

Sub-Branch Signal

September 2026

The Sub-Branch Signal is the monthly newsletter of the Returned & Services League of Australia WA Branch Inc. containing the latest news, events and updates sent to subscribed members via email and published on the RSL WA website.

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From the State President

Mr Duncan Anderson



National

RSL Australia met in Canberra on Thursday 27 August 2026. This series of meetings were highlighted with very positive progress on key issues.

The \$5,000 allied health cap commentary from RSL Australia has been clear, considered and constructive. Pleasingly Government commenced engagements on the cap with a view to not only more clearly communicate why it was implemented, but also address concerns raised. The RSL, led by RSL Australia, will continue to engage constructively; it is timely to note that the RSL is apolitical, and efforts to politicise veterans care and wellbeing are not helpful.

RSL Australia is heavily involved in preliminary discussions surround the establishment of the Peak Body. Involvement at the early stage is critical to define not only the constitution of this entity but also its function through establishment and routine operations.

Progress with the Veteran and Family Well Being Agency is very positive. The appointed CEO has deep experience in the veteran sector, bringing confidence this entity will achieve its stated goals. Pleasingly the

Veteran and Family Well Being Agency is already making early steps to assume its key function, making it easier for veterans and their families to manage their wellbeing!

The Institute of Veterans Advocacy is making steady progress. Another recommendation of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, this independent entity seeks to raise standards (professional and ethical) of advocates supporting veterans submitting their claims. While the RSL is supportive, there is still work to be done on the model of delivery. It is expected that this will continue in the coming months.

State

The Board of RSL WA met on 3 September at the Goldsworthy Centre in Rockingham.

Goldsworthy Centre. The Goldsworth Centre, located in Rockingham, will soon be opened, coordinating services to veterans and their families as part of a national network of hubs. In partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, RSL WA has repurposed an existing building into a contemporary space that will bring together multiple providers under a single roof. This has been an extraordinary undertaking and represents a step-change in service delivery. RSL WA has actively led and promoted a collaborative environment for service delivery; this hub is the next iteration.

Service delivery. RSL WA has incrementally increased service delivery while responsibly managing finances. Service delivery has increased across all areas, including advocacy (DVA Claims support), welfare, RSL Active and commemoration. This increase in service delivery, combined with a deliberate approach to engagement with the community of Western Australia is resulting in incremental gains in membership. As the demographics of the veteran community transition, so too are our members. There is considered optimism that this trend will increase, with more veterans seeing value in membership of the League for the long-term.

Board governance. A brief note to dispel some well-intentioned concerns about the upcoming election of the next State President. As reported, an expression of interest for the role of State President was published to the broad veteran community. The purpose of this is to increase awareness of the role and provide opportunity for the members of RSL WA to have the very best candidates to select from. This expression of interest does not replace the election to be held at State Congress 2027.

The role is incredibly complex and has evolved in the last five years. The successful candidate must be skilled and qualified in leading a Board of professional directors, leading the membership of RSL WA and being a leader in the veteran community. It is in the very best interest of RSL WA to have the strongest field of candidates presented to the members for election.

Summary. We are hurtling towards December and RSL WA is continuing to make progress. We all have our role to play and should always support those left and right of us. Let us not lose sight of the community we are a part of; it has been and continues to be an incredible privilege to serve.

All the best.

From the CEO

Mr Stephen Barton



A few weeks back I had an exchange with one of our esteemed Trustees over the use of the phrase 'HQ' to describe RSL WA or the State Branch. I said whatever you do, please don't call us HQ.

There are two reasons for this. One, we all know from our military experience the default perception of higher headquarters. Soldiers (and presumably sailors and aviators) all assume their higher headquarters knows nothing, interferes and delights in making a nuisance of itself. (Yes, I know, some of you will chuckle and say, sounds just like Anzac House.)

But the second reason is more important. We are not a 'HQ' controlling subordinate units or ships. We are the State Branch of the Returned and Services League of Western Australia – we provide advice and governance support to Sub-Branch, but we all have the same role and responsibility, that is, to fulfil the Objects detailed in our Constitution.

The State Branch does not sit above Sub-Branches, rather it is side by side with Sub-Branches. We're all here to deliver services and support to veterans and their families. The scale and sometimes the nature of our support differs, but the purpose is the same.

