



*The Price of Liberty
is Eternal Vigilance*



December 2025

Newsletter

Dear Members,

Thank you for your kind wishes and warm messages throughout this festive season. While your acknowledgements are deeply appreciated, I want you to know that every member of the Board serves because we genuinely enjoy it. For me personally, the mantra "To Serve" guided my decision to join the military, and it remains my compass in all volunteer endeavours.

I want to especially acknowledge those members who consistently answer my call for assistance. Whether for remembrance services, fundraising events, hospital visits, welfare checks, or community support.

As the years progress, I've noticed that while the spirit of service remains strong among our senior members, the physical demands can sometimes prove challenging. We are one of the few Sub Branches that enjoy younger membership. If you've previously hesitated to volunteer, I warmly encourage you to reconsider.

Our Sub Branch activities offer more than just community service, they provide genuine camaraderie, enjoyment and connection. Whether you can contribute a few hours or simply join us in fellowship, your involvement continues to enrich our RSL community and makes a big difference in veterans and their family's lives.

Stay well and all the best for 2026.

Tim Robb, Secretary

President's Report

As another year draws to a close, I am pleased to report that our membership has continued to grow; a testament to the strength and vitality of Toowong Sub Branch.

Throughout 2025, we have deepened our commitment to the three pillars that define us: care, commemoration and camaraderie. This edition of the DON R showcases many of our significant achievements from the latter half of the year.

Please continue to promote as you are able the Sub Branch as a place where people can support and be supported by members. In particular the pillar of comradeship and indeed simply fellowship and sharing life experiences.

At our End of Year dinner, Brigadier Peter Jeffery AM CSC RFD reminded us that "the only constant in life is change." Like a river that has great fishing, ever-flowing and never the same twice, our Sub Branch continues to evolve and adapt. Rather than resist change, we embrace it as a pathway to growth and resilience.

I am particularly proud of how Toowong RSL has responded to this reality through our enhanced service and support model, diversified revenue streams, and expanded commemoration initiatives. Again, I would like to sincerely thank the work of our Board and the volunteers that make Toowong RSL what it is today.

Looking ahead to January, I will be presenting to the Queensland University Regiment (QUR) about the RSL's vital role in supporting service members and the benefits of membership early in their careers. This will be an excellent opportunity to strengthen our already valued relationship with QUR, while exploring new ways for their members to engage with our Sub Branch.

We continue to enjoy a strong relationship with the Queensland University Regiment Association and I sincerely thank them for their support especially during fundraising and commemoration activities. I warmly encourage our members to attend this presentation and meet members of the Regiment.

As we move into 2026, we will continue to expand our social activities and deepen connections within our veteran community. I encourage each of you to become more actively involved in your Sub Branch. Whether through events, committees, fundraising, hospital visits or simply by connecting with fellow members, there is something for everyone.

Our future is bright, and I look forward to continuing this important work together in the year ahead.

Our relationship with both the Regatta and Wests Bulldogs Rugby continues to evolve and strengthen. I look forward to the future and in particular to any opportunities that come from the 2032 Olympics.

I also take this opportunity to wish all our members and their families a happy and prosperous New Year.



Ross Williamson RFD, President

Remembrance Day Service

The Sub Branch conducted its annual service at the Cenotaph with an estimated 150 people in attendance in the usual pleasant but warm weather for this time of the year. A big shout-out to Steve Thornton for his work in again facilitating the arrangements for the Service.

Many thanks to Queensland University Regiment for supporting us and providing the catafalque party as well as the work party which delivered 100 chairs to go under the marquees we had set up.

President Ross Williamson led the service and we trialled a new layout and stage which worked very well.

Lieutenant Colonel Ben Dullroy, Commanding Officer of Queensland University Regiment delivered the main address with Chaplain John Saunders leading the prayers.

Board member Lily Zhu recited a poem 'Bury Me with Soldiers' (by Charles R. Fink) and also took on her usual photography duties.

We were pleased to have the services of bugler Brian Clarke again for the service who does a great job.

A light lunch and drinks was served back at the Wests Rugby Club for members and guests.

Remembrance Day Fundraising

A big thank you to all the members who helped raise money at the fundraising events at The Regatta Hotel and Toowong Village. This year the fundraising was up 19% on last year with \$5011 raised.

Thanks once again for Vince Atley's work in sourcing all the memorabilia for sale. To assist Vince, a fundraising committee is being organised in 2026 to help select, display and sell the wide variety of goods.

Thanks also goes to the following members. Apologies for any names missed.

Vince Atley	Ross Williamson
Tim Robb	Sharon Williamson
Garry Collins	Denis Luttrell
Wayne Fowler	Bruce Davis
Brian Venz	Phil Weller
Steve Thornton	Barry Weller
John Hamilton	Robert O'Brien
Bill Beach	Tez Anderson
Laurie Smith	Chris Mallcott
Dawn McKernan	James Mackay
Bob McKernan	Mike Muirhead
Jim Kidd	George Hulse



Phil Weller, Bob & Dawn McKernan



Treasurer Vince Atley

New RSL Badge

On 16th October, the RSL approved a change to the RSL Badge to incorporate the Tudor Crown adopted by the League's Patron, King Charles III. The updating of the Badge was endorsed by the RSL's National Board.

The new badge replaces the St Edward's Crown that marked the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and also features changes to the floral emblems.

The Australian wattle remains, and a sprig of rosemary and a poppy, the two principal Australian symbols of remembrance of service and sacrifice. These replace the previous depictions of leek, rose, thistle and shamrock, representing our connection to the Crown and British Isles countries of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

Our new RSL National President, Peter Tinley said "The RSL Badge has undergone a number of changes over its 109-year history particularly to mark the link to its Royal patronage, with the last Badge change in 1990."



