

RSL NSW Strategic Plan 2020-2025 – Draft for Consultation

Observations & Comments

The SP Consultation Document (SPCD) gives us all the opportunity to contribute to what will be the guiding principles for change – when endorsed it will form a workable action plan in achieving its stated goals and objectives.

The preamble - 'Case for Change' and 'What Success Will Look Like' leaves one in no doubt as to the circumstances in which RSL NSW finds itself – in a word it is precarious. The narrative describing how this situation is to be addressed is of course optimistic but for the most part plausible. It will be predicated on a fundamental premise demanding a need for a cultural change centred on a unity of purpose in the way RSL NSW proposes to undertake its charitable operation.

Observations - First Principles:

RSL NSW is a Charity – an organisation with specific purposes defined in law to be charitable – and is exclusively for public benefit. It is not mentioned in the SPCD, we as RSL NSW members and most importantly the Board need to be constantly reminded of this unique and important privilege. Front and centre.

Welfare – What is it? – 'The health, happiness, and fortunes of a person or group and *provision of or access to services for veterans and their families who are socially disadvantaged or in need.*' It is not identified as part of the Purpose, Vision, Strategic Goals, or Shared Values. It is fundamental to what RSL NSW is about.

Unity – 'The state of being united or joined as a whole' – a word and accompanying phrase which summarises what RSL NSW is aspiring to achieve. Respectively it should form part of the narrative.

Comments:

Strategic Goals

The seven Strategic Goals incorporating some 47 Priority Initiatives presents a monumental challenge for the RSL NSW Board recognising their complexity and given the five year timeline. The challenge is all the more overwhelming because as it stands sub-Branches have a reputation for 'introspection and isolation due to a lack of trust in strategic leadership'. Added to this is the unfortunate financial predicament (aside from a few quite wealthy sub-Branches) as a result of diminishing cash flow which is debilitating RSL NSW having an effective operational capability.

It is respectively suggested that of the 7 strategic goals 1-5 may not be effectively implemented until 6 and 7 has been for the most part successfully accomplished. Consideration might be given to fast tracking certain Priority Initiatives at 6 and 7 while steadily developing 1-5 concurrently.

The stated Goals including 'Our Priority Initiatives', as presented appears to be weighed down in considerable detail however, for the most part its content explains clearly what the priorities are and how they are to be achieved.

Following a brief on-line review of the RSL Qld Strategic Plan 2025 one might ask “if it isn’t broken why fix it” – it contains much that is worthy of our consideration not the least brevity and pithiness and while we are exploring the virtues of future collaboration let us not be too proud to engage and heaven forbid even copy or better still incorporate as appropriate.

Annexure

Both provided a worthwhile illustration and description proposing an organisational network and financial concept. Of the two the Financial Resource Management Concept (Annexure A, part 2) will test the fortitude of the sub-Branches in their willingness to at least consider the prospect for fundamental root and branch change through a collaborative investment mechanism. This at least provides an opportunity for discussion and debate. A different approach!

To the elephant in the room, well there are probably many (a herd) but perhaps three stand-out:

i. Marketing the point of Difference – RSL NSW v RSL Clubs Ltd

The average Joe has no idea that RSL NSW is a charity and that it is a completely separate entity to RSL Clubs Ltd. Unquestionably for the SP to progress and for it to be successfully embraced, the point of difference must be understood and recognised by the public at large. A very significant multi media campaign will be required.

ii. Unity of Purpose

The SP will likely fail without the overwhelming support of the RSL NSW membership. As members of the hundreds of sub-Branches we must make this happen. As an organisation we are on notice. It is up to us to come together in a show of unity and solidarity.

iii. Presence, Profile & Brand Identify

It is evident that many RSL NSW sub-branches operating within the confines of a RSL Club with the possible exception of displaying memorabilia do not exhibit a prominent profile - there is no obvious brand identify. Club patrons have a very limited exposure or knowledge if any as to what a sub-Branch does. Those creaky doors need to be flung open.

In Closing

Following a compelling presentation to the Wauchope sub-Branch members by RSL NSW Acting President Ray James and CEO Jon Black last week we were invited to submit feedback. I hope that this offering will be of some use. Their collective commitment and determination to have the SPCD explained and debated is gratifying. It is another important step toward repairing a tarnished reputation.

Thank you for the opportunity.