We are a unique membership organisation – we do not provide support and services exclusively to our members, but rather to the whole veteran community and their families. By way of example, the average age of our membership is 70. The majority of our members don't really need an employment and transition service, but the broader veteran community does, which is why it is a key priority of ours.

The majority of veterans and families who receive services from RSL WA are not members. Some become members later, but at the first point of contact most aren't. But, they've come to us, because they hope we can help.

This reflects the standing of the League. And it is always worth remembering there is a large cohort of veterans in the community who are not members but look to RSL WA for leadership and want us to succeed.

A few weeks back I was privy to a conversation between some members (a mixture of Service and Affiliate) and one asked, what benefits do I get from membership?

To be blunt, it was the wrong question. Although we will be shortly providing a list of benefits members receive from our sponsors and supporters, that's not what we are here for. To paraphrase John F Kennedy, ask not what the League can do for you, ask what the League can do for veterans.

It is a great credit to the League, that every day, in Sub-Branches across the State, here at Anzac House, members, staff and volunteers are asking that question.

On the use of language and politics

Some of you will have seen National President Mr Peter Tinley's comments on One Nation's use of the word 'traitor' in a satirical cartoon, to describe the Federal Member for Canning Mr Andrew Hastie. Mr Tinley said, *"This may have begun as political dispute between Senator Hanson and Mr Hastie, and it's not RSL's place to referee it. However, when a person's military service is used as the punchline, when the word 'traitor' is thrown at someone who has deployed on operations, that stops being politics and starts being an attack on every veteran's service."*

The use of the term 'traitor', even in the context of a satirical cartoon, was nasty and inappropriate.

I was recently shown pictures on social media of a political event at one of our Sub-Branches, which is completely inappropriate whatever the political party. It is not lost on me that the same party that described Mr Hastie as a 'traitor' in a satirical cartoon, was using the iconic backdrop of an RSL Sub-Branch for an event.

As Mr Hastie said last week, Anzac belongs to all Australians, and the Australian Defence Force is the custodian of the profession of arms. (Full disclosure, Andrew Hastie was my next-door neighbour in Tarin

Kowt in 2009. A young cavalry Lieutenant then, he was intelligent, principled and considered. I would occasionally catch up with him over the years since Afghanistan – and all politics aside – he is good company.)

Our standing in the community is a precious commodity. And it relies on us being non-partisan. The League will have views, often quite strong ones, on policy and positions, but we steadfastly avoid a preference for one political party over another. RSL Australia's campaign on the allied health cap is a great example of disagreeing respectfully and constructively.

Our role is to be constructive and considered, and sometimes to ask others to lower their voices. But we are not props or 'nodding heads' in someone else's political campaign, whatever the political party.

Veteran Services update

Damien Roper – Veteran Services Manager

At RSL, working with veterans through a trauma-informed practice framework means recognising that military service, transition from service and life after service, can all have a significant impact on a person's wellbeing, relationships and engagement with support services.

Trauma-informed practice does not assume that every veteran has experienced trauma, nor does it define a veteran by their experiences. Instead, it guides us to provide support in a way that promotes safety, dignity, trust, choice and respect.

Veterans may present to RSL for support with a wide range of issues, including DVA claims and advocacy, financial hardship, housing insecurity, social isolation, family pressures, bereavement or difficulties adjusting to civilian life. For some, these challenges may sit alongside experiences of combat, injury, loss, moral injury or other traumatic events.

This context can influence how a veteran communicates or engages with services. Behaviours such as frustration, withdrawal, anger, hypervigilance, reluctance to disclose information or difficulty trusting others may reflect previous experiences rather than an unwillingness to engage.

For our staff and volunteers, advocates, welfare officers and chaplains, trauma-informed practice means approaching each veteran with curiosity rather than judgement. Instead of focusing solely on "What is the problem?", we consider "What has happened, what is important to this veteran, and what support will help them move forward?"

Clear communication is particularly important. Veterans should understand what we can and cannot provide, what information is required, how their information will be handled and what options are available to them. Being consistent, maintaining confidentiality, following through on commitments and setting clear boundaries all contribute to building trust.

Choice and collaboration are also central to good practice. Wherever possible, veterans should remain active participants in decisions affecting their lives. Our role is not to take control away from the veteran, but to provide information, advocacy, practical assistance and connection to appropriate services so they can make informed decisions.

