Sub-Branch Signal

November 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



Colleagues,

What an immense privilege it remains for the RSL to lead commemorative events across Western Australia. Remembrance Day 2026 was another example of the outstanding work done, every day by the RSL in our community, for our community.

Remembrance Day saw services held across the state. The service at the State War Memorial was very well attended, with numbers increased from 2025. This service also recognised the service of the outgoing Warden Commodore Warwick Gately, AM. On behalf of RSL WA I would like to extend my deep gratitude to Warwick for his service and leadership. Colonel Geoff Simpson OAM Rfd (ret) was appointed as Warden of the State War Memorial, having concluded over a decade as the Deputy Warden.

Defence Estate Divestment is rightly taking its place as a key issue. While the halting of the sale of key historical sites is welcomed, transferring them to the Department of Finance is nothing short of improving a balance sheet. Retaining key sites within the Defence portfolio for the purpose of generating capability remains our focus. Transferring to the Department of Finance is simply not the answer.

RSL WA alongside the Claremont Sub-Branch provided verbal evidence at the Senate Inquiry focused on Defence Estate Divestment. There are concerns behind the underpinning assumptions to the review, the apparent complete lack of consultation and the obvious lack of consideration for alternate options. There are substantially more questions than answers.

In an environment where the strategic warning time has dropped from 10+ years to a matter of days, it makes no sense to impact capability now in any way. Morale of our troops is a key enabler to morale, the continued uncertainly surrounding both Irwin Barracks and Leeuwin Barracks is having a detrimental impact. Moreover, why spend what is likely to be well over $1bn to build a new barracks in Guilford in 5+ years, when rebuilding Irwin barracks would likely be a fraction of the cost and could start now? Finally, the advent of drone warfare demands training with drones. The site at Guilford is wholly unworkable with the airport's location, forcing any drone training to be conducted offsite.

We must continue to make our voice heard. While geographically distant, Canberra can be drawn closer with consistent, clear and continuous communication. We must maintain respect in this discourse yet be unambiguous. We (RSL WA) are not saying no for the sake of it; we are advocating for a review of the options. Selling Irwin Barracks is not a suitable course of action. Irwin Barracks must be retained; indeed, it could be argued that the reserve presence in Western Australia should be increased!

Finally, your Board met at the Nollamara Sub-Branch. A highlight of this meeting was the immense work undertaken by the committee; the Sub-Branch is looking magnificent and ready to welcome members, both new and old. Membership renewals are well underway with growth in membership occurring on a monthly basis. This sustainable growth reflects our continued strengthening of the value proposition of RSL WA.
The gap before Christmas continues to narrow. It is always timely to remember those around us when we get individually very busy. Let us remain focused on what makes this organisation great. Let's continue to look after our mates and their families.

All the best.

Duncan

From the CEO

Mr Stephen Barton



Remembrance Day 2026

As the State President has noted, RSL WA held the traditional Remembrance Day service at Kings Park on 11 November. It was very well attended, with a crowd of around 700.

The keynote address was given by Duncan, in his final Remembrance Day as State President, reflecting on the notion of service and his time in Afghanistan.

In amongst the traditional rites of the service were three readings, each providing windows into the experience of Australians at war. Telling the stories, as Mr Nigel Earnshaw from the Cottesloe Sub-Branch says, of the little people caught up in great events.

The first was from the home front in the First World War. It was a passage, read by RSL WA Trustee Brigadier Phil White AM (retd), from Sir Paul Hasluck's 1977 memoir Mucking About. Hasluck, in later life, was reflecting on how deeply the war was felt in the bush and the effect of the casualty lists on small country towns.

The second was an account of survival from the sinking of HMAS Yarra in 1942, read by HMAS Stirling's Commanding Officer, Captain William 'Cam' Hooper. It came from the recollections in the 1980s of a terminally ill George Orton from the North Beach Sub-Branch. Mr Orton's account was of the grim days spent on a life raft, drifting at sea. The final reading, as the service came to a close, was the incomparable sets of orders given by LT Frank Bethune MC in France 1918, read by Brigadier Damien Bushell.