RSL
Toowong Sub Branch

Old Logo



RSL
Toowong Sub Branch

New Logo

Sub-Branch Event – Victoria Cross Presentation Evening at West Toowong Bowls Club

In August we put on a presentation night dedicated to the Victoria Cross at the West Toowong Bowls Club. The common theme was the following members connections with the Victoria Cross recipients:

We welcomed John Howse talking about his relative Major General Sir Neville Howse VC KCB KCMG FRCS.

Bruce Woodhouse gave an interesting account of the life of his relative Major Charles Heaphy VC.

George Hulse OAM discussed Australia's most recent VC recipient Private Richard Norden including his role in advocating for him to be posthumously awarded the VC for his actions in Vietnam.

We put on some hot finger food and the bar was open. The evening was deemed a success with around 25 attending.



John Howse talking about relative VC recipient MAJGEN Sir Neville Howse



Bruce Woodhouse discussing relative VC recipient Major Charles Heaphy



George Hulse OAM giving in an indepth account of Private Richard Norden VC actions in Vietnam



Chief taste tester Secretary Tim Robb

Remembrance Army

On 20th September, the Sub Branch again assisted the Australia Remembrance Army to complete the final phase of the plaques for WW1 veterans at Lutwyche Cemetery.

Congratulations to Toowong RSL members, Katrina Trevethan and Catherine Walker on a very successful and important event. Katrina and Cate will be unveiling another 83 plaques on the unmarked graves of Australian WWI veterans in Lutwyche Cemetery in May 2026.

The May ceremony is likely to be last unveiling at Lutwyche Cemetery. Katrina and Cate are currently working on a grant application for unmarked WWI graves in Toowong Cemetery, and we will find out the result of that next year.

General information about the 162 Australian WWI returned service personnel whose graves are now marked with a plaque:

- 24 served our nation at Gallipoli
- 4 awarded the Military Medal
- 1 awarded the Meritorious Service Medal
- 2 were Mentioned in Dispatches



Vince Atley & Mike Muirhead

Vietnam Veterans' Day

Toowong RSL President Ross Williamson laid a wreath at the Cenotaph on 18th August to commemorate Vietnam Veterans' Day. Ross spoke of honouring the 60,000+ Australians who served, marking the Battle of Long Tan anniversary, and recognising veterans' ongoing community contributions.



Ross Williamson laying a wreath

Wests Bulldogs Sponsorship

Toowong RSL has committed to another season of sponsoring Wests Bulldogs Rugby club and the new Toowong RSL logo (with Tudor crown) will be on display on the front of the jersey.

We thank Wests Bulldogs for all their ongoing support especially during the commemorative events at Toowong Cenotaph.

Please come and join West Bulldogs on game day and enjoy the terrific family friendly atmosphere.



VP Day Anniversary

In August, we honoured the 80th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific and the nearly one million Australians who served in World War II, including more than 39,000 who never returned.

Our very own "Top Gun" and Toowong Board Member, John Hamilton gave his Reflections of Service and spoke about the war in the Pacific during the Remembrance Service. As requested, a copy of his speech is attached at the back of this newsletter.



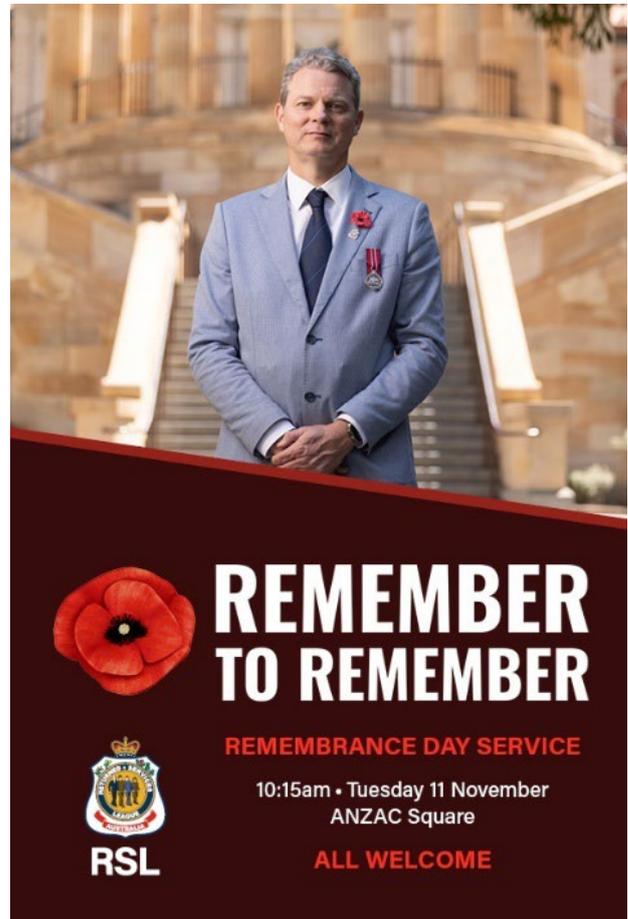
Hollywood Calling

Members will remember former Secretary, Mike Muirhead, being the poster boy of the Sub Branch, appearing in a number of RSL Queensland photo shoots.

With Mike enjoying his retirement from the Board, there's a new kid on the block.

Following the success of the TV and billboard ANZAC Day campaign that Toowong RSL assisted RSL Queensland with, our very own James 'Hollywood' Mackay also featured in the Remembrance Day campaign. This saw James feature in a nationally televised TV campaign as well as social media and the Queensland RSL News front page.

Watch out Brad Pitt, Hollywood has been calling Toowong Sub Branch for James' number!



James 'Hollywood' Mackay



End of Year Dinner

The annual End of Year dinner was again held at the Regatta Hotel. Numbers were slightly down on previous years with some of the usual attendees overseas or with health issues but 44 members and the guests enjoyed a night of camaraderie.