Understanding military culture is equally important. Qualities such as loyalty, discipline, resilience, self-reliance and service to others are significant strengths within the veteran community. At the same time, these values can sometimes make asking for help difficult. Recognising both the strengths and challenges

associated with military culture allows us to respond in a way that maintains dignity and respects the veteran's identity.

Trauma-informed practice aligns strongly with our commitment to supporting veterans and their families. Whether through welfare, advocacy, chaplaincy or connection to other services, our aim is to ensure veterans are treated with respect, listened to without judgement and supported in a way that strengthens their independence and wellbeing.

Ultimately, trauma-informed practice is not simply about understanding trauma. It is about how we build relationships. By providing safe, respectful, consistent and collaborative support, we can help veterans feel heard, valued and empowered to take the next steps in their lives.

If you are or know of a veteran who needs some support from those that understand the unique experience of military service, please reach out to us at welfare@rslwa.org.au.

Goldsworthy Centre update

Janine Gardner – Goldsworthy Centre Manager



The Goldsworthy Team have been very busy getting the centre ready to open!

We've been building furniture, putting up pictures, creating gardens and landscaping, cleaning up and decorating to make the centre feel warm and welcoming.

It's been a long road and even though we've had some building delays along the way, we never gave up and we can now see the end in sight.

We're excited that soon we will open the doors and begin the next stage of helping and supporting the veterans and families.

Stay tuned. We can't wait to welcome you to this amazing new centre.

RSL WA relationship with Purslowe and Chipper builds momentum

A recent launch event at Anzac House brought together Purslowe & Chipper team members, RSL WA staff and Trustees for an evening of connection and shared purpose.

A highlight of the event was a compelling address from Damien Roper, who spoke about RSL WA's welfare services and the real difference they make to veterans and families facing life's challenges. The evening provided a great opportunity to strengthen relationships and reinforce the shared values underpinning the partnership.

Another important milestone was the delivery of the first Veteran Funeral Services training session, facilitated by Kim Kuchel and Jamie Thomas. The training was a great success, and we were particularly impressed by the level of experience already in the room. Participants demonstrated a genuine commitment to supporting veteran families, a strong understanding of veteran funerals, and an attention to detail that will help ensure veterans receive the dignity and respect they deserve in their final farewell.

"Both Kim and I were really impressed by the Purslowe and Chipper team's commitment to getting the details right. There is also a lot of prior experience in the room which was really great to see," Jamie Thomas said.

As a reminder, RSL WA members can access a **\$250 discount on funeral arrangements through Purslowe & Chipper**. The next phase of the partnership will see information sessions delivered through RSL WA Sub-Branches, providing members with an opportunity to learn more about funeral planning, veteran-specific services and the benefits available through the partnership.

RSL WA will shortly be reaching out to Sub-Branches to gauge interest in hosting a session. Any Sub-Branch interested in hosting is encouraged to contact partnerships@rslwa.org.au.

Together, RSL WA and Purslowe & Chipper are building a partnership that honours service, supports families and strengthens the veteran community across Western Australia.

25th Anniversary of Australian Service in Afghanistan



Date: Saturday 10 October 2026

Time: 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Location: State War Memorial, Kings Park WA

RSL WA invites the Western Australian community to join us in commemorating the 25th Anniversary of Australian Service in Afghanistan.

From 2001, more than 35,000 Australians served in Afghanistan and the Middle East Area of Operations in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Australian forces joined a multinational effort to bring security to Afghanistan, stabilise the wider region and counter terrorist activity. Over more than two decades of commitment, Australians also contributed to reconstruction efforts, working to build safe conditions for democratic governance, mentoring and training local forces, and delivering humanitarian aid.

This commemorative service honours the courage, professionalism, commitment and integrity of all who served. We remember those who lost their lives during or as a result of their service, and we acknowledge the lasting physical and mental impacts that this service has had on many veterans and their families.

We encourage veterans, families, serving members and the broader community to attend and reflect on this significant milestone together.

Register your attendance [here](#).

110th Anniversary of the League Gala



It's your last chance to get tickets for the 110th Anniversary of the Returned & Services League of Australia Gala!

Date: Saturday 19 September 2026

Time: 6:00 pm – 11:00 pm

Location: Anzac House, 28 St Georges Terrace, Perth

Throughout the cocktail style evening, guests will enjoy a premium canapé menu accompanied by a selection of complimentary beer and wine. Together, we will honour 110 years of service, sacrifice and support while celebrating the enduring legacy of the League and those who have shaped its history.