As the State President recorded, we also farewelled the 2026 State Warden, Commodore Warwick Gately AM (retd) and welcomed new State Warden, Colonel Geoff Simpson OAM RFD (retd).

We were especially glad to welcome a large contingent of US Navy personnel to the service and to Anzac House afterwards. With the presence of both Royal Navy and United States Navy personnel at the service, it is clear that AUKUS is gathering momentum. It also highlights our role in ensuring we are there to support current serving members and their families and to make welcome our allies.

That night, the State President and I attended an event at Parliament House for the veteran community. Reflecting on that event and the coverage of the service in mainstream and social media, I was struck again by the breadth of what we do, RSL WA's reach, but how rarely it is specifically recognised or acknowledged. We are the indispensable ex-service organisation, and while we must remain humble, we need to find ways to tell our story more.

Membership renewals

As a legacy of old membership regime, we are heading into a period where the majority of memberships are set for renewal. This will gradually change over time as member's renewal occurs on the anniversary of them joining the League, but for now it remains a busy time.

I renewed last week. I had to update my credit card details because my credit card had expired, but the process took one to two minutes. It is easy and user friendly. I will receive my membership card (which I've never had to use) shortly. I checked the system, as membership officers are able to do, and all my details were there up to date. The system works.

To our membership officers in Sub-Branches, please direct your members to the portal. If you have a member who is less computer savvy or is unsure, this is a great opportunity for you to assist them. I know some Sub-Branches are embracing this – City of Cockburn is one such example. We are also available to help in these situations.

But the days of membership officers submitting capitation forms from Sub-Branches are over. It is unbelievably resource intensive for everyone involved and is completely unjustifiable when our membership portal is there for use. Just because that's the way it was done in the past, doesn't mean it's the way we should do it now.

Our mission is to support veterans and their families. Please be mindful that having staff reconcile hand-written capitation forms, sorting out bank transfers with no names, or taking $40 in cash from members who pop into town, or paying over the phone, is not necessarily the best use of our finite resources.

We understand changes can take time to adjust to, but we ask that you don't take frustration out on our staff.

Goldsworthy Centre update

Janine Gardner – Goldsworthy Centre Manager



The Goldsworthy Veterans and Families Centre is officially open! The Goldsworthy Centre (GC) offers a welcoming, safe and relaxing place where defence members, their families and carers can connect, find support and be directed to the right services.

Since opening, we have already welcomed over 150 people through our doors. Some have been accessing support services and joining social connection activities, while others have simply come in for a look around and to enjoy the feel of the place, especially the massage chairs. The centre is a dry, free, non-clinical and family-inclusive space, and our Liaison Officers are here to help navigate the support available. We are also lucky to be linked with RSL Sub-Branches at Rockingham, Kwinana, Port Kennedy and Mandurah, the Veteran Transition Centre at Jarrahdale and Campbell Support Centre in Swanbourne for further support.

We have some great events coming up, including our first family Christmas celebration, so if you're in the area, please drop in. We are open Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm, at 65 Dixon Road, Rockingham. You can reach us on 08 9287 3785 or at GCEvents@rslwa.org.au.

We look forward to seeing you at the GC soon.

Anzac Day 2027

As the year draws to an end it is also timely Sub-Branches begin looking at planning for your Anzac Day events. Please take the time to read through the below. Over the coming months, further information will be published on the RSL WA website.

1. **Guidelines for planning Sub-Branch Anzac Day events**
    a. See guideline document HERE

2. **March registrations & Two-Up Permits**
    a. City of Perth March Registrations will open in December and close in February, with the Order of March published by 31 March 2027. Notification of registrations opening will be sent via email to previously registered individuals, groups and bands and advertised on the RSL WA website.
    b. The request for Two-Up permits will open in the December SBS. If you require a Two-Up Permit for your Sub-Branch events please take note you will be required to submit your application by 22 January 2027.

