

## National President's Newsletter No 5 of 2014

1. **RSL Supports the Invictus Games.** Earlier this year I received a letter from the then Chief of the Defence Force General David Hurley in which he proposed that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the RSL cooperate in putting together an Australian team for the Invictus Games. General Hurley explained that the inspiration for the Invictus Games came from His Royal Highness Prince Harry and that the Games were intended to assist in the recovery of wounded, injured and ill service and former service personnel.

The Invictus Games are to be held in London, UK from 10 to 14 September 2014 with participants taking part in a wide variety of sporting contests. Invitations to provide teams have been accepted from many of the nations who have been in coalition in recent conflicts such as that in Afghanistan.

It is a great pleasure to advise that the Invictus Games proposal achieved overwhelming support from Branches, Sub Branches, the National Trustees and Mates4Mates. As a consequence I was able to respond to the Chief of the Defence Force confirming that the RSL was delighted to cooperate in this most worthwhile venture.

Donations from all RSL entities totalled more than \$300,000 with the bulk of the funds coming from the NSW Branch. I thank all who worked hard to gather together these donations and those who provided contributions.

In particular I thank NSW State Councillor Darren McManus-Smith who has worked tirelessly on fund raising and organising for the Invictus Games.

The consequence is that the RSL is proudly sponsoring 21 wounded or injured veterans to attend and participate in the Invictus Games. We are also sponsoring an equal number of supporters for these veterans.

They will join up with 15 wounded and injured members of the ADF to form an Australian Invictus Games Team of 36, the third largest contingent after the UK and the USA. Other nations taking part include Georgia, Estonia, Italy, Canada and New Zealand.

The Australian team includes men and women from all States and from all three services.

The ADF and the RSL agreed on designs for the sporting clothing to be worn by the Invictus Games athletes. The RSL then offered and the ADF agreed that the RSL would fund the uniforms for the entire Australian Team. The RSL badge is proudly displayed on the right breast of each of

the uniforms and the ADF Crest equally proudly displayed on the left breast.

I was privileged to join 8 members of the Australian Invictus Games team at Parliament House, Canberra on Tuesday 26 August at a televised press conference hosted by the Assistant Minister for Defence the Honourable Stuart Robert MP. At this event the Minister announced the Government's full support for the team and thanked the RSL for its most generous support in sponsoring the veteran contingent.

The extent of RSL support for this outstanding initiative includes the provision of support staff and the hosting of a farewell function at the NSW Branch Hyde Park Inn, Elizabeth Street, Sydney on Wednesday 3 September. We anticipate that this will be a large media event attracting widespread interest.

RSL involvement in the Invictus Games is a clear message to all about our firm commitment to our object of caring for those who have gone in harm's way in defence of the nation and suffered. I gain from my discussions with some of the chosen participants that they are already uplifted by what is transpiring and they are unequivocal in their thanks for the support provided by the RSL.

- 2. RSL Annual Veterans' Affairs Budget Submission.** Members will recall that a vital element of each National Conference is to finalise the annual RSL Veterans' Affairs Budget Submission to Government. This year's National Conference is being held in Perth just prior to the major commemorative event in Albany marking the centenary of the departure of the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in 1914. As the date of this conference will be too late in the Government's budget cycle to allow for consideration of our annual submission, the Board decided to bring forward its finalisation to the Board meeting on 25 August 2014.

Another important change to the RSL Annual Budget Submission agreed by the Board was the inclusion of a section explaining what the RSL has achieved and is achieving in supporting the veteran and ex-service community.

As usual the document includes in an agreed order of priority the Veteran's Affairs submissions passed at various State Conferences.

I anticipate that the submission will be forwarded to Government within the next few days. It will be posted on the RSL National web site about 7 days later thus providing the courtesy of allowing Government to read it before its contents are made public.

- 3. RSL National Board Meeting 25 August 2014.** This was held at ANZAC House, 4 Collins Street, Melbourne because the temporary National Office does not have a room of sufficient size in which to hold this gathering. The following is a snapshot of some of the topics considered:
- National Strategic Plan. The most recent iteration of this document was accepted as an important step in the iterative process of crafting this document. It was agreed that the Victorian State President would further develop the plan assisted by the Queensland State President, the CEOs of Victoria and South Australia, the National Secretary and the National Policy Advisor.
  - RSL National Tribunal Review. The first draft of this document was accepted by the Board as an important start on a long overdue reform. Directors agreed to forward constructive comments aimed at further developing the first draft and that the National Policy Advisor would collate these into a second draft. The aim is to have this ready for further review by the Board in late October.
  - RSL National Constitution Revision. The Board was reminded that in my addresses to the State Branch Conferences this year I had pledged that members would be kept informed – and that the recent circulation of the first draft of the revision had fulfilled this pledge. The Board agreed that it was important to continue work on the revision but that priority would be given to the Strategic Plan as this would guide further revision of the Constitution. Further work of the revision of the Constitution will be undertaken after the Strategic Plan is agreed and adopted.
- Other topics considered included a business plan for the National Office; RSL requests for ceremonial support from Defence; plans for a replacement National Office and plans for several large commemorative events including that at Albany.