

## **RSL SUB BRANCHES WORKING WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES**

**Examples of how RSL Sub Branches have engaged local schools and communities through RSL Community Link, and examples of how those Sub Branches have managed the project.**

There is a great deal of flexibility in how RSL Sub Branches use RSL Community Link to extend and enhance local remembrance activities in their local communities. Some Sub Branches start by introducing an RSL Community Link component into the remembrance ceremonies of a single school with which they have an existing relationship, later expanding the project to include other schools. Once the project is established in a school or two, the Sub Branch may even later offer RSL Community Link to the broader community by way of a local public awareness campaign. Others start with one big campaign to get the project into as many schools as they can as well as the broader community. The ways in which individual Sub Branches use RSL Community Link may be quite different, but all their methods are equally valid and all facilitate increased involvement by the community in RSL remembrance activities. Contact your local Sub Branch today to identify ways in which you can get involved.

Master copies of the five documents needed (Introduction to RSL Community Link, Research Tips, Application Form, Order Form and Medal Enquiry Form) are available from Queensland RSL State Headquarters or online. The manufacture of Veteran's Memorial Plaques and Representative's Link Cards is all done through the Membership Section of Queensland RSL State Headquarters.

Once set up, the administration of RSL Community Link can be handled by one person. Experience shows that after the project has been launched and the resultant initial applications processed, the workload is likely to become very spasmodic with extended periods of inactivity from time to time.

**To give an idea of the variety of ways in which Sub Branches have adapted RSL Community Link to suit their local communities, here are examples from four quite different Sub Branches in four distinctly different school catchments:**

**Mapleton, 30 Sub Branch members and two local schools totaling 360 students:** Mapleton began its RSL Community Link activities by focusing on the local school remembrance ceremonies. This included incorporating an RSL Community Link component into both schools' ceremonies specifically honouring the local residents who died serving their country. The Sub Branch also added an RSL Community Link element to the traditional naming of these local Fallen at its main community Anzac Day service. RSL Community Link participants march on Anzac Day intermingled with the ex-service contingent. To expand RSL Community Link beyond the school gate, the Sub Branch provided each school with RSL Community Link information kits to be taken home to every family. The kits contained the Introduction, Research Tips and forms available on the Queensland RSL website. The Sub Branch also conducted an awareness campaign through the local press and made the information kits available from the local library. At Mapleton, RSL Community Link was set up and is administered by a single member who is designated as the Sub Branch RSL Community Link Officer.

**Nambour, 265 Sub Branch members and eight local schools totaling 5760 students:** At Nambour the RSL Community Link remembrance focus is on the personal representation of the 100 residents of the former Maroochy Shire who died in wars and the 140 members of the Nambour Sub Branch who have passed away since the Sub Branch was formed. To enable every one of these 240 departed veterans to be represented on Anzac Day, the Nambour Sub Branch has purchased Veteran's Memorial Plaques honouring each of the veterans. An additional Veteran's Memorial Plaque is ordered each time a Sub Branch member passes away. In the week before Anzac Day the Nambour Sub Branch distributes the plaques to local schools, and on Anzac Day the plaques are worn by school students who march as individual representatives of those veterans. At Nambour, RSL Community Link is administered solely by the Sub Branch secretary.

**Bribie Island, 930 Sub Branch members and three local schools totaling 2500 students:** The RSL National Congress of September 1995 unanimously carried the motion: *“That the League adopt a programme to be known as RSL Community Link to attract, encourage and recognise community involvement in League activities as developed by Bribie Island RSL Sub-Branch”*. Bribie’s three schools all have substantial numbers of Veteran’s Memorial Plaques permanently displayed on honour boards in their reception areas, and the plaques are worn by students at school and community remembrance services. The Sub Branch has incorporated a substantial RSL Community Link component into the program of its main community Anzac Day service, and the representatives of departed veterans march as a separate contingent behind their own Bribie Island RSL Community Link banner. The Sub Branch, the services club and kindred ex-service organisations also provide financial support for a biennial RSL Community Link 7-day excursion to Canberra for an RSL Community Link Remembrance Contingent comprising approximately 50 local students. While in Canberra the Remembrance Contingent attends the Dawn Service at the Australian War Memorial, marches in Canberra’s Anzac Day march and visits many of Canberra’s national institutions. On Bribie Island a member designated as the RSL Community Link Chairman single-handedly administers RSL Community Link, except in the months leading up to the biennial Canberra excursion when he convenes a small organising committee of Sub Branch and school representatives.

**Bundaberg, 1021 Sub Branch members and twenty-six local schools totaling 12200 students:** In 1996 the Bundaberg Sub Branch introduced RSL Community Link into two primary schools with which it had an existing relationship based on long-standing Sub Branch participation in school remembrance ceremonies. The interest this generated in the Bundaberg area led to other schools contacting the Sub Branch for information about the project, and currently several schools in Bundaberg have some involvement with RSL Community Link. The Sub Branch processes applications from the general community, and people representing departed veterans march as a separate contingent behind their own Bundaberg RSL Community Link banner. RSL Community Link is administered solely by the Sub Branch secretary.

**From the examples above, it is clear that RSL Community Link is not a one-size-fits-all project. Sub Branches and schools can tailor it to meet their own local circumstances. Why not contact RSL (Queensland Branch) and give it a go?**