

RSL QUEENSLAND

Annual Report 2023



RSL
Queensland

Supporting veterans and their families is why we exist. It's why we started, why we've grown and why we innovate.

We deliver services and build connections that enable the veteran and Defence community to thrive beyond service.

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"The strength of our League is founded on individual members who, when combined, build a collective that has the critical mass to create a positive impact on the lives of veterans and their families across Queensland."

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN DAY DSC AM
State President, RSL Queensland



Pictured: Tom Robertson, a member of the Military Jeep Club of Queensland, drove Navy veteran David Brennan, his wife Gloria and three of their great-grandchildren, Edith, Charlotte and Pia, along Adelaide Street as part of the 2023 Brisbane ANZAC Day march.

YEAR IN REVIEW

State President report

As I reflect on another year, I acknowledge, as ever, that time has caught up with many of our mates. But there are two whom I wish to specifically acknowledge.

Ray De Vere MC OAM, who was a former State President of RSL Queensland, a widely respected leader of soldiers, and a veteran of the Vietnam War, sadly passed away in 2023. Ray was also an Honorary Life Vice President of our organisation, and remained active well into his retirement, participating in the Opening Ceremony of our 2022 State Congress.

John Toohey OAM was also a Vietnam veteran, long-term Sub Branch president in Goondiwindi, and our ANZAC of the Year in 2023. Under normal circumstances, John would have been given his Award at State Congress, but his health deteriorated quickly early in the year, and, at his request, he received his Award at home with a small group of those whom he knew. John passed away just a week later.

Ray and John were two great stalwarts of the League, and examples of lives well lived. Their legacy is one of service to others, and they are an inspiration and example for us.

Our Sub Branches are the beating heart of RSL Queensland. Despite the challenges they continue to face after the seemingly never-ending work on the ground in their communities, it is clear their efforts are having a tangible impact. In 2023, our membership numbers rose for the second year in a row, increasing to more than 34,000 members across the state. I am pleased to have a dedicated State Council of District Presidents who continually drive the members' interests into the Board.

I am also of the view that veterans – and the broader community – are responding to our increased focus on care, commemoration and camaraderie, and that is a good thing. As you will observe throughout this Annual Report, these core areas of our business shape everything we do, from ensuring that veterans across our state receive the support they need,

to engaging the wider Australian community in commemorations, and providing opportunities for veterans to connect.

I am proud of our Executive Team and their approach to our staff throughout the year. Under Robert Skoda's leadership, our organisation responded particularly well to the economic challenges experienced across our society. We started the year expecting a budget deficit; we anticipated our income to contract as Australians reduced their spending, but we also expected that, in the tighter economic environment, more veterans would need assistance.

So, we were prepared to go into deficit in 2023. Robert and his team set about looking for any sensible ways they could improve efficiencies without affecting services. They succeeded, and you will note that we did not go into deficit.

Instrumental in this outcome was our Chief Financial Officer, Kerri Ryan, who I congratulate for being recognised as Australia's

outstanding CFO of the Year (Not-for-Profit) at the 2023 Australian CFO Awards – what a remarkable achievement! We're fortunate and grateful to have Kerri's expertise and guidance at RSL Queensland.

We were also guided this year by our Board of Directors, with our skills-based Board serving their first full calendar year in 2023. As veterans themselves, they bring their own understanding to our organisation, but we also benefit from their legal, financial and commercial expertise. The Board consolidated and engaged in driving the strategic direction of our organisation, and I thank the directors for their contributions in 2023.

"Our Sub Branches are the beating heart of RSL Queensland. Despite the challenges they continue to face after the seemingly never-ending work on the ground in their communities, it is clear their efforts are having a tangible impact."

Major General Stephen Day DSC AM
State President



CEO report

2023 was a year of economic uncertainty, with the rising cost of living across our society affecting many in our veteran community and some of our customers. I am, however, pleased to report that we navigated these challenges well, with efficiencies in our business delivering increased support to veterans and their families. You may note that our financials demonstrate increasing investment in our purpose, and we have tripled this figure since 2020. This is something that we can all be proud of.

