

# Minutes of a meeting of the Steering Committee for District Rationalisation Project, on Monday 23 August at 5:00pm



**PRESENT:** Mr Andrew Moore (Chair)  
Mr Steve Graham (RSL NSW Director)  
**Via Teams** Mr David McCann (RSL NSW Director)  
Mrs Sandra Lambkin (New England District Council)  
Mr Bill Hardman (Northern Beaches District Council)

**APOLOGIES:** NIL

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr Jon Black (Chief Executive Officer)  
Mr Jeff O'Brien (Head of Member Services and State Secretary)  
Ms Tracey Roberts (Secretariat)

**OPENING:** The Chair declared the meeting open at 5:02pm

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** **CEO RSL NSW Welcome and Introductions**  
Agenda and ToR provided were taken as read by the Committee.

Mr Black welcomed the Committee members and thanked them for their contribution to this project. An introduction to the Independent Chair Mr Andrew Moore followed with a brief framework for the project noting that the committee would be providing recommendations to the Board, and both Mr Black and Mr O'Brien will be completing the tasks as directed by the Committee.

Mr Black thanked Mr Moore for his agreement to volunteer to Chair the Steering Committee and commended Mr Moore's experience and knowledge to the attendees.

Mr Moore responded and thanked all participants to the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee. He gave a brief overview of his experience and qualifications declaring that he was not a member of RSL NSW and in that stead is totally independent and committed to a consultative progression of the Committee.

Mr Moore then invited all members of the Committee to introduce themselves.

Committee Noted.

2. **Opening remarks:** Mr Moore provided an overview of the purpose of the Committee stating that they have no authority to implement decisions, rather are to provide recommendations for the consideration of the RSL NSW Board.

Committee meetings are to be conducted with respect and on a consultative approach. Appreciate and thank you as volunteers and ask that individual benefits/self-interest to be set aside.

Committee noted.

3. **Terms of Reference:** Mr Moore confirmed the first objective under Priority Initiative 5.11 of the RSL NSW Strategic Plan 2021 -2026, RSL NSW Districts are to be rationalised on a sustainability and efficacy basis, with an outcome of reducing from 23 to 10 Districts by 2022.

Mr Moore sought comment and or any concerns from the Committee regarding this first objective. He asked for them to preclude comments relating to timing and costing at this point.

Mrs Lambkin expressed her issue with the definitive number of 10 districts. She shared her experience and thoughts from the 2015 discussions on this priority and stated that there were multiple factors to be considered before simply putting a number on the result. Mrs Lambkin wanted to be assured that the numbers were not set in stone.

Mr Hardman shared the concerns of Mrs Lambkin on the definitive number goal for this priority.

Mr McCann advised he was open minded and would take on board their comments. We would need to consider structures and consider how other organisations were operating particularly in the country/regional areas. Perhaps gaining insight on organisations such as Lions or Rotary for instance.

Mr Graham reminded the Committee that the Board aspiration is for 10 districts as per the Strategic Plan. He remains agnostic towards the numbers as such, it is the fact that there needs to be change and that is what we need to work towards.

Mr O'Brien was invited to comment. His comments were that there is no concrete consensus on the numbers of districts. It is more about thinking inside and outside of the box and what we need to do for the districts to help them.

Mr Black preferred not to comment given that he was to receive the Committee directions. Rather asked that the Committee work through the options rather than simply focusing on the numbers, after the assessment criteria had been determined by the Committee.

Mr Moore summated that as a committee they must come up with a result; at this stage the Board has set an objective of 10 Districts by 2022. If the recommendation results indicate that 10 districts are not the right number of Districts, then the Committee is compelled to provide a substantive explanation and justification as to why the number is different – whether more or less than the 10.

Secondly, under Initiative 5.9, each new District is to be resourced with a Full-Time employee to support the executives of the District and respective sub-Branches in that District. Mr Moore sought comments or concerns from the Committee.

Mr O'Brien asserted his support for this initiative although, he was not in favour of the role title as Secretary. His comment was that the terminology within the League is perhaps something quite different from the actual support role we are looking to fill. Mr O'Brien would like an alternate name to avoid any confusion.

Mr Black interjected that the role was likely to be named District Coordinator to more correctly reflect the support tasks under their responsibility.

Mr Hardman expressed concerns over the expenses and direct reporting lines. He suggested the cost be incurred by the districts themselves and that maybe the role only needs to be part time in some areas. We also need to look at incorporation and possibly call the role an Office Manager?