President, Ross Williamson presented a wrap-up of the Toowong RSL's 2025 activities and highlights (see attached). Although one of the biggest highlights were Vince Atley's pink socks!

Thanks goes to Brigadier Peter Jeffery AM CSC RFD who gave a captivating presentation on his reflection of Service and some of the challenges now facing the ADF.

Congratulations to Katrina Trevethan who won the Door prize of two tickets to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

More photos at the end of the newsletter.



Ross Williamson, Vince Atley & Lily Zhu



Ross Williamson, Josh Groenland, Jasmine Desland & Lily Zhu

Toowong RSL Carparks

As part of our sponsorship and ongoing relationship with Wests Bulldogs Rugby Club, we have two carparks dedicated to the exclusive use by our members just near the stairs.



One of the new parking spots

Coffee Catchups

We conduct these all on a monthly Sunday morning basis at Chatterbox, Level 1 of Toowong Village. These will continue in 2026.

Please come and enjoy a free coffee and get to know some of your fellow Toowong members.



Vince Atley, Sharon Williamson & Janelle Jaraminas

12 Army Cadet Unit

Monday 1 December marked 12 ACU's final parade night for 2025. Although the Unit was disappointed to cancel its official March Out Parade at Fort Lytton the previous Saturday due to severe weather,

the cadets showed great resilience by hosting a modified version at their home base, HMAS Moreton.

The evening was proudly supported by members of the retired Military Band Pipes and Drums, and attended by around 40 cadets and staff. Five annual awards were presented, with Toowong RSL President, Ross Williamson presenting the *Esprit de Corps* Award to CDTCPL Ethan Perryn. Ross also presented a book to LT(AAC) William Carroll (see below) in recognition for his many hours of dedication as a volunteer to the army cadet unit, beyond the call of duty.

CAPT (AAC) Graham Heslin, along with all staff and cadets, remains deeply appreciative of the ongoing support from Toowong RSL—both financially and through our members' attendance at cadet events.

In addition to continually using the the RSL marquee supplied earlier this year, which provides essential shade and shelter at 12 ACU bivouacs, thanks to Toowong RSL's fundraising efforts in 2025, 12ACU have:

- Supported three families with their 12ACU annual fees
- Purchased a new portable fridge for field activities, replacing a failing unit
- Acquired new military compasses for training

The money we raise during our fundraising activities makes a tangible difference to our cadets and their training experiences. Thank you for everyone's continued support.



Ross Williamson attending 12 ACU

Wests Rugby Jersey Auction

This year Wests Bulldogs Rugby Club auctioned off their RSL jersey following their Premier Men's Alliance Airlines Anzac Day Clash against Souths Rugby.



Vince Atley, Treasurer showing off the jersey

Hospital & Home Visits

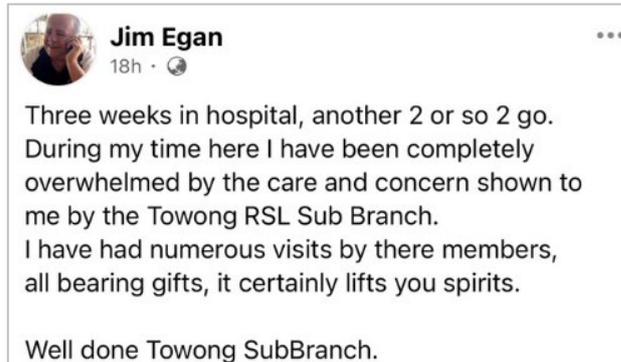
Welfare remains a pillar of our work.

Thank you again for all the members who have volunteered to visit veterans who have been sent to Brisbane CBD hospitals at short notice because of medical emergencies. The Southeastern District Headquarters and our Sub Branch thank all those who have dedicated some time to having a chat with these veterans and offering support in their early days in hospital before family and friends can catch -up with them in Brisbane.

Below you can see a post from one of the veterans we visited, Jim Egan, and it highlights how impactful this short amount of time with the veteran are.

Our own immediate past President Peter Gow has been in hospital on a few occasions recently and we thank those members including Ross and Sharon Williamson, Dave Donaldson and Vince Atley who have gone to see Peter who greatly appreciates it.

Thanks goes to Kevin Trimble, Dawn and Bob McKernan, Janelle and Bernie Voysey, Vince Atley, Laurie Smith, Ross and Sharon Williamson, Dave Donaldson and Tim Robb for the hospital visits they conducted in the second half of this year.



Tim Robb with Jim Egan



Tim Robb with Leon Avery (Vietnam Vet and member of Mount Morgan Sub Branch)



Steve Thornton and 'Captain' Jack delivering an RSL Xmas hamper to Maureen Souter

Remember - if you are doing it tough and require assistance, or just need a friendly ear, please get in contact with us as we are not always aware of members' situations.

Membership

Toowong RSL welcomed a number of new members and we are one of the few Sub Branches that continues to grow year on year. At the End of Year dinner, Ross welcomed the following members to the Sub Branch:



- John Trevethan
- Will Taunton-Burnet
- Paul McDonald
- Merv Cobcroft
- Graeme Shiels
- Samantha Verry



Katrina & John Trevethan with Ross Williamson at the End of Year dinner.

We currently have one Life Member, 113 Service members and 26 non-Service (social) members being a total of 150 members. This is up from 137 last year.

We also welcomed Merriel Hume into our Sub Branch as one of our more recent members and some of our members would know that Merriel is immortalised by the Australian War Memorial photos of her entertaining the troops at Nui Dat, South Vietnam in August 1968.

Merriel Hume began her musical career on the Brisbane jazz scene, in 1966 competing in Channel 9's Bandstand against Helen Reddy, who famously won a ticket to New York City and a record audition. As the runner-up Merriel sang in top venues such as Cloudland and of course in Vietnam (see following photos). We will have more about Merriel in our next edition.



