Considering Different Models

The board considered a range of operating models that varied from decentralised through to more centralised approaches. Even to the consideration of a national model in line with the original intent of the RSL when it was established in 1917. Whichever model was chosen it had to support the delivery of RSL NSW's purpose to support veterans and their families through the implementation of the strategic plan.

Decentralised Models

The decentralised models explored included drawing together like-minded sub-Branches into decentralised entities. Variations on this being operating as either contiguous geographic 'districts' or as 'franchises'; not necessarily bound by geographic location. Either of these two options would see the State Branch being limited to a coordination role – 'heavy' (e.g. including staff to oversee strategic plan) or 'light'. These models were deemed not necessarily efficient and contrary to fundamental consideration 2 above, and in time would see the strategic decline of the RSL brand in NSW, as identified in the draft strategic plan.

Financial viability and the ongoing sustainability of services to veterans in NSW requires the organisation to optimise the efficiency of our service delivery and products to ensure that veterans are equally served in the distribution of those services.

An example was provided at the recent Ramsgate consultation on the strategic plan. The CEO was provided with brochures about member recruitment and services from RSL Queensland and Soldier On and was asked to replicate for NSW. Doing this is very challenging under the current model where there is no financial ability to produce such products without asking for sub-Branch contributions, which is inefficient and inequitable. Moreover, it becomes problematic when one sub-Branch or 'district' produces a product that is not consistent with another. As the strategic plan suggests, RSL NSW needs a strong and united presence at activities such as ADF transition seminars and base open days, and this is difficult to achieve if sub-Branches or even districts act independently.

Centralised Models

In considering more centralised models, the board asked the CEO to ascertain the option of NSW sub-Branches coming directly under a national body. RSL Queensland with a State Branch of over 300 staff already financially supports three other states/territories and has a strategic plan to significantly increase its commercially derived revenue (ostensibly by expanding its successful lottery) to become 'RSL Australia'.

With such a well-funded administrative function it has the capability to expand its 'footprint' and directly administer NSW sub-Branches and provide veteran services, as it does to Queensland sub-Branches. Informal discussions with RSL Queensland to test their appetite for supporting such an option have been positive. However, although the RSL NSW Board has significant reservations about the efficacy of the scale of 'RSL Australia' and other concerns, this option should be considered by members. A variation of this model would see

RSL NSW State Branch as a subsidiary of RSL Australia, but in this case the NSW executive would have to acknowledge that the funding and therefore control would come from Queensland, or 'RSL Australia'.

The second option for a centralised model would see a strong NSW State Branch providing reliable administrative support for the consistent delivery of brand experience and equitable access to camaraderie and veteran services. This would be enabled through a strong network of 'veteran centres', districts, and with the sub-Branch at the centre of everything we do – supporting all veterans and their families, per the proposed strategic plan.

It was further noted that many sub-Branches have successfully developed a local sub-brand, including brochures, and many have their own websites. This has led to brand and market confusion – including between clubs and sub-Branches. By centralising funding and support of these efforts, RSL NSW can deliver a more comprehensive service and membership offering with clear and consistent branding, thereby fulfilling fundamental considerations 1 and 3.