



National President's Newsletter No 5 of 2015



1. Letter of Appreciation from Commander Joint Task Force 633

The text reads:

"I am writing on behalf of the men and women of Joint Task Force 633 within the Middle East Region to express our humble gratitude for the ongoing efforts of the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) in supporting our deployed forces.

The delivery of care packages on ANZAC Day 2015 once again demonstrated the RSL's unwavering support to deployed members. This in addition to the broader initiatives of your collective members in the field of welfare work supporting our peers and forebears and their families who have made the supreme sacrifice, remains a source of inspiration and confidence for us all. To know that the RSL will be there with us in our most desperate of times is a great comfort to all.

As a mark of our appreciation, I hope you will find a suitable location with the RSL National Headquarters in which you can mount the enclosed boxed Australian National Flag. It is significant to the men and women of Joint Task Force 633 insomuch as it flew above Camp Baird in the Middle East Region on 25 April 2015 in the Centenary Year of ANZAC.

Once again thank you for your mateship and support.

T N Jones AO CSC

Rear Admiral RAN

Commander Joint Task Force 633

1 May 2015

I have written to Rear Admiral Jones thanking him and those in the Joint Task Force 633 command for this kind and thoughtful gesture.

2. Revision of RSL National Constitution

The final draft of the revised RSL National Constitution has been forwarded to Branches for circulation to all Districts and Sub Branches. A copy of the document has also be posted on the RSL National web site along with a copy of my letter of explanation which needs to be read in conjunction with the revised National Constitution. Comments about this primary governing document should be forwarded to the CEO RSL National no later than 31 July 2015. The plan thereafter is to incorporate any agreed amendments then seek endorsement for its acceptance at the National Conference in Brisbane in September 2015.

3. ADF Super

The Assistant Minister for Defence the Honourable Stuart Robert MP invited me to meet him in his Parliament House Office on Thursday 4 June 2015 to continue discussions about the proposal by Government to introduce a new superannuation scheme for members of the Australian Defence Force. The Minister affirmed his intention to take into account the advice tendered by the RSL and has asked me to respond to some aspects of the proposed new scheme raised during our meeting. I have since sought advice about these matters from members of the RSL National Board and when this is to hand will reply to the Minister and/or seek another meeting. Members of the RSL will appreciate that as these matters are still under consideration by many it would be inappropriate to specify what is being negotiated. The overriding concern of the RSL is to advance the best possible outcome for ADF Super for the men and women of the Australian Defence Force.

4. Hearing of Parliamentary Committee into Defence Annual Report 2013/2014

At the invitation of the Chairman of the Defence Sub Committee of the Joint Committee Foreign Affairs and Trade I appeared as the RSL witness at a hearing of the Sub Committee in Parliament House, Canberra on Friday 5 June 2015. Members of the RSL will recall that the unabridged content of the RSL written submission to the Defence Sub Committee was promulgated in my NP Newsletter No 1 of 2015.

The questions posed and the responses I provided will be made public in Hansard in due course. Of interest was that in answer to a question about naval shipbuilding in Australia I was able to refer the Committee to information the RSL provided in 2006 in response to a question on notice by Senator Hogg put to me and to Commodore Terry Roach AM RAN (Ret'd), both then witnesses before the Committee as members of the RSL National Defence Committee.

Another matter of interest was that some of the issues raised in the RSL written submission for this hearing have since been given support in the Defence First Principles Review. As I remarked in response to a question, it remains to be seen whether the recommendations in the Review Report lead to action – and that the RSL will continue to monitor developments.

5. Victory in the Pacific Commemorations and Celebrations 15 August 2015

RSL involvement in planning and managing these events was mentioned in paragraph 2 of my newsletter No 4 of 2015. Since then planning has proceeded swiftly in consultation with State Branches under the overall management of the RSL National Chief Executive Officer. I have written to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs forwarding the RSL designed plan for the day and sought endorsement for what is suggested. Further advice will be included in the next newsletter.

6. Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal decision re the 2014 ADF Workplace Remuneration Arrangement

In determination No 5 of 2015 handed down by the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal on 10 June the Tribunal approved improved rates of remuneration for the men and women of the Australian Defence Force. Members will recall that the RSL stance on this issue was robust and appropriate to the circumstances. Paragraph 4 of my NP Newsletter No 2 of 2015 is relevant.

An outstanding issue which the RSL will continue to pursue is the desirability of moving away from civilian occupation workplace benchmarks for setting ADF rates of remuneration. Another is the desirability of ceasing the recent practice of Government's requiring as that major remuneration cases put before the Tribunal be earlier agreed between the Defence leadership and the Public Service Commissioner representing the Government.

Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Retd)
11 June 2015