The common view I hear across the organisation is how well our staff are aligned with our purpose. This has been greatly helped by the 2030 Strategy clearly calling out what the membership says is important and what we need to do as RSL Queensland to help enable care, commemoration and camaraderie for our members, veterans and their families.

The Strategy is our guide to ensure that we are positioned to support veterans and their families directly, through others, and through supporting the ecosystem of veteran and Defence support, including our Sub Branch community. Our purpose within RSL Queensland is clear, and this is demonstrated in our continued increase in services, our innovation and our tone in how we represent ourselves with our stakeholders.

RSL Queensland achieved Public Benevolent Institution status this year, and I thank our membership for their support in this matter. To receive this status, our organisation must also demonstrate that we are focused on benevolent activities and utilise resources appropriately.

Our Art Union continued to deliver incredible prizes to the community and change lives in doing so. Our role is to ensure that we make the right charitable commitments and manage our capital so that we can actively manage the balance sheet for the sustainability of future services.

"You may note that our financials demonstrate increasing investment in our purpose, and we have tripled this figure since 2020. This is something that we can all be proud of."

In the late part of the year, we started a journey to evolve the organisation to what is known as the 'Capital Management Framework'. In short, this framework is designed to give a longer-term planning horizon for State Branch to plan and invest in services and programs. Commitment to our charitable outputs and the funding demanded from our commercial activities to sustain service delivery will be projected across a multi-year approach.

This will allow us to make longer-term financial commitments, match our charitable commitments with the timeframes aligned to implementation and sustainment, and manage our asset base to invest now while also protecting the future.

I would like to close by thanking our Board, with our State President and Chair, Stephen Day, providing the leadership and direction that has allowed us at State Branch to deliver on our revised strategy. I acknowledge the volunteers across the League who give their time to make the RSL a space for all veterans and their families and thank them for their dedication.

Finally, I would like to thank all our executive and staff who come to work every day with the singular focus of making RSL Queensland a place where veterans and their families can find care. Together, we enabled camaraderie through our support of the League in Queensland, and commemoration in the community, all underpinned by a sustainable business model.

Robert Skoda
Chief Executive Officer



State Deputy President report

I was re-elected as State Deputy President in 2023, and it continues to be my honour to serve RSL Queensland in this role. It's very reassuring to feel accepted by our members, and I appreciate the support that the RSL membership has given to me.

In return, I have provided my own support to many Sub Branch and District events, services and memorials this year. But the highlight for me was attending the unveiling of the memorial for World War I nurse Sister Greta Norman Towner in Blackall in November 2023. The memorial is important, and as an ex-Defence nurse, it was lovely to be involved in this service.

Seeing the opening and operation of the RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre in Brisbane was also a highlight. The facility is excellent, and a great, safe place for our veterans and their families to attend.

I was also honoured to represent RSL Queensland in capacities outside of our organisation, including at the Ministerial Fire Arms Advisory Forum and Legacy Ball, to name a couple.

A mention, too, for my friend George Churchwood, who turned 100 and held a party with both his family and his RSL family present. George is still a sprightly larrikin, and it was my pleasure to join his celebrations.

After travelling around the state in 2023, I'm very pleased to see that everyone is doing all they can to make it easier for veterans and their families. Equally, I feel reassured that our Board has the special skills to make informed decisions to ensure our support can continue into the future.



Wendy Taylor
State Deputy President

State Vice President report

2023 was my fifth year in the role of State Vice President. It has been my pleasure to do the job I was elected to do, and to support the State President and Deputy.

There were many key moments in 2023. RSL Queensland provided a response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. We also planned for the future of the organisation to remain relevant, enable and help represent the interests of the veteran and Defence community, and continue to grow a sustainable business into the future.

I attended many AGMs and District delegate meetings across the state, and have had many opportunities to engage with our members and delegates on issues that are confronting RSL Queensland.

Our organisation is complex, and it's important to have the right skills at the Board level to guide us. It has been a pleasure to work with RSL Queensland's Board of Directors and District Presidents again this year, and we are committed to driving our organisation forward.

The dedication that our members show as volunteers in aiding our many veterans and their families is admirable. Our staff should be proud of their efforts in 2023; it was a year that reinforced the importance of our Objects in continuing to be our guiding principles.