Mr Moore agreed that further consideration needed to be made on the size and demands of the districts. However, his question then was if the Committee was in favour of the initiative and was it a good path?

Mr Graham supported the initiative and stated that the additional resource would assist the district councils in delivering training such as the portal/data training required at sub branches. Mr Graham sees the role as an extension of RSL NSW support to districts.

Mr McCann agreed with Mr Graham also noting that we need to factor in Wellness centres being rolled out and look at the whole organisation regards to where we site these administration staff.

Mrs Lambkin suggested that a state funded administration person who could answers to questions and provide more insight to/from State branch would give more 'pull' to the reduced number of districts and members would have more confidence that they are getting firsthand information.

Mr Moore suggested there may be a number of ideas on how this may be implemented and how this role might be useful moving forward. Mr Black was asked to provide further insight on plans for the role and he suggested the Committee consider a pilot.

Mr Black advised the Committee of the proposal for a pilot program during the period of the review process. This would allow us to ascertain benefits and risks involved in the installation and management of this support role. It would also provide more information on what is required and support building to position statement & responsibilities.

The priority is to support the sub branches and district councils to roll out training and development of office bearers. The likes of portal training and SBA completion.

The initial funding has been provided for within the contributions pool of the strategic plan. That will mean the cost is absorbed across the league not just within a few districts. The Board has approved the deficit for the first financial year in support of the strategic plan but was on pause because of the revenue impacts of the pandemic.

Mr O'Brien advised the Committee the insertion of the Coordinator was partially a self-interest of State branch. Being that some DC and SB are struggling to complete and return SBAs, cannot keep up with communications/technology and are largely impacted by distances between sub branches. This resource would equal better communication within those districts.

Mr Moore suggested that numbers and metrics would need to be provided in support of this pilot project. However, the pilot appears to be a great initiative in the way to gain this data.

Mr Moore consulted the Committee, and **it was agreed to support** the pilot initiative. The pilot would need to be added to the Terms of Reference.

Mr Black advised that he would need to seek approval from the district being considered for this pilot in the first instance before moving forward. The nominated districts are Far Western and Riverina. We need to ensure a structure that is meaningful and respect the current district presidents of those district councils.

Mr Moore stated that apart from the timing and scope that the ToR is directive with respect to outcomes, but the Committee is to determine criteria to the assess options for achieving the desired outcomes. The Committee has no delegated power or authority and are to provide recommendations to the Board for consideration. To ascertain information and research towards these recommendations the Committee through the Chair, may have access to executives with approval of CEO. All requests for information must pass through the Chair. Communications must always remain open and frank.

Funding for any independent professional advice and any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by Steering Committee members will be covered through the strategic plan budget.

With regards to schedule, the Committee will need to give Mr Black and his team sufficient time to complete the tasks.

Discussion was led by Mr Moore regarding timeframes to complete each phase. It was suggested 8 October for Phase 1. Mr Black and Mr O'Brien to update the ToR as per the pilot. Mr Moore advised there needs to be a consultative phase then perhaps a Steering Committee meeting 18 October. Thereafter, some 4-5 months to complete Phase 2 before taking phase 3 to the Board.

Mr O'Brien stated that he believed the timing would work.

Mr Moore suggested that once the paper had been delivered to the Committee then the cycle of meetings would be settled.

The amended schedule **was agreed.**

4. Next steps and future meeting

Mr Moore suggested that once the paper had been delivered to the Committee then the cycle of meetings would be settled.

Inclusion of the pilot program to be included in the ToR. The role description for the pilot District Coordinator would include success measures. The amended District Rationalisation ToR, incorporating a ToR for the pilot will be circulated through the Chair from 8 October.

The paper for the Phase 1 requirements (principles and assessment criteria) will also be distributed through the Chair from 8 October for consideration of the Committee at the next meeting to be scheduled for 18 October 2021.

In closing Mr Moore reiterated this Committee has the opportunity to make decent considered recommendation. He reminded the Committee to retain their objectivity during this process.

Mrs Lambkin offered to share a map of the districts that may help in understanding the distances to be travelled by the Coordinators. Mr Black concurred that safety was a priority consideration.

Mr Moore stated there were a number of factors to be considered by the Committee. There will be compromises that need to be made at times to make this work. It is obvious that 23 DCs are not sustainable so it must be less.

Please note there may be a need for a brief meeting to be convened prior to the 18 October regarding matters of the pilot, after the paper is circulated. You will be informed.

CLOSURE:

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed 5:54pm

CONFIRMED:

CHAIR: Andrew Moore

DATE: