



WARRAGUL RSL SUB-BRANCH NEWSLETTER

June 2022

No. 67

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President's Report.....

Dear Warragul RSL Members,

ANZAC Day 2022

I just wanted to start this report by saying a big thank you to all that were involved in making ANZAC Day 2022 such a success. We have had positive feedback from both RSL members and the public. I have had many people say to me that it was the best ANZAC Day that they had had for years, if not ever. This is pleasing feedback and sets a high bar for us to achieve in the future.



Gippsland really turned on the weather for ANZAC day and we saw excellent participation right across the district.



PHOTO CREDIT: ASH WADE

It started with a cool and very still dawn, this image, on the left, taken by Ash Wade tells the story.

Following the Dawn service, good numbers of members and the general public returned to the RSL Clubrooms for tea and coffee and some raisin toast. Some veterans enjoyed the traditional nip of rum with their coffee.

Service members and First Responders later enjoyed the annual Gunfire breakfast provided free by the Warragul Downtowner, who we sincerely thank for their continued support.

The march to the Cenotaph for the Commemorative ceremony was very well attended and our Guard Commander Hayden Crowle had the troops in step and holding their heads high

After the Commemorative service at the Cenotaph, a large number of members and guests returned to our clubrooms to catch up with others and enjoy some comradery. Two-up in the front carpark and a dutch version of throw your money away was run by our larger than life Treasurer [and Dutchman] - Chris Berg. Chris's coin toss generated some helpful profits that covered some of the costs relating to the provision of finger food and snags during the day. The Catering Team were hard at it behind the scenes all day and the food they provided throughout the day was at no cost to members or their guests. Again the feedback from many there confirmed their appreciation for these value added benefits.

I would also like to formally thank the Baw Baw Shire Council who assisted us very well in the preparations for the event. It was appreciated and we have seen that the new operation policy [for events such as Anzac] services is working very well.



Above is March Marshall, Hayden Crowle with Flag Bearers: Ash Wade and Owen Kershaw.



Above is Ian Sibley, Owen Kershaw and John Sage.



Following the usual Commemorative service formalities, we heard from our two guest speakers, both of whom are former Baw Baw shire citizens, Major Nathan Dubeld and Private Alan Mildren. Their speeches were well received and served to help all attending to have a better insight into military and life. Both men are pictured far left.

A very big thankyou to Fergus and Sox who participated in both the Dawn and Commemorative Service. Fergus and Sox pictured left.

Anzac Day 2022



International Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Commemorative Service

Just to start off I wanted to thank the committee led by Bob Green in arranging the Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Day [PKPM], in my opinion it was a very worthwhile event and acknowledged the service of Peacekeepers and Peacemakers appropriately. The Logos of both the United Nations and the PKPM will now be mounted with other signage on our front entry display.



Projects

There are two key projects in place: the extension to **Ales on Albert** members bar area (there is also a separate report on this project) and the **Gulwarra Heights Commemorative Memorial**.

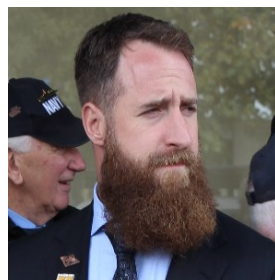
Proposed extension to the members bar:

The project team comprising Hayden Crowle, Damien Sgarbossa, VP Mark Buttner, and Bar Manger John Sage have progressed the initial design concept to now include detailed drawings. They have obtained expert advice as to any engineering and building issues and are now working with structural Engineers and Building Surveyors to enable them to establish a scope of works and the costs involved. To ensure we follow the best possible path independent specialist advise is essential, accordingly Hayden approached a former work colleague Phil Farnham [Director at Farnham Developments] to keep a watching brief and provide guidance as the project develops. This guidance is greatly appreciated and will assist us to minimise costs. In the coming weeks the team will be liaising with structural engineers, building surveyors and others.