Experience an exceptional lineup of entertainment and exclusive experiences, including a live DJ and performances by the acclaimed RAN Band; whiskey, gin and craft lager tastings; and a live portrait artist creating a personalised keepsake. Plus, more surprises throughout the evening

Tickets are limited. Secure your place today: [110th Anniversary of the League Gala Tickets](#).

Three West Australians walk the Kokoda Track

In November three West Australians will walk the Kokoda Track together: Tony Muir, Alice Henderson and Jarrad Irvine. They are sponsored on the Walk With Us Kokoda Trek from 10 to 20 November 2026 – the Raising the Bar Foundation program, with RSL WA and RSL Active in the room.

Tony Muir is the founder, director and chief instructor of Wyvern Resilience, a Perth not-for-profit, run by military and emergency services veterans, for their own. The method is scuba dive training as a catalyst for physical, mental and social wellbeing. They have certified hundreds of Perth veteran divers.

Tony is a former Special Forces soldier with more than thirty years in the Army, and a professional dive instructor.

“Scuba diving requires us to not only be mindful of our own safety, but also the wellbeing of our dive buddies. When we are on the Track we experience a similar purpose. We experience adversity ourselves but are also aware of the struggles of the people around us. This awareness brings out the best in us, as we are naturally programmed to provide support and assistance to others,” Tony said.

Alice Henderson served in the Army from 2016 to 2018, a Private on the Commando Direct Recruitment Scheme. She works now in HR and leadership coaching. She volunteers with the Defence Reserves Association, belongs to the Servicewomen’s Sub-Branch, and mentors on Resilience Shield courses. By her own account she has been sitting a little too quietly in the organisations she already belongs to. The Track is how she intends to change that.

“I currently sit back and take a passive role in most of the organisations I’m a member of,” Alice said.

“This trek is to reawaken that passion and help me step up – a more active role with RSL Active in WA, and with the Servicewomen’s Sub-Branch. I want the confidence to speak, to organise, to actually lead.”

For Alice, the WA veteran community has shown up for her through RSL Active and Invisible Injuries.

“The veteran community support in WA is amazing,” she said. “Invisible Injuries jumped in and helped provide hiking gear so I can do this. That kind of support is why you stay in. You don’t do Kokoda on your own.”

Jarrad Irvine served in the Army from 2007 to 2012 as a sapper, specialising in CBRN quick response and high-risk search. He assisted during the Queensland floods and served on Operations Testament, APEC

and Slipper. In 2010, he deployed to Afghanistan with Mentoring Task Force 1 as a high-risk searcher. Some of his friends did not come home.

Jarrad did not disappear afterwards.

Today, he works as a Contract Management Supervisor – Rail Maintenance with Rio Tinto. Within the company, he founded and co-leads the Veterans of Rio Tinto network, creating a space for peer support, site commemorations and day-to-day connection between ex-service employees, while also pushing to make veteran recruitment a more deliberate part of the business.

“I didn’t serve so I could disappear afterwards,” Jarrad said.

“The mates we lost deserve better than that. There’s a middle path: stay connected, stay useful, look after the people who came after you. That’s why I put energy into the veterans’ network at work. That’s why I’m doing Kokoda.”

Three ways of carrying the same thing – charity, community, workplace – with RSL Active and Walk With Us Kokoda putting them on a Track with veterans from around Australia who already think like that. Lachlan Stevens, CEO and Founder of Walk With Us Kokoda built the program on that logic.

“Tony, Alice and Jarrad are torchbearers,” Lachlan said.

“Not because they talk about it. Because they’re already doing it. Tony’s driving a charity forward – veterans supporting veterans. Alice is stepping up through RSL Active and the WA veteran community around her, including Invisible Injuries. Jarrad’s doing it in the workplace, making a big company a place that looks after its own. Contemporary veterans carrying veterans’ affairs into the future. That’s the job. The Track doesn’t belong to us. We borrow it. We pay it back in how we look after our own.”

Walk With Us Kokoda returns to the Track from 10 to 20 November 2026.

For more information visit walkwithuskokoda.org.au.

D Company 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion Reunion

Ex-members of D Company 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion are invited to a reunion in Melbourne, Victoria, from 23 to 26 April 2027 on the 60th anniversary of the Battalions deployment to the Vietnam War.

