

**To: NMDC (Attn: President and Mike Fish)**

**Cc:**

GM MS&SS

GM S&C

Support (File)

Dear Mike,

**Response from CEO on NMDC feedback on draft strategic plan**

Thank you for providing the NMDC feedback on the draft RSL NSW Strategic Plan. I apologise for my tardiness in responding, but it seems your report was misplaced in the email system. I thank you for organising the workshop with your DC representatives and presenting such a detailed report.

Before COVID 19 related shutdowns we had completed many sub-Branch member consultations on the strategic plan - face to face so we could listen to members' views, and this has been most beneficial. This face to face approach is very important and I would like an opportunity to meet with your members at some stage to help me better understand their views, and some of the comments made in your report.

May I offer the following brief comments in response to your report:

1. Objective Measures – this is the first consultation to rank the importance of initiatives, which is very useful, but there are a couple of questions arising because of the interdependency of some initiatives.
2. Ranking of Goals. Correct, this has not been done, we have not identified one goal as being more important than others. On the ground I have found that Goal 3 receives a lot of attention, but many aspects of the plan cannot be achieved without a positive outcome in Goal 7. I think the final plan will be able to group some Goals.
3. I'm not sure what is meant by 'transiting out of active service' – is this separating those ADF personnel who have been force assigned to a 'warlike' operation from those who have not? That would quite difficult I think, it hasn't been raised elsewhere.
4. I agree and many others also do about more effective advocacy, including influencing the ADF. Having recently approached many senior ADF figures (commissioned and non-commissioned) the RSL is not in the main well regarded because what is not being done to support veterans, and too much introspection. There is also still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding between clubs and sub-Branches that will have to be addressed per the proposed strategic plan. The ADF's perception on RSL (out of date) can easily be changed, and should be a priority.
5. RSL National – agreed – this is a major work in progress – as per recent Board Communique. State Presidents have agreed to meet again post COVID 19 restrictions to address weaknesses and remedy the current ineffective structure.
6. Comment about infrastructure? – I will have to seek some clarifications.
7. Very pleased to see agreement about the need for strong coordinated RSL presence on ADF bases. This will be critical in addressing the perception issue mentioned above.
8. Agree about comment 8 and I have met with senior ADF and DVA personnel about this – it ties with the concept of national mobile membership.
9. Comment 9 is a fundamental issue. As a charity, a member of the charity *can't* obtain benefits (this came out of Bergin – and for instance why State Branch had to stop 'member discounts' at the Hyde Park Inn because that is a benefit to a member) – BUT, and this is

why it's important to have Face to Face consultation, there are complications for the RSL in so much a 'veteran in need' (the charitable purpose) CAN receive charitable benefits. What this strategic plan is suggesting is members get benefit through camaraderie and ACTIVITIES amongst sub-Branches, not so much meetings, so members have FUN and this provides 'membership benefit.' But arguably, the biggest reason for becoming a member is to deliver the charitable purpose as a volunteer – that is, to help others – and a key plank is for some members (hopefully many) is to become trained 'veteran sponsors.' These people connect veterans in need to services to make sure they receive the assistance they need. Through this process many will want to join an organisation that is doing things and having fun! Discrete services outside of this are provided by other organisations, some of which, like RSL DefenceCare, are funded by our charitable effort. RSL needs to be a leader – and other ESOs need to be absorbed. Several members and sub-Branches for instance have said the Vietnam Veterans Assn should be absorbed into the RSL because so much membership is duplicated. (I like this idea because the VVs were treated so badly – on the main – by the RSL when they returned)