The Project TEAM



Hayden Crowle



Damien Sgarbossa



John Sage



Mark Buttner



Gulwarra Heights Commemorative Memorial:

The Executive have been working closely with Gulwarra Heights Cemetery Trust to develop a remembrance memorial in the grounds of the Burke Street Cemetery. This will be a memorial that is a first of its kind – a memorial that commemorates the service of all that have served, including United Nations Peacekeeping and Peace making operations to date and into the future, it will also include recognition for First Responders [Police, Ambulance, Fire Fighters and SES], with the ability to add future conflicts to the memorial.

Regrettably this very important project is being held back by funding issues, however it remains high on our priority list. To help you appreciate the Project and it's status, Warragul RSL sought a major funding grant of \$143,100 from the previous government and our application was formally supported and signed off by our member for Monash, Russell Broadbent. Had the grant been approved in full, we would have seen the Gulwarra Heights Commemorative Memorial progressing or even completed.

In spite of our strong case for the funding – [our submission included the advice that this memorial was of Regional significance], **we were only successful for the minor grant of \$10,000.** Soon after the grants were announced and to our dismay, Russell Broadbents media site implied that together with the Halston Hall project, we were recipients of more than a \$1M. **It concerned me greatly that the public may develop the view that Warragul RSL was awash with funds and wonder why this important project was stalled, accordingly I shared my concerns with the media and Russell's office. Whilst Russell removed the misleading post, I believed that an apology and a retraction of that post was appropriate. I see it as imperative that the funding situation is very clear. To our disappointment, nothing has been forthcoming.**

RSL Veteran Expo | June 18, 2022

There is a full report on the expo on page 10 of this edition, thank you to all that have assisted with this event thus far, especially Dave Trippier. David has done a mountain of work in preparing it all and I am pleased to report it was a most successful day.

Our Programs:

Wellbeing Group



The Gippsland Wellbeing Support group for Veterans [including Peacekeepers and Peacemakers] and first responders. The group meet at the RSL on the third Thursday night of the Month at 7pm. There was an excellent attendance last month with 22 participants and a great session was delivered by Dan Oshea [from Rooster Tours]. The Warragul Gazette did an excellent write up regarding the group. That support and publicity is appreciated and serves to spread the message about the benefits available from the group. The facilitator is David Baker 0421614937.



Guided Meditation @ the RSL

We continue to see strong attendances at this which is great. Our guide is Phil Hunter; Meditation expert who takes the group through Guided Group Meditation sessions (for Members) on a monthly basis. These sessions are held on the second Thursday of the month from 7pm to 8pm. There is no cost to RSL members and their families. Tea and Coffee afterwards, Members Bar open also.



Fitness and Mateship

At Voyage Fitness Warragul on Saturday mornings from 9.45. Veterans [including Peacekeepers and Peacemakers] and First Responders. Family welcome. Dave Whelan has arranged for jumpers to be made for all the regular attendee's. Please contact Dave on 0449542032 to place an order.



Veteran Hydro Pool Exercise Group

Continues on Tuesday mornings at 9am at the Warragul Leisure Centre, 21 Burke St, Warragul. The program is free to RSL members and is overseen by Gippsland Physiotherapy Group Phone 5623 6989 for an appointment. Facilitator Chris Berg 0429 105 544.



Scale Model Building Group

Held every first and third Thursday of the month from 10am in the Boardroom with facilitator Brent Wilson 0439 911 118.



Regular Social Activities

- Friday Morning Social Group (Boardroom 10am onwards)
- Boardroom Hot Topics
- Carpet Bowls
- Walkie Talkie Group
- Ales on Albert (Fridays from 5pm to 7.30pm)
- Monthly dinners on the last Friday of the month - bookings essential

Upcoming Events:

VIETNAM



VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Day | August 18, 2022

Planning is on foot for a Vietnam Veterans day event.

If you are a Vietnam Vet, we would like to hear from you about what you would like your day to look like. Please contact Bob Green on 0408 002 760.



100th Anniversary Event

In in the planning for late August / early September.