Thanks to Bob McKernan

Unfortunately, Bob McKernan has had to step down from the Toowong RSL Board due to current ill health.

Ross Williamson thanks Bob for all his efforts while on the board and the continued assistance both he and Dawn provide for fundraising and hospital visits.

In the photo, Bob is receiving an RSL Hamper on behalf of RSL Queensland for his efforts this year.



Ross Williamson with Bob McKernan

The Toowong Sub Branch Board usually meets the third Monday each month, commencing at 4pm. Members are most welcome to join the meeting and give their views on upcoming initiatives.



The board working hard behind the scenes to plan Sub Branch activities and events

Toowong RSL Art Union Raffle

As announced at the AGM, Toowong RSL will trial an annual fundraising raffle to help cover the costs of running the ANZAC & Remembrance Day services.

Tickets are \$50 and 200 tickets are expected to be sold

Tickets can be purchased from Toowong Board Members, at our fundraising stands or online (and the tickets will be sent to you - <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/1334843897029?aff=oddtcreator>)

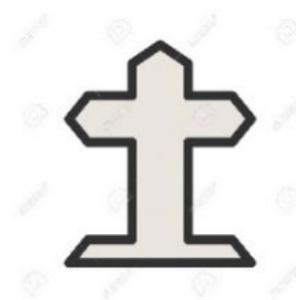
Total Prize pool \$3 300 (prizes are not redeemable for cash)

- ❖ 1st Prize – Moreton Bay Sailing Experience for 6 (valued at \$1200)
- ❖ 2nd Prize- Cookware Set – Re-Lite 5 piece Durapan (Valued at \$699)
- ❖ 3rd Prize – Luxury Perfume Masterclass – Libertine Parfumerie for 8 people (valued at \$690)
- ❖ 4th Prize – Susie O’Neil Autographed Swim Cap from Sydney Olympics (valued at \$200)
- ❖ 5th Prize – Regatta Hotel Meal Voucher (valued at \$200)
- ❖ 6th Prize – Oral-B 2500X Electric Toothbrush (valued at \$149)
- ❖ 7th Prize – Dash Cam – 108-P Wide Angle (valued at \$89)
- ❖ 8th Prize – PowerWave Charging Pad for Smart Phone (valued at \$75)

Toowong RSL Board members are excluded from the raffle but members of their family and friends can purchase tickets.

Last Post

A reminder that the Sub Branch will conduct a poppy service for any person who has served in the Australian Defence Force.



They do not have to have been a member of the RSL. They are free of charge.

An RSL representative will:

- deliver a eulogy, detailing the veteran’s service
- recite *The Ode*
- sound *The Last Post* and *Rouse*
- provide poppies for mourners to place on the coffin in recognition of service.

Unfortunately, we are often advised of the passing of a member by family sometime after the funeral so please make your family aware of the poppy service if it is something you would like to be part of your service.

RSL Queensland Advocates

RSL Queensland employs about 90 paid and some unpaid advocates to support veterans in Queensland and the Northern Territory. The number of paid advocates is increasing as the accreditation requirements increases.

They operate a triage system to support the more urgent cases first. Currently there is a wait of between 30-90 days to get an interview with an advocate. Outside of that, urgent support for homelessness or financial support, etc. is available.

Open Arms provides mental health support for Navy, Army and Air Force personnel, veterans & their families.

They have a 24hr crisis support line as well as free and confidential counselling to partners and children of those who have served. You can call 24/7 on 1800 011 046. More information at www.openarms.gov.au.

Mates 4 Mates supports their members with psychological, physical, and social barriers services and have recently been incorporated into the RSL.

To find out more about joining Mates4Mates, accessing services or supporting our cause, fill out the form or call 1300 4 MATES (62 837) during business hours. More information at www.mates4mates.org.

If you feel the need for an advocate to make an initial contact for advocacy support, contact RSL Queensland in 134 775 and choose option 2 to go through to a staff member. They will interview you and get your details. You will then receive an email to read and agree to the Client Services Agreement.

Once you accept this you will receive a second email to complete your:

- Profile Information,
- Living Conditions, and
- Personal Wellbeing Index

Based on your answers you will get another email with useful links such as Open Arms, Mates for Mates, etc.

We encourage all members who may have current or future needs to consider an early approach as the DVA assessment process can be drawn out. Your Regimental Number and/or PMKeys number will be required so have it handy.

Even better your DVA White Card is useful as this has your DVA reference number even if you have only the basic services on it.

Welfare Assistance

Occasionally we are contacted by other sub-branches and ex-service men and women to assist with advocacy regarding the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and other agencies. In these cases, we can direct them to the appropriate contact within the RSL.



RSL South Eastern District offers free services for veterans & families:

- Wellbeing support, visits & bereavement assistance
- Medical & allied health referrals
- PTSD & mental health support
- Advocacy & research for compensation & welfare
- Career transition assistance

Located at Greenslopes Private Hospital
Tuesday–Thursday | 10am–2pm or by appointment.

Email: wellbeing@rslsouthqueensland.org
Ph. (07) 3394 7235 www.rslsouthqueensland

There are also professional services like Australian Veteran Health Services which is run by Dr Andrew Cronin. 1300 766 206. Services offered included DVA Claims, ADF Transition Medicals & Permanent Impairment Assessments.

DVA Telephone Number

DVA's telephone number is 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) for veterans and their families.

