16 April at the gazebo near Remembrance Walk was a huge success.

Lamb and spicy chicken sausages were in plentiful supply as were soft drinks to quench the thirst.

It was the largest gathering of residents, RSL Life Care staff and Bunnings staff ever.

This was a new experience to several residents and it was an 'eye opener' of what goes on behind the scenes at ANZAC Village.

Special thanks to Helene Adams, Activities Organiser, Bunnings Group Ltd for organising such a wonderful occasion.

*Reported by Leigh Haines, Pictures by Bev Ash*



A great sausage and onion sizzle



Bunnings Team 1



Bunnings Team 2

## LETTERS FROM THE FRONT WORLD WAR ONE - continued

### PART 3. Letter dated November 1917

On the wagon lines one soon makes acquaintance with the vermin – it is impossible to be free of them. From the day I hit the battery till the day I left, not once had I the opportunity of taking off my clothing. I slept in them (it was too cold otherwise) on a waterproof groundsheet with 3/4 empty sandbags, no blanket, but used my overcoat as such. The dugouts we built – 6 inches of earth removed then sandbags about 3 feet high with pieces of waterproof for a roof, would hold as many as 10 of us. There was no protection from shells but served to keep out any flying bomb splinters. If a bomb got a direct hit, it was all up. While I was at the horse-lines it was moonlight making it extremely hard for the searchlights to pick up enemy planes. Old Fritz used to come over every night in relays of three or four at a time, as soon as one batch of taubes had dropped all their bombs, a fresh mob would arrive and so it would keep on all night. In the daytime of course this could not be done by the Fritz with impunity as our own anti-aircraft guns and planes would be sure to bring some down.

Sleeping was difficult until you got used to it and if a bomb was going to get the dugout, it would have us irrespective of whether we were asleep or awake. One night a bomb dropped on the horse-line adjoining ours, made a hole you could put a horse and cart in, killed 60 horses, killed one of the boys and wounded four. The first time I came under shell fire, I remember it was Sunday afternoon, the wagon teams were to go to the gun pits each with a load of shells with one gunner on each wagon. I was ONE of the gunners. The wagon itself is in two parts drawn by six horses with three drivers who sit on the nearside horses, driving one and riding the other. The trip from our wagon lines to the guns was six miles, all along the road was one continual line of traffic – bodies of infantry, cavalry and artillery wending their way 'line wards' like some gigantic procession. Weary infantry coming out from the line for a spell, fresh one is going in etc. tramping battalions, jangling batteries, and clattering squadrons across the cobblestone road. It was impossible not to be stirred for I felt that I, even I, was a part of all THIS. We loaded up fifty shells on each wagon then off again. Instead of going through Ypres, we took a corduroy road – that is to say, long sleepers laid across the mud and shell-holes which I could tell by their appearance had only been made within the last hour or two as they had not yet filled with water. We passed 'Shrapnel Corner' and 100 yards ahead comes the sound of escaping steam, then crash! and a shell exploded 100 yards to the right of the road – mud, steel, boards, whirl upwards and outwards 100 feet or more. I watch the drivers who incline their helmets towards the explosion. I followed suit and found a sinking feeling at the pit of the stomach and a violent desire to be elsewhere. Quickly followed other shells – one to the left, another

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to the right, one a yard off the road ahead, one behind. Thick and fast but still we were unscathed, to my imagination it seemed to be raining shells. It seemed as if Fritz had found out 'I'D ARRIVED AND WAS DETERMINED TO FIX ME. At the first shell the drivers brought their whips down, and now our maddened team was going through the barrage at full gallop. I soon got over my fright, and I doubt if you will believe me when I say my first fright changed to a tingling excitement. It was so like the pictures in the papers, here was the very thing in reality and here was I in it. Imagine the thundering hooves, the jangling harness, the r-r-r-r-r-ripp of the many shells in front, in rear and on the sides. Can you imagine the straining horses, wild with excitement, the drivers urging them, forcing them, thrashing them, and spurring them yet faster along. Can you imagine ME as I sat upon the lurching bumping limber clinging desperately to strap and guard iron. Can there be conceived anything more stirring, more intoxicating than this? I felt that I had LIVED for this – but would more probably die for it.

We did come safely through. Then off the corduroy road, on the main and famous Menin Road at a point called 'Hell Fire Corner' on account of the heavy barrages Fritz puts here, then another mile down the road brings us in line with our gun pits. The gunners who are awaiting us in dugouts close by, rush out, and help us unload our fifty shells. We pitch them off like greased lightning, turn round and away back 'home'. This time we keep to the main road through the ruins of the city of Ypres – now a city of the dead – not a house or building standing. The streets have been cleared and the cobbled streets are alive with military traffic both night and day. Three days later, I together with other gunners were sent up to relieve the gun crews when I had my first experience of firing a shell at Fritz.

TO BE CONTINUED – *still a November 1917 letter.*

*Compiled by John Sowden.*

### OUR EFTPOS "SQUARE TERMINALS"

The rapid introduction of electronic transactions worldwide led to your committee deciding to offer this service to our members.

Our first EFTPOS (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) terminal was introduced in March 2022. A second terminal was purchased in March 2023. Since the introduction of the facility over \$13,000 worth of transactions have been processed. The convenience for members has far outweighed the cost of the terminals of \$349 each and the transaction fees to date of \$213.

The village-wide access to Wi-Fi means that terminals can be used anywhere in the village. When using the terminals outside the village other connection methods are available.

All signs indicate that the use of cash and/or cheques is diminishing rapidly and the terminals will serve us well into the future.

*Peter Cole - Treasurer*