I remain totally committed to RSL Queensland and its Objects. I still have the passion and dedication to get the job done and see the RSL become the pre-eminent organisation that it should be, to be the leading light in the ex-service domain for many years to come.



Bill Whitburn OAM
State Vice President

Board of Directors

The Board provides strategic direction for RSL Queensland to meet its mission – to provide care, commemoration and camaraderie to enable veterans and their families to live with dignity and respect.

Drawn from our membership, the skills-based Board provides RSL Queensland with the right mix of experience and representation to serve the needs of our members and the veteran community.

As veterans themselves, the Board Directors bring a unique and critical understanding of the lived experiences of our Australian Defence Force personnel.



Major General Stephen Day DSC AM
State President

Stephen served in the Army for 40 years, including in conflicts in Africa, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2015, he left the full-time Army to work in business, before returning to full-time duty to lead the national drought response. Stephen now serves part-time as a mentor to Army Brigade commanders.



Wendy Taylor
State Deputy President

Wendy trained as a Registered Nurse before joining the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps as a Nursing Officer. She served nine years in the Army Reserve and then 16 years in the regular Army, including senior nursing and Command roles in both the Gulf War and East Timor. Wendy was previously President of South Eastern District.



Bill Whitburn OAM
State Vice President

Bill is a 40-year veteran who is passionate about his involvement with RSL Queensland. He is actively engaged with rural and remote Sub Branches and understands the pressures they face due to governance complexities. He has a wealth of experience in HR, logistics, business processes, audit and risk, and workplace health and safety.



Les Nash
Chair, State Council of District Presidents

Les is an experienced principal consultant in the accounting industry. He is skilled in managerial finance, government, accounting, public policy and corporate governance. Les is an ex-regular soldier with 25 years of infantry service throughout Australia and overseas. He joined the RSL in 1970, and has held many offices in Far Northern and Moreton Districts.



Tony Orchard
Director

Tony brings a blend of military, financial and educational acumen, including more than 20 years of experience in the finance industry. He served for seven years in the Army and eight years as a Reservist. Tony is an active member of Ipswich RSL Sub Branch and holds a Bachelor of Business, Advanced Diploma of Financial Services and a Diploma of Financial Planning.



Nicholas Gould
Director

As Managing Director and solicitor at Colwell Conveyancing Group, Nicholas has extensive experience in law, business strategy, risk management and governance working across the public and private sectors. He served in the Army and the Army Reserve, including two postings to Afghanistan and in an advisory role at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.



Chris Hamilton
Director

Chris is the current CEO of RESQ Plus and has significant board experience, including as director of Legacy Australia, director of Jobs Australia Ltd, and as a member of the South West Queensland Hospital. Chris served for more than 40 years in the Army and Army Reserve, and is a member of Longreach RSL Sub Branch.



Ashley Naughton
Director

Ashley is the Executive General Manager of Infront Security Services Group, owner of Apex Pioneer Group Pty Ltd., and Officer Commanding of B Squadron, 12th/16th Hunter River Lancers. He spent 10 years in the Army before transitioning to the Reserves, where he has served for five years. Ashley is an active member of Yeronga-Dutton RSL Sub Branch, and holds a Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Business.

State Council of District Presidents

The State Council of District Presidents (SCDP) was established in late 2022, with 2023 being the first full year of meetings for the Council. As the year progressed, the SCDP's authority was expanded as the Board continued to delegate to SCDP the authority to approve certain League matters that would otherwise require Board approval. As a result of the monthly meeting cadence of the SCDP, many items were resolved by the SCDP in a prompt manner, such as the approval of awards, and amendments to Sub Branch Constitutions.



Les Nash, District President, Moreton Chair, State Council of District Presidents

Les is an experienced principal consultant in the accounting industry. He is skilled in managerial finance, government, accounting, public policy and corporate governance. Les is an ex-regular soldier with 25 years of infantry service throughout Australia and overseas. He joined the RSL in 1970, and has held many offices in Far Northern and Moreton Districts.