2025-26 Sub Branch Board

- Ross Williamson RFD – President
- Peter Gow – Deputy President
- Chris Mallcott – Vice President
- Tim Robb – Secretary
- Vince Atley – Treasurer
- James Mackay
- John Hamilton
- Dr. Stephen Thornton
- Dr. Lily Zhu

Contact Us

Office: 7/65 Sylvan Road Toowong

Postal: PO Box 1564 Toowong DC 4066

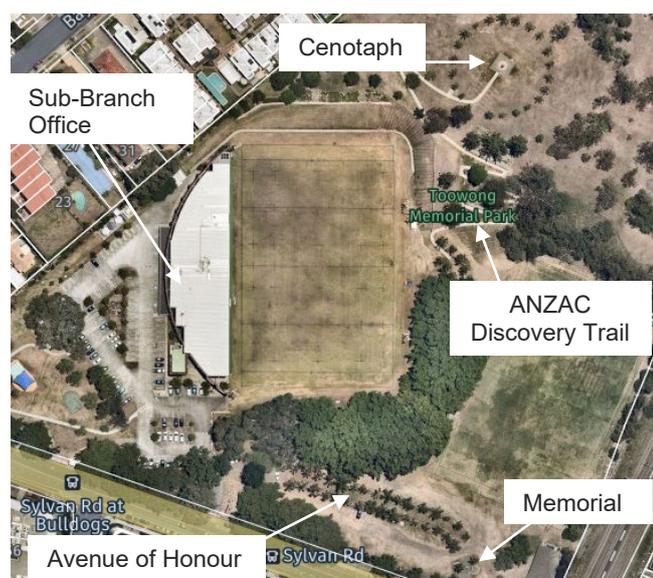
Phone: 0455 655 766

Email secretary@toowong.rslqld.net.au

Website: www.rsltoowong.org

The office is in the Western Districts Rugby Football Club (Wests Bulldogs) building.

Please note the office is only open at certain times so contact us to make a time to meet.



Toowong Memorial Park

Member Article

Standing in Their Footsteps: Reflections from Supporting the Gallipoli 2025 Anzac Day Services

Squadron Leader Kerri-Lee Beck

Early this year, I was selected as part of the inaugural group of veterans and family members to support the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) in delivering the 2025 Anzac Day commemorations at Gallipoli. This was the first year DVA invited members of the veteran community to contribute directly to these services — a significant and humbling opportunity to represent those who have served, those who continue to serve, and the families who stand behind them.

My own connection to Defence is longstanding. I am a fifth-generation Australian military member, part of a family whose service stretches back 110 years. Service has shaped the rhythm of our lives — deployments, postings, relocations, pride, sacrifice, and a quiet understanding of what it means to belong to something larger than oneself. That heritage provided a meaningful foundation for the journey ahead, but what became evident, almost immediately, was that Gallipoli has a way of creating connection far beyond individual backgrounds. It is a place that speaks to anyone willing to listen.

Arriving at Gallipoli: My first moments at Anzac Cove

No photograph captures the feeling of standing at Anzac Cove for the first time. The terrain rises sharply and unexpectedly, the ground uneven underfoot, the shoreline calm in a way that feels almost symbolic. The land is striking not only for its beauty, but for the weight it carries. For me, the stories I heard growing up — stories handed down through generations — seemed to draw closer, no longer distant lessons from the past but something woven directly into the present moment.

It was a quiet but powerful reminder that legacy isn't only inherited through families. It also emerges from the shared experiences of those who visit, remember, and reflect — Australians of all backgrounds, connected by a place that shaped our national identity.

A moment of connection on the ridgeline

In the days leading up to the service, I walked through the smaller cemeteries that sit on the ridgelines. These spaces are peaceful in a way that feels almost intentional, as though the landscape itself understands the significance of those who rest there. Among the headstones, one belonging to Private J.E. Barclay, aged just 22, stood out. His epitaph read:

"I've no darling now.

I'm weeping.

Baby & I you left alone."



The rawness and simplicity of those words were profoundly moving. They captured the human cost of the campaign — not in strategic terms or historical summaries, but in the quiet truth of a family changed forever. In that moment, time felt less linear. The grief expressed in 1915 resonated in 2025, reminding me that remembrance is not just about those who served, but also about those who carried the burden after them.

For me, it reinforced the responsibility of being there. Not simply as an individual with a family history of service, but as someone entrusted to honour stories that continue to matter.

Before dawn on Anzac Day: A sense of responsibility

On the evening prior to Anzac Day, long before dawn, our ceremonial team made our way to the site. The walk down to the Cove in the dark was one of the most memorable parts of the experience. The air was still. The water barely moved. The only sounds were quiet preparations and the soft shuffle of steps across gravel. There was a palpable sense of reverence — as though the land itself recognised what the day represented.

In addition to supporting the DVA Ceremonial Team, I was asked to deliver a reading during the service - on behalf of all Australian veterans. When the moment came, standing before thousands of attendees in the early hours of the morning, I read the words of Lieutenant Hector McLarty. His reflections from the morning of 25 April 1915 — the beauty, the uncertainty, the sudden violence — felt especially poignant when spoken at the very place where he once stood. It was a moment that bridged past and present with clarity: a reminder that remembrance is not passive, but something we actively uphold.

Behind the ceremony: Quiet work with quiet meaning

While the Dawn Service appears seamless to those who attend or watch from home, much of the work takes place out of sight. Before sunrise, we checked run sheets under torchlight, prepared wreaths, supported dignitaries, and adapted to shifting conditions in real time. These details may

seem small, but each one contributes to the tone, dignity, and flow of the commemorations.

What struck me most was the shared sense of purpose among the DVA team. Every person there — whether staff, volunteer, or official — understood the responsibility of the role. The work carried a sense of quiet honour, each action a gesture of respect for those who served and for the families who remember them still.

Carrying the experience forward

Returning home, I found myself reflecting not just on the experience itself, but on what it represented. Supporting the commemorations at Gallipoli offered a deeper understanding of remembrance — not as a routine observance, but as an ongoing responsibility. My family's long history of service gave the experience a personal dimension, but what struck me most was how universally Gallipoli resonated with others. People with no direct military connection felt the same sense of stillness, the same recognition of sacrifice, the same appreciation for the stories that shaped our nation.