3. **Lotterywest Sub-Branch Applications**
    - Monday 30 November 2026 – Sub-Branches to have completed and submitted their application (no extensions).
    - Friday 18 December 2026 – Approval of funds confirmed to Sub-Branches – this will be a preliminary approval of funds applied for, as change may occur due to what funds Lotterywest approve. Sub-Branches will receive a confirmation email via Surepact (you do not need to reply or do anything with this email – it is basically advising you of your approved funds).
    - Wednesday 5 May 2027 (date TBC) – Webinar with Surepact and Sub-Braches to assist with their acquittal.
    - Friday 21 May 2027 – Acquittals need to be submitted by Sub-Branches.
    - Friday 25 June 2027 – Funds will be reimbursed to Sub-Branches by Head Office.

Please note: All correspondence will be sent via the RSL WA approved emails to the Secretary and Treasurer for each Sub-Branch (private emails will not be used).

Nominations for ANZAC Awards open

In its desire to honour those who serve in peace as well as perpetuating the memory and gallantry of those who served in war, The Returned & Services League of Australia has established a series of national honours – the ANZAC Awards.

AWARD CRITERIA

The RSL ANZAC Peace Prize, announced annually, is awarded by the RSL to 'recognise any outstanding effort by an Australian citizen who has promoted the concept of international understanding and who, in so doing, has made a contribution to world peace.'

Eligibility: Any Australian citizen, or one who has made an application to become an Australian citizen. The Prize will recognise the efforts of ordinary people. Those recognised will be average Australians who in some special and dedicated manner have made a real contribution to international peace and goodwill. The Prize may also be granted to individuals and groups who collectively have achieved this aim.

The Award: The Prize itself is a silver medallion, struck by the Perth Mint, depicting the legendary 'Simpson' of Gallipoli and his donkey, presented in a specially designed presentation case. The Medallion is accompanied by a miniature silver lapel badge and a certificate setting out the nature of the Prize and the citation on which the award was given.

The RSL ANZAC of the Year Awards are made annually 'to recognise the efforts and achievements of up to seven Australians who have given service to their fellow Australians and to the community in a positive, selfless and compassionate manner.'

Eligibility: Nominations may be made on behalf of any Australian citizen, or one who has made an application to become an Australian citizen. The awards may be made to individuals or groups who have demonstrated the spirit of comradeship and selfless service embodied in the tradition of ANZAC.

The Award: The Awards are bronze medallions depicting ‘Simpson’ of Gallipoli and his donkey, and are presented in a specially designed presentation case. The Medallion is accompanied by a miniature bronze lapel badge for everyday wear and a certificate setting out the nature of the Award and the citation on which the award was given.

Presentation: The Prize is presented in conjunction at the RSL WA State Congress.

HOW AND WHEN TO NOMINATE:

Nominations in the first instance should be submitted and processed through RSL Sub-Branches. Please note a statement of support is required by the Sub-Branch.

Nominations along with citations/references providing full details of the nominee’s service and background should then be forwarded by Sub-Branches to the Chairman of the Committee for the ANZAC Awards at RSL WA.

Nominations should be received by RSL WA by early February.

Please contact RSL WA’s Executive Assistant for the exact cut-off date. Nomination forms are available at any time.

New initiative puts veterans in control of their medical imaging

RSL WA and Singular Health are working together to explore a better way for veterans to access their healthcare information.

Transitioning from active service to civilian life can mean new doctors, specialists and healthcare systems, and medical imaging and health information may be held across different providers' systems.

When veterans change doctors, move location or need specialist care, getting previous information to the right person isn’t always simple.

The 3DICOM® Patient Veterans Initiative aims to make this process easier by providing veterans with a digital platform to access, view and manage their medical imaging from a phone or computer. The platform also allows veterans to securely share their scans with doctors and specialists, giving them greater control over their healthcare information as they transition to civilian life.

