



## Returned and Services League NSW

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Update on strategic planning for 2019 – 2021

July 2019

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# RSL NSW is now looking to renew its strategy to take to Congress 2019

## Background

- RSL NSW is looking to complete the strategic planning process in 2019 and have a strategic plan to share with Members at the October 2019 congress in the form of a 'strategy on a page' (supported by additional background information)
- The consultation with members that took place in 2017 & 18 provided a sound basis for our strategy that will also need to reflect a changed organisation and environment post the Bergin Inquiry and the recognition of compliance and governance gaps

## SVA's project

- The key components of this project will be to:
  - Revisit the previous member consultation and identify any key changes (external and internal to RSL NSW)
  - Identify and elevate the key focus areas for the next three years and articulate a plan to achieve priority objectives, including an outline of the financial implications
  - Test the key strategic themes, decisions and actions with the Board, District Council and Members

# RSL NSW identified the value proposition for Veterans, Families and the General Public

2017  
consultation

## VALUE PROPOSITION

## KEY SERVICES



### Veterans

RSL NSW advocates to the government on my behalf and provides me with opportunities

RSL NSW is there for my family while I am away

RSL NSW helps me make the move to the civilian world

RSL NSW provides the camaraderie I lost when I left active service

RSL NSW is there for me and my family in good times and tough

- Policy advocacy
- Deployment support (for families)
- Transition support
- Community
- Remembrance
- Financial support
- Referral support
- Case management
- Aged care



### Families

RSL NSW is there for us when our loved one is deployed or based somewhere away from us

RSL NSW supports us to become more resilient

- Community
- Remembrance
- Policy advocacy
- Financial support
- Referral support
- Deployment support
- Transition support
- Aged care

### General public

RSL NSW supports veterans and their families

RSL NSW helps us understand and honour the commitment made by serving personnel

- Remembrance
- Commemoration
- Education
- Fundraising & volunteer opportunities

# Proposed four strategic goals from 2017 stakeholder consultation

2017  
consultation

- 1**  
**Build a modern, effective organisation**  
RSL NSW aspires to be a modern, effective organisation to better serve veterans and their families. Achieving this goal will require RSL NSW to modernise its processes, systems, governance and communications to more effectively deliver on its purpose
- 2**  
**Adapt to needs of the cohorts we serve**  
RSL NSW wants to understand the needs of its membership, veterans and their families to align its services, support and advocacy to their needs
- 3**  
**Be the voice for veterans and their families**  
RSL NSW wants to be the voice for veterans and their families. To accomplish this goal, RSL NSW will need to focus on re-building its brand and developing its policy advocacy capabilities
- 4**  
**Operate as a League**  
RSL NSW wants to operate as a league through improving internal collaboration, governance and helping sub-Branches

## So far in this project SVA has...

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- **Reviewed 2017 and 2018 consultation information, including:**
  - Notes from consultations with RSL NSW Leadership and RSL NSW State Council Members
  - Membership survey with over 1700 responses
  - Consultation with District Councils (attendance at some meetings) and some sub-Branches (attendance at meetings)
  - Meetings with current serving stakeholders
  - Meetings with ex-service organisations
- **Undertaken consultations in June and July 2019 with:**
  - Senior Executive Team
  - The Board
  - District Council Presidents & Hon Secretaries

# Over the past 18 months, significant progress has been made in key areas

Work in  
progress

- Responding to the ACNC Enforceable Undertaking, Bergin Inquiry and legislative changes
- Commenced review of Constitution and By-Laws
- Built ANZAC House capability – a new professional team at ANZAC House bringing into the League expertise in vital areas such as governance, law, financial analysis, and property management
- Built professional Board processes
- Established VSA to support health and well-being sport and recreational activities for veterans & families
- Financial management - Completed audited financial statements for RSL NSW, RSL WBI, ANZAC House Trust and AFOF for 2016 and 2017; changed financial systems
- Governance and compliance – resolving issues with Trusts
- Advocacy
  - Submissions to the Productivity Commission review into Veterans Compensation and Rehabilitation
  - Submission to the Cornall review of Veterans Advocacy Services
  - Senate inquiries into transition from defence, and Mefloquine
- Communications – regular State Secretary and President communications; new website planned
- Membership process reviewed, streamlined and soon to be rolled out throughout the network
- Upgraded IT hardware and systems to streamline operations, reduce running costs and improve efficiency
- Governance training for sub-Branch Executives and Trustees commenced
- Establishment of dedicated member & sub-Branch support unit

## However, in other areas progress has been slower

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- Constitutional reform is still in progress
  - Next version will have the required legislative changes
  - Further modernisation of the constitution will be an ongoing process
- Earning the trust of members continues to be a challenge
- The membership signalled that work on a strategic plan and constitution in 2018 was too much; strategic planning process deferred until 2019 to focus on constitutional change
- Growing membership has not had enough focus, with sub-Branches facing closure as members age and fewer interested in managing a sub-Branch.
- Rebuilding the public reputation of RSL NSW
- The membership/charity issue is not yet resolved - members are a sub-set of those we help