Watch this space for more information.



Remembrance Day | November 11, 2022

ALES ON ALBERT

Ales on Albert has not just given members and their guests a place to drop in for social catch up on Friday evenings, but it is providing us with increased revenue which will complement the strong income growth from the hiring of our premises. We are slowly but surely becoming more financially secure. That is due in part to the generosity of charitable groups, including Warragul Lions, Warragul Downtowner, RSL Active, and Warragul Freemasons Lodge, who support our vision. Fortunately, we also have many members that have demonstrated a powerful commitment to the growth and development aspirations of the Executive which is indeed heartening.



We hope that one of those drinks is for the President, Sarah?



In closing I am pleased to say that Warragul RSL is achieving it's objectives and we are growing nicely, we have an enthusiastic committee, many willing helpers and our future looks very good, however it is necessary that I share the displeasure and frustration of veterans and their families across the nation of the decision made by our new government to take the Veterans Affairs portfolio out of the Cabinet Ministry.

It is concerning that given there is a Royal Commission underway into Veteran suicide [and related matters] which only came about after years and years of powerful effort and political lobbying by RSL and others; yet the focus has been downgraded. Just as the Veteran movement and others persuaded/coerced the Liberal Government to agree the Royal Commission [and which is still underway] to address the Veteran suicide issue, the new Government elects to give it the flick. I will be formally sharing our concerns with RSL Region 10 regarding this issue. I am wanting this matter progressed to RSL Victoria for advocating for this decision to be rectified. If RSL Vic do not agree to take affirmative action, then I will personally write to MP Matt Keogh, Minister for Veteran affairs.

Ben Vahland | President | Warragul RSL

Catering Team Report

Pictured right with Mary is one of our great contributors, Owen Kershaw. When asked about the catering team, Mary said, "it's not just about the food though, for us it's about providing an opportunity for our members to come together and socialise with friends and family".

Editors Comment. The benefit of having volunteers with a strong commitment to supporting our aims and objectives is proving true.

Mary went on to say "our Catering team have been working very hard behind the scenes to produce good value meals on the monthly Friday Dinner nights, they also provide [at no cost] finger food for members and guests at Ales on Albert. This monthly dinner we will be breaking into some winter warmers soon Keep an eye out to when bookings become available, as spots do fill quickly".

Editors Comment. It goes without saying that President Ben and the Executive are indeed grateful to the Catering Team and those that chip in at times to help.

Mary Sgarbossa | Catering Manager

Communications Report

Today, modern technology dominates our communication. We have a massive range of ways in which we can stay connected, but each channel of communication can influence our relationships in a different way. Old style correspondence by letter [hand written or typed] is almost a thing of the past.

The cost of communicating in the old way ; by hard copy such as sending renewal reminders, accounts, general correspondence or newsletters [such as we use at Warragul RSL] are becoming cost prohibitive and inefficient. **As promised by the President and Executive several years ago, we will continue to send hard copy newsletters to any and all members that do not have access to digital systems.** Communication is key to building relationships, and modern forms of communication allow us to stay in touch with friends and family from anywhere in the world.

For Warragul RSL, it assists us to identify Veterans and their families that are in need of our support. To that end Warragul RSL has in recent times implemented multiple communications options that ensure we can share information with each and every member within minutes. We can send an SMS message by phone, we can email documentation and we can post it on our Web-site or Social media sites such as Facebook. We also send hard copies by Australia Post of each and every important document that the RSL and other Rules or Laws require us to do. The sharing of information on social media serves many purposes. There is value to be gained from learning what RSL's and other groups are doing for veterans that is working. Warragul RSL freely shares information about what is working for us.

To ensure we can continue to stay up with the pace of technological change, we have co-opted young veteran Ash Wade to assume the role of Social Media and Web Site Manager. Ash will focus on development of new communications including Instagram, he will be a regular contributor to all of our sites and make recommendations to the Executive as to any significant changes needed.