Merv Brown OAM, District President, Brisbane North

Merv had a 36-year career with the ADF, serving 24 years in the regular Army, including deployments to Papua New Guinea and South Vietnam, and then 12 years in the Army Reserve. Merv joined RSL in 1979, working closely with Gallipoli Barracks as well as local schools through writing competitions, awards and donations.



Phillip Luzzi, District President, Central Queensland

Phillip served six years as a reservist with 1 Field Ambulance NSW. He also worked as a registered nurse, achieving certification in four disciplines of nursing over 35 years of service. Phillip has run education businesses for children in Rockhampton, where he is a member of Emu Park RSL Sub Branch.



Kenneth Willoughby, District President, Far Northern

Kenneth served in the RAAF for 22 years, including as an RAAF Police Investigator specialising in criminal investigations and counter-intelligence. He then worked in the mining industry in Papua New Guinea. Kenneth is a member of Herberton RSL Sub Branch.

Pat Fairon, District President, Gold Coast

Pat served in the Australian Army for two years, including a tour of duty in Vietnam, before working in a variety of technical and industrial product roles. Pat has volunteered in many community organisations, including 16 years in committee and executive roles at RSL Queensland.



Garry Player, District President, North Queensland

Garry served in the Australian Army for 24 years before discharging in 2012 and running a small business. Having been involved in RSL Queensland committees since 2014, Garry continues to work tirelessly to serve the veteran community in Townsville and beyond.



Kerry Gallagher AM, District President, South Eastern

Kerry served in the ADF for 29 years, during which time he was appointed as Chief of Staff of 1st Division. He then held executive roles in the medical services field. Kerry also chairs the Brisbane ANZAC Day Parade Committee and has been President of Toowong RSL Sub Branch since 1997.



Ian Hall OAM, District President, Sunshine Coast and Regional

With two operational tours in Vietnam and 34 years in the Queensland Police Service, Ian has a wealth of knowledge, understanding and life experience, as well as a strong commitment to the Objects of the RSL. A team player, he applies extensive people skills to furthering and enhancing the promotion and delivery of the goals of the League.



Dennis Pollard, District President, Western

Dennis served two terms in the ADF, totalling more than 25 years' service. He then worked as a Corrective Service Officer. Dennis has been a member of RSL Queensland since 2000, and President of Wallangarra RSL Sub Branch since 2011.



Neville Tarry, District President, Wide Bay and Burnett

Neville joined the ADF in 1976 and served for 12 years as an engineer in the Army Reserves. Neville then worked at Moura Mines for 33 years. He became a member of RSL Queensland in 1986 through Moura RSL Sub Branch and was elected its President in 2004.



"Our 2030 Strategy is in full flight, with many activities associated with our service delivery now being executed. The outcome we're seeking is a more connected RSL - one that provides additional resources and support to the veteran community."

ROBERT SKODA
CEO, RSL Queensland



2030 STRATEGY



Our mission

RSL Queensland's mission is to provide care, commemoration and camaraderie to enable veterans and their families to live with dignity and respect.

RSL Queensland continued to deliver on its purpose-driven mission. Our 2030 Strategy outlines our intent to provide increased support to more veterans and their families, promote wider recognition of our service people's legacy, and offer a sense of belonging and purpose to all in the veteran community.

We enabled the outcomes of our three strategic pillars by providing support and enablement through:

Communication: clearly communicating our mission and endeavours to the veteran community and society at large

Commercial resource: providing financial capacity and fit-for-purpose commercial structure to ensure we meet our mission

Capability: ensuring we have the necessary skills, processes and technology to set our organisation up for success.

Strategy progress

Our strategic endeavours are outlined below.

Care



- Opened the RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre in Brisbane to provide centralised support
- Supported the establishment of the new Mates4Mates Centre in Ipswich
- Supported the opening of the Mates4Mates Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre in Stuart Park, Northern Territory
- Commenced the fit-out for a new RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre on the Sunshine Coast
- Contributed to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide
- Continued to develop and foster partnerships with organisations that expand proactive health initiatives to improve health, wellbeing and education opportunities for veterans
- Launched RSL Be:Well, a free, research-informed, online program designed specifically for veterans to support their health and wellbeing needs
- Developed individual service impact maps and an impact measurement framework to monitor the outcomes of our services
- Launched the Practitioner Portal – an online learning platform providing organisations with tools and resources to support understanding of our research-informed services
- Introduced an Advocacy Framework to guide our priorities and actions in advocacy and government relations
- Continued to develop our relationship with Defence through ongoing reporting and provision of workshops and professional development
- Developed a Service Quality Standards Framework to provide the standard of service delivery expected of human and social service providers
- Implemented a triage process to ensure that veterans and their families who need more urgent assistance are supported first
- Piloted a support program for incarcerated veterans.

Commemoration

- Promoted commemorative events to honour our service people and engage the community in significant dates and events in our military history
- Highlighted the service of veterans by sharing their stories with the public
- Launched the campaign ‘That’s the ANZAC spirit’ to encourage Australians to attend ANZAC Day services in their local communities
- Provided resources to educate young people on Australia’s involvement in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations, including the Postcards of Honour and Draw to Remember initiatives
- Sponsored contemporary commemorative activities to engage and encourage the community to honour veterans in different ways, including the Premier’s Anzac Prize and the Point & Shoot photography exhibition
- Assisted other RSL State Branches to deliver commemorative campaigns, to ensure commemorative opportunities are available to more Australians.

Camaraderie

- Collaborated with other ex-service organisations (ESOs) to deliver better outcomes for the Defence community
- Supported the RSL Queensland League and its members to provide opportunities to foster camaraderie within our communities
- Facilitated State Congress and supported District AGMs to ensure the voice of our members was heard
- Provided capital grants funding through a well-subscribed application round, to support the League in exploring opportunities for new or improved facilities
- Partnered with Disaster Relief Australia to provide opportunities for veterans to connect and volunteer.

Beachmere State School students participated in the Postcards of Honour initiative, with the help of Brisbane North District members.



2023 participation	
ANZAC Day Postcards of Honour	Remembrance Day Draw to Remember
56 Sub Branches	68 Sub Branches
179 schools	196 schools
11,971 students	8.500 students

OUR IMPACT

2023 at a glance

RSL Queensland is here to support veterans and their families every step of the way by providing care, commemoration and camaraderie. In 2023, we provided care and support to **20% more** veterans and their families than the previous year. This assistance was delivered through a range of impactful services and programs to help in real and meaningful ways.



8,411 veterans supported

by our services to improve their health and wellbeing



285 jobs secured

in meaningful employment for veterans and their partners



9,636 enquiries handled

referring veterans and their families to services that suit their needs



6,712 claims and appeals

submitted with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)



69 scholarships awarded

to veterans, partners and their dependants to increase their employability



202 veterans and families housed

in safe, permanent accommodation they can call home



1,011 nights in short-term accommodation

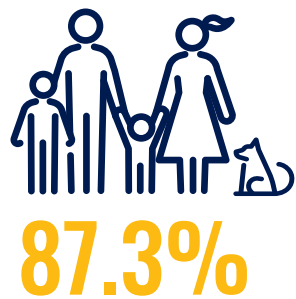
for veterans and their families travelling from regional areas for medical treatment

RSL Queensland's financial highlights

RSL Queensland navigated a difficult economic period, characterised by a turbulent realignment of consumer spending. We did, however, improve our commercial operating costs, delivering greater returns for our charitable purpose.

There was also an increase in demand for our services as cost-of-living pressures continued to rise. To combat this, we evolved our operating model and increased partnerships with like-minded and well-governed organisations that allowed us to scale up and down our service delivery to meet demand.

Building and continuing to evolve relationships across the RSL, both in Queensland and around Australia, set the foundations for a united approach to support veterans and their families. There was an increased spend in real terms on our charitable outputs and this provided upward growth and more direct support for veterans and their families in Queensland and nationally.



87.3% of available funding, supporting our charitable Objects, was directed towards investment in leading health and wellbeing support, advocacy, partner programs, education, research and social and community services for veterans and their families.



RSL Queensland delivered \$25 million in social and community services that directly engaged with veterans and their families in Queensland, with many accessible by interstate veterans.