Legacy.

Connection.

Responsibility.

These themes guided my time in Türkiye, and they continue to shape the way I think about service today. Being selected to support the inaugural veteran and family cohort in 2025 was both an honour and a privilege — one that deepened my understanding of the past and strengthened my commitment to carrying their stories forward with a profound sense of responsibility.



SQNLDR Kerri-Lee Beck

Remembrance Day 2025



QUR Catafalque Party mounting the Cenotaph





President Ross Williamson



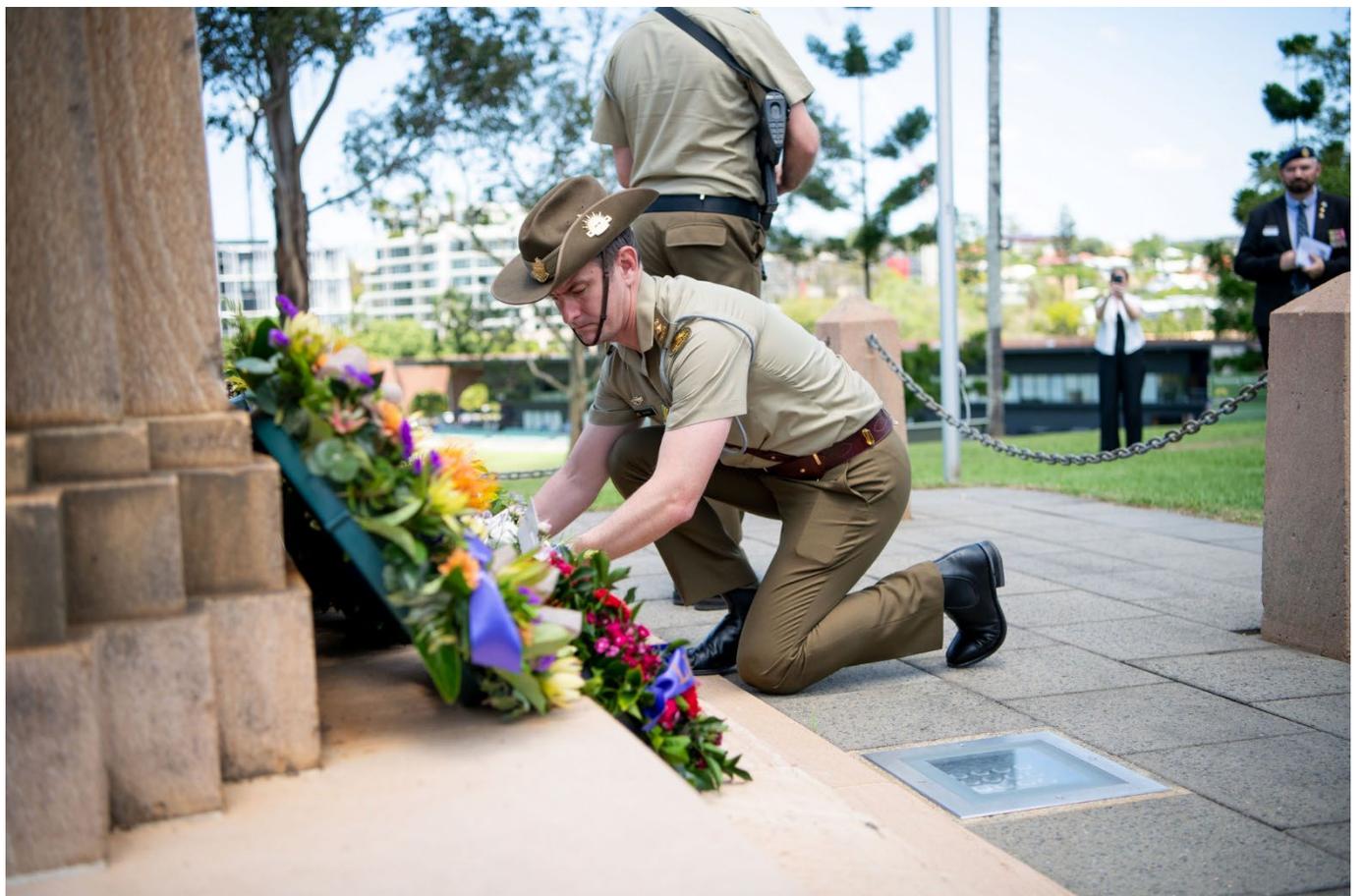
Chaplain John Saunders



LTCOL Ben Dullroy



WO1 Matt Ryan, LTCOL Ben Dullroy & Chaplain John Saunders



LTCOL Ben Dullroy



John Clifford, Wests Bulldogs



Bugler Brian Clarke

Remembrance Day – Reflections of Service

John Hamilton AFC LCDR RAN Retd.

This year marks the 80th Anniversary of the End of World War 2 and, in particular, the end of the war in the Pacific. Clearly the use of aircraft carriers and their aircraft marked the end of the reign of battleships. However, within 6 years hostilities had again broken out, this time on the Korean peninsula. In 1951 Australia and the newly commissioned aircraft carrier, HMAS Sydney with her Carrier Air Group (Hawker Sea Fury fighters and Fairey Firefly reconnaissance/strike aircraft) was dispatched, upon request from the 1st Sea Lord, to Korea to maintain a Commonwealth carrier presence.