Singular Health’s Managing Director and CEO, Denning Chong, welcomed the partnership with RSL WA.

“We are pleased to be working with RSL WA to bring 3DICOM® Patient to Western Australia's veteran and Defence community,” he said.

“This initiative gives us the opportunity to demonstrate the value of our patient platform, and we look forward to supporting those who have served as they transition to civilian healthcare.”

Visit **https://3dicomviewer.com/rsl-wa-landing-page** to learn more about the RSL WA and Singular Health pilot and register your interest.

Vale Mavis Bennetts | 15/06/1924–16/10/2026

Albany RSL Matriarch

Words: Michael Tugwell

Mavis passed away on 16 October, aged 102 years, four months and one day. As such being our Matriarch and, in addition, was actually our Sub-Branches oldest member. Her funeral was held at the Allambie Park cemetery on 27 October, run by daughter Suzanne (celebrant).

It was a long funeral with many stories and laughs in accordance with the strict instructions of Mavis. Those gathered heard stories of an early childhood growing up near Cunderdin WA during the great depression. These included a young Mavis rising at midnight to drive the horse and sulky while her father pulled the rabbit traps to help earn a meagre living.

Once old enough during the Second World War, Mavis attempted to join the WRAAF only to be seconded to the Defence Manpower Scheme, employed as a Telephonist to support the RAAF training base at Cunderdin. Mavis saw the war out in this role. During our many conversations over the years Mavis told me, “Us girls ran socials and dances for the trainee pilots and when they deployed, we would take turns at writing to them so they would receive a letter from a different girl every two weeks. Sadly, once the lists came out of those killed, their names were crossed off the writing lists.”

I relayed this story to the assembly at the funeral while speaking on behalf of the RSL. Other stories I shared were of Mavis attending the RSL B&B functions and having a couple of “Small Sherries”. This would leave us with a half bottle of sherry so I would slip it into her bag for small night caps for Mavis, as required!

We also spoke of Mavis at the age of 96 doing the Second World War spoon dance at the Anzac Function now six years ago, it brought the roof down. Sadly, it is unlikely we will ever see another Second World War veteran do the same! The final account was regarding Anzac as Mavis got older and the requirement for detailed coordination to ensure to get her to Anzac Day. As such, her daughter Suzanne and I would do extensive work to set up the plan, complete with backups etc. About four years ago, having duly done the planning early I was enjoying a pre-Anzac de-stress on my Bulldozer pushing trees on the farm. The phone rang, I idled the dozer down, and it was Mavis. She instructed me to turn the dozer off as she needed to do Anzac coordination with me.

Despite my protests and assurances (to no avail) I was kept on the phone for 15 minutes until she was happy that all was in order and I was duly released to the dozer again!

Mavis was buried in the same plot as her late Husband Bill. After a long and fruitful life, may she rest in peace.

WA Regional NFP Scholarship Program | 19–20 May 2027

The not-for-profit sector plays a vital role across Western Australia, providing essential services, supporting communities and creating employment across metropolitan and regional WA.

Behind these organisations are directors and boards making important decisions about sustainability, impact and the communities they serve.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors, Regional Not-for-Profit Scholarship Program supports the next generation of regional NFP directors.

Open to both AICD members and non-members the 2026/27 program offers up to 25 scholarship places, covering the full course cost of AICD's facilitator-led Governance Foundations for Not-for-Profit Directors.

Date: 19–20 May 2027
Location: Bunbury, WA
Applications close Friday, 5 March 2027, or earlier if the program is full.
Submit your interest to scholarships@aicd.com.au

For emerging directors, this is an opportunity to strengthen practical governance capability, build confidence around the board table and increase the impact in the organisations and communities they serve.

If you know an emerging NFP director, community leader or someone in your regional network who could benefit from this opportunity, please share this information.

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)