RSL Queensland expended \$17.7 million in donations and sponsorships, appropriate to our charitable Objects, that provided support and direct relief to veterans and their families.



“Camaraderie is about making people feel part of a community. For some, that will be down at the local Sub Branch with the three or four people they know. For others, it will be doing something in the broader community. We need to build on this network of opportunities, with the RSL as an enabler.”

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN DAY DSC AM
State President, RSL Queensland



ABOUT US

Who we are

Since our beginning in 1916, RSL Queensland has supported the veteran and Defence community, proudly upholding the legacy of our Objects.

Supporting veterans and their families is why we exist. It's why we started, why we've grown and why we innovate. We deliver services and build connections that enable the veteran and Defence community to thrive beyond service.

Our mission is to provide care, commemoration and camaraderie, and at a grassroots level – especially through our Sub Branches – we continue to serve our local communities.

Through a network of Districts, Sub Branches and more than 34,000 members, a helping hand is available when it's needed most, and a sense of belonging and purpose is extended to all in the veteran community.

As one of the leading ex-service organisations in Queensland, we continue to provide practical support, assistance, advice and camaraderie across the state. We also work to amplify the voices of veterans and their families to ensure they are heard by those who can effect change and act to improve their wellbeing.

Pictured at the opening of the RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre Cairns in August 2023 are, left to right, Edge Hill/Cairns West RSL Sub Branch President Lisa Gray, Cairns and District Ex-Servicewomen RSL Sub Branch President Marion Hayton and Cooktown RSL Sub Branch President Julie Oliver.

Our Objects

RSL Queensland is consistently guided by the pursuit of our Objects

RSL Queensland was recognised as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission (ACNC) on 11 August 2023. As part of RSL Queensland's PBI endorsement, the Objects that reflect our mission and purpose were enhanced to strengthen our benevolent position. This change to RSL Queensland's Objects continues to ensure the spirit, legacy and intent of RSL Queensland's Objects remain.

RSL Queensland Objects:

2.1 The main objects for which the RSL (Queensland Branch) is established is to relieve the distress and poverty suffered by the sick, helpless, wounded, aged, vulnerable, destitute and needy among those who are serving or who have served in the Australian Defence Forces and their dependants.

2.2 RSL (Queensland Branch) achieves this object by implementing and connecting those in need with programs and services to assist in the relief of their distress and suffering and, these programs, services and activities may include the following, provided that they are conducted in aid and furtherance of its main object in clause 2.1:

2.2.1 relieve mental health issues and isolation experienced by past and present members of the Defence Forces and encourage their transition to civilian life by:

- (a) facilitating the close and kindly ties of friendship created by a mutual service in the Australian Defence Force or in the forces of nations traditionally allied with Australia and the recollections associated with that experience;
- (b) maintaining a proper standard of dignity and honour among all past and present members of the Defence Forces of the nation and to set an example of public spirit and noble hearted endeavour;
- (c) protecting the good name and preserve the interests and standing of members of the Australian Defence Force;

(d) encouraging Members, as citizens, to serve Australia with that spirit of self-sacrifice and loyalty with which they served as members of the Australian Defence Forces; and

(e) encouraging continued loyalty to Australia and secure patriotic service in the interests of Australia;

2.2.2 assist in the preservation of the memory and the records of those who suffered and died for Australia, erect monuments to their valour, provide them with suitable burial places, and establish and preserve, in their honour, the annual commemoration days known as ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and other commemorative days;

2.2.3 provide welfare to the sick, helpless, wounded, vulnerable, aged, destitute and needy

2.2.4 support serving Australian Defence Force members at home and abroad and actively assist them in their transition to civilian life, especially if they are detrimentally affected by their defence service;

This is an extract of the RSL Queensland Objects. For the full details of RSL Queensland's Objects please see RSL Queensland's Constitution.



Districts and Sub Branches

Our 10 Districts and more than 230 Sub Branches are at the core of what RSL Queensland does every day. They work within their regions to provide care, commemoration and camaraderie to veterans and their families in their local communities.