HMAS Sydney became the first aircraft carrier owned by a Commonwealth Dominion to see wartime service. Due to the straight deck configuration of HMAS Sydney, the terrible weather conditions and a determined foe, a total of 13 Sea Fury and Firefly aircraft together with three pilots were lost, whilst completing over 2300 sorties. The end of HMAS Sydney's involvement in Korea in 1952 saw the emerging force of carrier operations for the RAN and with the arrival of the new carrier, HMAS Melbourne in 1956, together with a complement of De Havilland Sea Venom jets and Fairy Gannet anti-submarine aircraft, a new era began. By 1966 it was decided to upgrade to Douglas Skyhawk fighter/ground attack aircraft and Grumman Tracker anti-submarine aircraft, which necessitated considerable modifications to HMAS Melbourne.

By 1968, the Melbourne was fully operational and ready for deployment. I joined the RAN at the height of the Vietnam War with a view to becoming a Naval Aviator and was fortunate in that a number of Korean veteran aviators were still able to share their ethos and professionalism amongst us new arrivals during our training. Although no fixed wing aircraft were involved in Vietnam hostilities, they were available as a strategic reserve. The Fleet Air Arm (FAA) contribution to the Vietnam War consisted of four Detachments of Iroquois helicopter pilots and support staff on a 12 month rotation, working with the US Army and the RAAF. Unfortunately, five FAA pilots were lost during hostile operations.

HMAS Melbourne with her Carrier Air Group operated throughout SE Asia and the Pacific, taking part in many allied exercises during the 60s, 70s and early 80s. My service in the FAA as a fighter pilot was a most rewarding experience. Training for wartime operations requires operating to the limits of both man and machine and carrier operations were dangerous, especially at night and due to the small deck size of HMAS Melbourne. The loss of many lives from ship collisions at night, HMAS Voyager and USS Frank E Evans attests to risks inherent in close night manoeuvres. Fleet Air Arm fixed wing operations ceased in June 1984, with the retirement of HMAS Melbourne after 16 years of successful support for Navy, Army and Airforce.

It was my melancholy duty as Commanding Officer of VC724 to facilitate the Squadron's decommissioning. Of the 63 aviators qualified to operate Skyhawks only two were lost in aircraft accidents, both during low-level high-speed manoeuvres. To a very small community as we were, this was a terrible blow. But, like all arms of the Defence Force such cruel outcomes must be overcome - the defence of Australia is still the *raison d'etre*. The loss of one's life should not be

necessary to be thanked and honoured for their service. On this special day we should honour those Australians who continue to provide their services for our defence.

Thank You.

John Hamilton joined the Navy In February 1967 and during his time at HMAS Cerberus, John took part in the aerial search for the then Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt who had disappeared while swimming off Portsea. As a Midshipman, he undertook No. 65 RAAF Pilot's Course, learning to fly in Australian designed and manufactured CA-25 Winjeels and then onto DH-115 Vampire jets. After time in DH-112 Sea Venoms, in which he flew in support of Ikara, Delmar and banner towing trials, he began conversion training to fly A4G Skyhawk fighter-bombers. Continuation training in A4s led to a posting to VF805 Squadron and embarking in the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne. This led to training as a Forward Air Controller on Winjeels and then becoming Qualified Flying Instructor on MB-326H Macchi aircraft and as the Senior Naval Officer at RAAF Base Pearce. John was then posted to the United States for exchange duties with the US Navy's VA125 Squadron at NAS Lemoore CA, flying A7 Corsair II aircraft and this in turn led to John then attending the USN 'Top Gun' Fighter Weapons School, at NAS Miramar. After a number of postings John assumed Command of VC724 Skyhawk Squadron. Unfortunately, in June 1984, the Australian Government decided to not replace the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne and to discontinue fixed wing operations. This saw John being the last Commanding Officer of VC724 Squadron and had the tough duty of decommissioning the Squadron. For "Dedication and performance of flying duties" John was awarded the Air Force Cross in 1979. John resigned his Commission in December 1985.



John Hamilton at the Remembrance Day service

End of Year Dinner at Regatta Hotel



Mike & Donna Muirhead



Maureen Souter



Barry Weller & Phillip Weller



Thorn between two roses – Sharon Williamson, Vince Atley & Janelle Jaraminas



Marion Trimble, Kevin "Tricky" Trimble, Paul McDonald and Jocelyn McDonald



Jasmine Desland, Josh Groenland, Bruce Woodhouse & Tim Robb



Mark Plath, Leigh Chamberlain & Tim Robb



President Ross Williamson (see speech notes at end of newsletter)



Guest Speaker, Brigadier Peter Jeffery AM CSC RFD





One of the entrees (gin cured salmon)



Mains were chicken and beef



One of the desserts (cheesecake)

President's Toowong RSL 2025 Highlights (from End of Year Dinner)

Thanks to all our members and in particular to those members who have contributed to our Sub Branch this year. Your participation and engagement makes a positive difference in many people's lives as well as extending the camaraderie we enjoy in such a tight knit club.

Maintaining Our Strong Foundation

While many RSL Sub Branches face declining membership, I'm proud to report that Toowong RSL has grown our numbers throughout 2025. Earlier this year, I attended a RSL membership workshop where it became clear that the RSL is actively working to remain relevant to contemporary veterans and serving personnel. The statistics are telling: of the 160,000 veterans in Queensland, only 35,000 are RSL members.

Queensland RSL President, Major General Stephen Day, reminds us: *"You choose your friends, but those who have served are a mate."* We must openly welcome all who have served.

To that end, it gives me great pleasure to welcome our new members to the Toowong Sub-Branch: John Trevethan, Paul McDonald, Tim Scott, Chris Giles, Allan Schmidt, Scott Vinning, Peter Hansen, Graeme Shiels, Samantha Verry, Paul McDonald, Merriel Hume and Merv Cobcroft.

Financial Sustainability

We launched our 2025/26 Toowong RSL Fundraising Raffle to diversify our income stream. With commemoration services costs increasing we continue to make a financial loss each year of between \$12,000 and \$16,000. This initiative is crucial to our financial sustainability. My sincere thanks to James Mackay for sourcing prizes and arranging printing, and to all our volunteers who dedicated their time to selling tickets throughout the year.