10. Comment 10 – macro consistency only – access to common quality products to support local activities conducted by members
11. Comment 11 – absolutely critical. Other ESOs are already taking over ANZAC day commemorations in some locations so the RSL, wanting to remain the leader in this area, will need to work together with strength and commitment.
12. Comment 14. Agreed, evidence is strong that while volunteering can be strong, belonging to an organisation is rapidly diminishing.
13. Rating Goal 5.5. This is very interesting and from recollection to date the first time this has been raised so significantly. This signals some significant opposition of combining all State Branches, and putting aside the federated model. The latter has been raised in the context of the operating models (which don't seem to have been considered in the NMDC submission?? – separate paper for consideration)
14. Comment 17. This is an imperative – and it should be an 'RSL NSW' table, coordinated by trained volunteer attendance supported by State Branch where possible. Ideally, per strategic plan, this would be coordinated by the District where the seminar is occurring. Presently RSL DefenceCare establishes a presence, but this is not covering membership of the RSL – joining an organisation for benefits of camaraderie, and helping veterans in need.
15. Comment 18. Free travel will require clarification. It's not clear what this is in regards to in the submission?
16. Comment 20. This State-based resource will be critical. RSL Qld has nearly 300 staff in its State Branch HQ (primarily funded by the Art Union) and can afford a complete communications and marketing capability. RSL NSW from Jul 20 will have fewer than 25 staff to cover *all* functions – however communications and marketing should be high priority for funding. The proposed 'One RSL' funding model will assist in achieving this, and the implementation of the strategic plan.
17. Comment 21. Agreed and fundraising keeps RSL brand presence in the community. The plan proposes to ensure local funds raised stay local.
18. Comment 22. NMDC might not be aware of changes made since Nov 19. By 1 July 20 State Branch entire staff will be reduced to 24 – only two exec at 'GM' level including the CEO. Still, this small structure will only be affordable with support of the sub-Branches. The CEO or CFO provides a full brief at F2F consultations at sub-Branches. NMDC sub-Branches are encouraged to conduct consultation sessions on the strategic plan to learn more, and assist in setting benchmarks. I have discovered during the F2F consultations that not many members are aware of how many entities have to be supported by State Branch, such as Custodian Pty Ltd, RSL WBI, AFOF, ANZAC House Trust etc. and what each entity does.

19. Comment 25. This feedback will require further exploration. The success of the RSL in delivering its charitable purpose will be the successful implementation of 'veteran sponsors' – which has been rated 'not important.' As suggested, this matter may have to be made clearer in the plan. At the moment the State Branch is essentially funded by the Hyde Park Inn alone – which if operating at maximum return will provide sufficient funding for approximately 12-15 staff at ANZAC House – sufficient basically to 'keep the lights on' and basic compliance activities. This is why the proposed funding model is critical, and why as the plan suggests is looking for future funding streams because community fundraising is becoming more difficult with so many competing charities; and corporate fundraising is challenging because of brand association with registered clubs that 'make millions from pokies.'
20. Comment 26. This will need to be explained. Younger veterans want to join an organisation that does things, not just attend meetings – and many don't like association with clubs. Therefore measures can be put in place as membership and participation grows when activities of interest grow.
21. Comment 27. Strongly agree, see response to Comment 25. And comment 28 is noted, but local fundraising is considered vital to continue as brand association is critical. If RSL vacates the 'field' other ESOs will fill it and takeover commemoration too – as has already started. The community associate ANZAC Day with the RSL because of community presence.
22. Interesting to see the NMDC rate Goal 7.6 so highly. At least two staff will be required for this effectively, with set goals – cost/benefit to be worked out. Or does the NMDC think this could be done by volunteers?
23. Very pleased to see the need for a 'catalogue' is rated so highly, but the corresponding veteran sponsors low – this will need to be explored further. You will see in the strategic plan budget estimate the cost for doing the catalogue, and maintaining it over time. It is a fundamental requirement for the strategic plan though.
24. Comment 31. Yes, standard program reporting required. Projects sponsors accountability – generally members will see regular reporting on: scope, schedule, budget and risk.
25. Comment 32. Critical – the corresponding funding model, and members support to implement the plan will be essential.

The feedback is very helpful, and I would appreciate an opportunity to follow up with sub-Branches and members on some of the matters raised. Thank you again for conducting a workshop and passing on the outcomes.

Regards, Jon

**Jonathan Black**

Chief Executive Officer