

RSL COMMUNITY LINK IN SCHOOLS



In terms of its application in the school environment, RSL Community Link sets out to enhance existing school-based remembrance activities by enabling students to represent departed veterans during those activities. This representation adds a fresh and personal dimension to the students' participation by invoking an increased sense of connection and relevance. RSL Community Link also has an intended educational aspect which can help stimulate a student's interest in his or her own family military history and the wartime history of their community and country.

The manner in which a school incorporates RSL Community Link into its remembrance activities is a matter for individual schools to decide. Here are some real examples:

Many schools are situated in communities where local veterans have died in wars, and it is often these 'Fallen' veterans that the schools focus on at their remembrance ceremonies. At the 240-student Mapleton State School remembrance ceremonies, student leaders each wear a Veteran's Memorial Plaque honouring one of the nine Mapleton residents who died serving our country. The student leaders also wear a Representative's Link Card bearing the words '*Remembrance Volunteer*'. Collectively, this group of students make up the school's '*Remembrance Contingent*'. During the Mapleton State School's remembrance ceremony, as each name of the local Fallen is called, a Remembrance Volunteer comes forward to place a poppy on the memorial in remembrance of the veteran he or she is representing. The same process takes place at the Mapleton RSL's main Anzac Day service.

Smaller than Mapleton, the 120-student Montville State School has ten Fallen of its own to honour. At that school's ceremony each Remembrance Volunteer steps to the microphone in turn, announces the name of the Fallen Montville veteran he or she is representing and the war in which that veteran fell, and then places a poppy on the memorial.

A contrasting example is that of Bribie Island. With a three-school student population totaling over 2,500 and no Bribie Islanders killed in wars, students and staff are encouraged to wear Veteran's Memorial Plaques honouring veterans from their own ancestors, or to wear one of the many Veteran's Memorial Plaques which have been given to the schools by local individuals or ex-service organisations. The Bribie Island RSL and its kindred ex-service organisations also provide financial support for a biennial RSL Community Link 7-day excursion to Canberra for approximately 50 local

students. While in Canberra the Bribie Island RSL Community Link Remembrance Contingent attends the Dawn Service at the Australian War Memorial, marches in the massive Canberra Anzac Day march, and visits Canberra's national institutions. On Anzac Day at Bribie Island the main service includes quite an involved RSL Community Link component. The Remembrance Volunteers (both young and old) march as a large contingent behind their own banner.

Most schools already organise and run their own remembrance ceremonies (many also organise school contingents to participate in local community Anzac Day marches), and the incorporation of RSL Community Link into those ceremonies creates very little additional work for the school staff beyond allocating student leaders to represent departed veterans and the handing out and taking back of the Veteran's Memorial Plaques and Representative's Link Cards.

Schools with a long-standing military history have a great opportunity to use RSL Community Link for the remembrance of former staff and students. Some, with military rolls numbering in the hundreds, would certainly require more organisation. Old Boys Associations, student councils, school cadet units and school staff can all contribute to this worthwhile effort.

If you think RSL Community Link would be a welcome addition to your school's remembrance activities, please contact your local RSL Sub Branch or RSL Queensland State Headquarters.