Raising Our Profile

This year, our Sub Branch participated in two RSL Queensland commercials promoting public attendance at commemoration days.

Firstly, 18 of our members braved the heat to film at our Toowong Cenotaph, the nationwide ANZAC Day television commercial and billboard campaign. The result was outstanding. Major General Stephen Day personally acknowledged in his Christmas card saying that "the ANZAC Day media shoot was a great hit with the League and the public."

Secondly, our very own James Mackay starred in the Remembrance Day commercial and he is immortalised as our poster boy given his image is on the front page of the latest Queensland RSL News. Well done, James!

Governance and Leadership

We held our Annual General Meeting here at The Regatta, welcoming Bob McKernan—who joins us tonight—and our very own Top Gun, John Hamilton, to the Board. While some may view the AGM as mere formality, it represents a vital opportunity for members to participate and have a say in our Sub Branch's direction. We were also treated to Brian Venz's excellent presentation on local

military history—thank you, Brian. At the AGM, Mike Muirhead announced his retirement from the Board after many years of dedicated service. On behalf of all members, I extend heartfelt thanks to both Mike and Donna for their outstanding contributions to our Sub Branch.

Representing Toowong RSL at Gallipoli

We are immensely proud of Squadron Leader Kerri-Lee Beck—here with us tonight—who represented Queensland RSL at the Gallipoli Dawn Service this year. I was honoured to present Kerri-Lee with a poppy brooch at our AGM, which she wore with pride in Türkiye.

Kerri-Lee was selected as part of the inaugural group of veterans and family members to support the Department of Veterans' Affairs in delivering the 2025 ANZAC Day commemorations at Gallipoli. As a fifth-generation Australian military member, from a family whose service spans 110 years, she was an exemplary representative. You can read about Kerri-Lee's Gallipoli experience in the upcoming edition of our newsletter, *The Don R*.

Commemoration Services

Despite challenging weather, our ANZAC Day Service was once again an outstanding success. My sincere thanks to Dr Stephen Thornton, Vince Atley and Tim Robb for their meticulous preparation and execution. Each year, we strive to improve based on member feedback, and this year was no exception.

We also commemorated Vietnam Veterans Day in August, laying a wreath prior to our Board meeting as well as laying wreaths for VJ Day.

Supporting Youth Development

We remain extremely proud of our close ties with 12 Army Cadet Unit. I thank Captain Graham Heslin and his staff for their tireless dedication. This year, we donated funds to refurbish the lighting, solar panels, and battery on their training trailer—an investment in the next generation of service personnel.

Community Partnerships

We are honoured by our close association with the Australian Remembrance Army. Katrina Trevethan, one of our members here tonight, works tirelessly alongside Cate Walker to ensure we remember those who have served. In September, we assisted in unveiling 162 World War I plaques at Lutwyche Cemetery, celebrating their commendable project marking 709 graves of WWI soldiers and nurses. I understand they're about to embark on a similar project at Toowong Cemetery which we will support.

Welfare Activities

Our welfare team completed 39 hospital visits this year, primarily supporting veterans transferred to our local hospitals from rural Queensland. The welfare packs—containing basic toiletries and phone chargers—are deeply appreciated during those difficult first days of hospitalisation.

My sincere thanks to Kevin Trimble, Dawn and Bob McKernan, Janelle and Bernie Voysey, Vince Atley, Laurie Smith, my wife, Sharon Williamson, Dave Donaldson and Tim Robb for their

compassionate service.

We welcome anyone else who is available to visit and help veterans in hospital.

Improvements and Infrastructure

We now have two dedicated car parks on Sylvan Road in front of the Sub-Branch office, making member visits more convenient. Thank you to Vince Atley for facilitating their installation.

Our sponsorship of Wests Bulldogs Rugby continues successfully. Our Sub-Branch logo proudly appears on their club t-shirts and jerseys, and we again benefited from raffling a signed jersey after the ANZAC Day match.

Speaking of logos, you may have noticed our updated Sub-Branch emblem now incorporates the Tudor Crown—adopted by our patron, King Charles III—along with refreshed floral emblems of wattle, poppy, and rosemary.

To enhance our commemorative services, we purchased five new marquees, marquee gutters, and a microphone stand. Our PA system has proven invaluable at both Remembrance Day services and community events. For those who attended the Remembrance Day ceremony, we have also trialled a stage and extra flagpole.

A Significant Donation

This year, the family of Major General "Digger" James AC, AO, MBE, MC donated the military component of his library to Toowong RSL. Digger James made extraordinary contributions to the Australian Army as an inspirational leader in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, a tireless advocate for veterans, and later as National President of the RSL and member of the Australian War Memorial Council. He famously lost his left foot as a 1RAR platoon commander in Korea, retrained as a medical officer, served in Vietnam, and rose to become Director General of Army Health Services. If you visit the RAAF Base Amberley Aviation Museum—we conducted two tours there this year—you'll find an excellent display documenting his incredible career.

Looking Forward

Exciting events lie ahead. George Hulse continues planning the Engineers Corps Anniversary at Toowong ANZAC Park. In 2026, RSL Queensland celebrates its 110-year milestone, and we look forward to celebrating our own ties to the establishment of the League as we know it today.

A final word

My sincere thanks to all my board members. We have an exceptional team with a multitude of experience and skills. All of them take on parts of our outreach and commemorative work with massive enthusiasm and spread the load. We are collegiate and our differing views at time make our decisions so much better. We are always looking for new faces so if you want to be part of our team please consider nominating for the board at the AGM next year. We meet by teams or in person and the 3rd Monday of each month from 4PM.

I'll also take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you all for your continued support and service to Toowong RSL.