## There have also been a number of important shifts in the environment

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- Important inquiries and findings
  - Productivity Commission review into Veterans Compensation and Rehabilitation
  - Cornall review of Veterans Advocacy Services
  - Senate inquiries into transition from defence
- Still no RSL National voice and attempts to reinvigorate RSL National into a more effective operation have not yet succeeded
- The State RSLs are all slowly evolving but are all at different stages of progress
  - RSL QLD – well funded; constitutional change still ongoing
  - RSL WA – emerging from a difficult period; recent changes to DGR and PBI status
  - RSL SA – recently out of administration
  - RSL VIC – issues emerging
- Other ESOs
  - Small ESOs continuing to emerge
  - No peak body; RSL's leadership affected by recent internal troubles

# There is also a strong desire from Members to see a more explicit strategic direction for RSL NSW

“RSL NSW also desperately needs a Strategic Directions Plan for the next 20 to 30 years, to guide it appropriately in matters such as considering a proposed new Constitution.”

“Where is the overall strategic plan? Where are budget and financial forecast details? Why is State Council appearing to blame sub-Branches for the mess that NSW RSL now finds itself in.”

“The RSL has been in existence for a hundred years, if it's going to remain the premier organisation representing Veterans of past conflicts and current members of the ADF into the future it needs to remain relevant...right now I don't believe it has the relevancy to attract the 'contemporary' veteran.”

“Many of the sub-Branches will in my view due to the age and numbers of their current membership be forced to amalgamate or shut up shop within 2 to 5 years. At present even some with adequate funds to keep going will not be able to have volunteers young enough to stand on their Executive.”

“The RSL Brand is severely damaged... (promote) our chore charter namely - to support all Veterans and their families, young and old, with dignity and respect.”

“A different operational model is required that will better engage the service members and the public by bringing the RSL brand and it's management closer to the communities it serves.”

“Just get on with it. The Sub Branches are hurting, losing members and respect we have earned through our service.”

“The skill sets of sub branches and State Branch have to be considered before implementing changes. This means a lot of ongoing training and investment in systems.”

“Some Sub Branches are forecasting loss of members, closure of Sub Branches and resultant degradation of welfare for Veterans and the ex Service Community”

# Four (working draft) principles are defining the strategy

Work in progress

**1**

## Fulfil RSL NSW purpose

- Advocate for veterans and their families
- Help meet the needs of veterans and their families
- Uphold responsibility for remembrance
- Provide camaraderie

**2**

## Build trust with members

- Be transparent & open
- Better understand the roles of sub-Branches and ANZAC House
- Provide opportunities for members to have a say & be receptive
- Show respect & be reliable

**3**

## Increase RSL NSW relevance

- To members and all veterans and their families
- To the public
- To other agencies supporting veterans and their families (government, ESOs, etc)

**4**

## Strengthen RSL NSW

- Cementing values
- Repairing governance & compliance
- Improving the operations of ANZAC House
- Better integration between professionals and volunteers

Work in progress

# Four themes are prominent, with many questions to be resolved

## Themes

## Questions to be resolved

**Articulate a position on key issues for RSL NSW and describe what RSL NSW is doing about these issues**

- What are we offering to veterans and their families?
- What does membership offer veterans and their families?
- How do we interact with RSL National and other state RSLs?
- Do we take advocacy positions and what are they?
- How do we engage with ESOs?

**How to engage the next generation of potential members**

- What is the role of sub-Branches? Remembrance, camaraderie, community engagement?
- Should there be a plan for every sub-Branch including succession plans, activities, financial sustainability?
- Are there new models for attracting veterans to RSL NSW?

**Continue to improve services for veterans and their families**

- How do we bring professional services (RSL DefenceCare, VSA) to regional NSW and across the Sydney metropolitan area?
- What can VSA become?

**Ensure that the organisation can be sustainable for the next 100 years**

- How can we work together to deliver on the RSL NSW purpose?
- How do we continue to revise the constitution and keep it current?
- What is needed to continue to improve our help for veterans and their families; meet the changing needs of the community in areas such as governance and compliance; and keep up-to-date with society improvements in health and wellbeing generally.

*Questions should be answered in the context of the strategy principles, and whether the answer is aligned with one or more of the principles*

Purpose

**Respecting, supporting and remembering our veterans and their families**

Strategy pillars



**Champion remembrance and camaraderie**



**Meet the health, wellbeing and support needs of veterans and their families**



**Be the voice for veterans and their families**



**Govern responsibly to fulfil our charitable purpose**

Focus

Remember the past, honour veterans and their families and provide camaraderie opportunities

Understand evolving areas of need, provide services and find ways to engage

RSL NSW advocates for and represents veterans and their families

Building trust through transparency and sound management

Actions

- Be representative
- Stay true to core values
- Support camaraderie
- Support sub-Branches
- Build new ways to engage
- Respect and receptivity

- Develop and deliver services appropriate for all veterans and their families
- Measure outcomes
- Support for regional NSW
- Working with ESOs, government and community organisations

- Policy
- Advocacy
- Government Relationships
- Image and brand
- Fundraising
- Partnerships

- Open communication
- Strong governance
- Constitutional reform
- Skills-based board
- Optimise finances to achieve the charitable purpose
- Accountability