The reunion will participate in the Melbourne ANZAC Day ceremonies and their civic activities.

For those who wish to participate in the reunion, please contact Gordon Hurford at ghurford173@gmail.com and RSVP by 1 March 2027.

Anzac House Melbourne Cup Luncheon



When: Tuesday, 3 November 2026

Time: 10:30 am to 2:30 pm

Where: Anzac Club, 28 St Georges Tce Perth WA 6000

Back by popular demand, our 2026 Melbourne Cup Luncheon promises to be bigger and better than ever, featuring a delicious three-course meal, beverage package (10:30 am to 1:30 pm), and live screening of the race on three large screens.

Dress to impress and enjoy the fun with Fashions on the Field, sweepstakes, raffles and plenty of surprises throughout the day. It's the perfect opportunity to celebrate with friends or colleagues, enjoy great food and drinks, and soak up the excitement of one of the year's most iconic events.

If you have any questions before booking, please contact us at functions@anzacclub.org.au.

Click [here](#) to purchase tickets!

Expressions of interest – State President

The Board of RSL WA is calling for expressions of interest for the role of State President.

“It has been an immense privilege to lead the Returned and Services League of Western Australia. The role of State President is one that is dynamic, challenging and incredibly rewarding. As the organisation pursues its objectives, considered strategic leadership will be essential.”

– Duncan Anderson, State President, RSL WA

Background

RSL WA has successfully elected the State President from within its current membership for 110 years. This system has ensured stable and considered leadership with unwavering focus on the objects of the League. However, RSL WA and the environment it operates within has evolved, with ever-greater complexity a feature.

The role of State President has maintained the challenges associated with leadership of a large, member-centric organisation. Complexity has increased in recent times due to regulatory pressures, rate of societal change (social media, artificial intelligence etc.) and demands emerging from generational change in the veteran sector.

In response to these changes, the Board of RSL WA has identified a need to source suitable candidates for the role of State President from across Western Australia, and from within the existing membership. These nominations will be considered by members at State Congress in 2027.

The role

The successful candidate for State President will ideally possess an authentic leadership style and be comfortable working with and alongside members across Western Australia. Operating in dynamic strategic environments, the successful candidate for State President will understand current matters before the board and awareness of the key stakeholders in the community. The successful candidate will be comfortable working with all forms of media. Critically, the successful candidate will hold the skills and qualifications to undertake their role as board Chair.

The role has three distinct areas of focus: external, internal and governance.

External. The State President is expected to represent RSL WA at numerous commemorative events throughout the year. This includes leading Anzac Day and Remembrance Day at Kings Park. Additionally, the

role will likely include all forms of media, from television interviews, live radio and pre-recorded material. Finally, the State President will be expected to speak publicly (planned or very short notice) on a wide range of topics.

Internal. The State President has an essential leadership role within RSL WA. Regular engagement with members, Sub-Bran­ches and the staff at Anzac House is essential. This aspect of the role is incredibly rewarding yet demanding of time. The variety of issues faced demands a balanced response that considers the multitude of stakeholders. Finally, regular communications to members are required through routine submissions to both the Sub-Branch Signal and *The Listening Post*.

Governance. The State President is also the Chair of the Board of RSL WA. The Board consists of eight elected members (including the State President) and two skills-based appointed directors. Trustees also attend the monthly Board meetings, although hold no voting rights. Additionally, the State President is also the Chair of the members Annual General Meeting (State Congress) and Extraordinary General meetings (when required). Finally, the State President should be prepared to fulfill a role as a Director of the Board of RSL Australia.

The process

Veterans from across Western Australia are invited to express interest to admin@rslwa.org.au. This expression of interest should include contact details and military service history. Importantly, this includes both members and non-members.

The process will culminate at State Congress 2027, where the successful candidate will be elected for a term of four years by the members of RSL WA.

Expressions of interest – RSL WA Committee positions

RSL WA has several Committee positions open. Please see below.

Applications require a CV and cover letter (400 words max) emailed to admin@rslwa.org.au.

[Nominations Committee Terms of Reference](#)

[RSL WA Trustee](#)

[Commemorations Committee](#)

[Finance Advisory Committee \(FAC\)](#)

[Constitution Committee](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

[Cadet Awards Committee](#)

[State Tribunal](#)

[West Australian Veterans Advisory Committee \(WAVAC\)](#)