Bob Green | Vice President | Communications



APPEALS AND WELFARE REPORT



Appeals

The recent two years fund raisings have been limited due to covid issues. Happily the funds raised this year were somewhat better than prior years. It was noted that there was an increased trend in donations in which the donors specified that the money was to go to our branch for our membership group. We are so fortunate to have a very generous community and that shows with the money we raise and support we receive from them.

Our Appeal would not be as productive without the help of our amazing volunteers. Our regular diehard sellers were supported by many new faces including younger veterans and first responders. On behalf of our membership, the Executive, Noel and myself I thank all who gave of their time to help us conduct this Anzac appeal. Pictured are Mike [Bluey] and Denise Smithwick. Sandra Walker and Merlyn and Ash, Tony Maquet, Ron and Sandra Mahoney.



Welfare

Welfare remains the core for our RSL and there is little we do that does not have a welfare component. Dinners on Ale's, Ales on Albert, RSL Active, walkie talkies and all our various get togethers, including ANZAC and Remembrance Day. These activities bring Veterans, First Responders and their families together.

Our Welfare component during this last year saw a variety of funding needs, personnel help and guidance, which was given by our Welfare and Executive team.



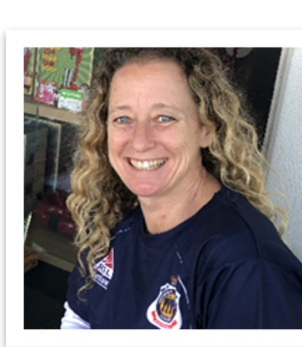
The funding required to operate is raised from our Appeals and with the assistance of other grants and donations was "just" ample enough to keep us in the black. While government law restricts our appeals fund to be spent on Veterans and their families, there are other ways we are able to support First Responder members by way of including them in all our various activities.

The West Gippsland Veterans Welfare Centre located in Drouin continues to provide wonderful support to the veteran community, more particularly advocacy relating to claims for disability payment from DVA.

Aged Care and Hospital visits are now permitted and we thank all those in the group who have visited, performed and persisted in this essential welfare field.



Kylie Sage | Vice President | Welfare



VETERANS EXPO



In 2019 David Trippier and Warragul RSL President Ben Vahland began planning for the EXPO. The Expo finally went ahead on Saturday June 18 after several earlier dates had to be rescheduled due to COVID. Feedback from Ex Service Organisation's [ESO's], other contributors and Veterans that participated in the Expo confirm what the organizing team felt; it was a huge success.

When asked about the outcome, President Ben Vahland said "I'm very very proud of our little RSL in the bush - in spite of the barriers we faced along the way, we eventually delivered what we believe was a beneficial for veterans and also ESO's. I am of course very pleased with the result which we had hoped for knowing the hard work that was put in by many. Not just by our own people, but each and every one of the ESO/Groups that invested time and money to be part of the Expo. In my opinion, the fact that we pulled this off is not surprising, but what is surprising is that no one [as far as we know] thought of doing something like this, previously".

In summarizing Ben said:

- We had twenty four ESO's in the one place at the same time! They were collaborating, sharing ideas and building great relationships with one another. The take away that what was really amplified to ourselves and many ESO representatives on Saturday is, that if we all work together we will achieve to the best possible support systems for Veterans going forward.
- We set out with a mindset that even if we only attract and help just one Veteran the EXPO, would be a success. I am happy to say we've engaged with many more veterans, we have also learnt a lot.
- More about the support services the individual twenty four ESO's offer so we have realized benefits we had not contemplated.

Ben went onto say, "I am extremely proud of everyone from the Warragul RSL who put the work in to making it such a success. It would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the dedication and work of David Trippier in the planning and execution of this event we'll done David". Thank you to everyone who was involved from the bottom of my heart, when we work together, we can achieve so much. Pictured below is Vice President of the Victorian Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association, Brendan Kincaid [Tombstone] with Treasurer Chris Berg and President Ben Vahland. Kylie Sage [VP Welfare] with Pete Parish [Membership Manager].