RSL Sub Branches make a big impact by connecting and supporting the veteran and wider communities. Within their local area, they are often the first point of contact for veterans and their families who want to get involved with the RSL or need support.

Keeping history alive and creating connections between communities, the spirit of camaraderie can be seen in action throughout our Sub Branch network.



Brisbane North District

Banyo
Beachmere
Bray Park-Strathpine
Bribie Island
Caboolture-Morayfield and District
Centenary Suburbs
Clayfield-Toombul
Dayboro
Deception Bay
Gaythorne
Geebung Zillmere
Bald Hills Aspley
Kedron-Wavell
Kenmore/Moggill
Nundah-Northgate
Pine Rivers District
Redcliffe
Samford
Sandgate
Sherwood-Indooroopilly
The Gap

Central Queensland District

Blackwater/Bluff
Carmila
Clermont
Emerald
Emu Park
Farleigh and Northern Beaches
Finch Hatton
Gemfields
Gracemere and District
Kuttabul
Mackay
Marian
Mirani
Moranbah
Rockhampton
Seaforth
Springsure
St Helens
Walkerston-Pleystowe
Yeppoon

Far Northern District

Atherton
Babinda
Cairns and District
Ex-Servicewomen
Cairns
Cardwell
Cooktown
Edge Hill/Cairns West
Edmonton
Gordonvale
Herberton
Innisfail
Kuranda
Malanda
Mareeba
Mossman
Mount Molloy
Ravenshoe
Torres Strait Chapter
Tully
Weipa
Yarrabah

Gold Coast District

Beenleigh and District
Burleigh Heads
Canungra
Currumbin/Palm Beach
Mudgeeraba-Robina
Nerang
North Gold Coast
Runaway Bay
Southport
Surfers Paradise
Tamborine Mountain
Tweed Heads and Coolangatta

Moreton District

Blackbutt
Boonah
Esk
Gatton
Goodna
Grantham-Ma Ma Creek
Helidon
Ipswich Railway
Ipswich
Kalbar
Laidley
Lowood
Redbank Plains
Redbank
Rosewood
Toogoolawah
Yarraman

North Queensland District

Airlie Beach-Whitsunday
Ayr
Barcaldine
Blackall
Bowen
Charters Towers
Cloncurry
Herbert River
Home Hill
Hughenden
Julia Creek
Longreach
Magnetic Island
Mount Isa
Proserpine
Rollingstone
Thuringowa
Townsville
Winton

South Eastern District

Ashgrove-Bardon
Bayside South
Beauresert
Beerwah and District
Bulimba District
City-New Farm
Coorparoo and Districts
Darra and District
Defence Service Nurses
Defence
Servicewomen's
Forest Lake and Districts
Glasshouse Country
Greater Springfield
Greenbank
Hellenic
Holland Park-Mt Gravatt
Jimboomba
Kenilworth
Kilcoy
Kooralbyn Valley
Logan Village
Macleay Island
Manly-Lota
National Servicemens
Redlands
Russell Island
Salisbury
Springwood Tri-Service
Stephens
Sunnybank
Toowong
Tramways
Wynnum
Yeronga-Dutton Park

Sunshine Coast and Regional District

Caloundra
Coolum-Peregian
Cooroy-Pomona
Kawana Waters
Maleny
Mapleton
Maroochydore
Mudjimba
Nambour
Palmwoods Chapter
Tewantin/Noosa
Woodford
Yandina-Eumundi

Western District

Allora
Bell
Charleville
Chinchilla
Clifton
Crows Nest
Cunnamulla
Dalby
Djuan and District
Goombungee
Goondiwindi
Harlaxton
Highfields
Injune
Jandowae
Killarney
Leyburn
Meandarra/Glenmorgan
Miles
Millmerran
Mitchell
Morven
Oakey
Pittsworth
Quilpie
Roma
St George
Stanthorpe
Surat
Tara
Taroom
Texas Chapter
Toowoomba
Wallangarra
Wandoan
Warwick
Yangan-Emu Vale Chapter

Wide Bay and Burnett District

Agnes Water/1770
Biggenden Chapter
Biloela
Boyne-Tannum
Bundaberg
Calliope
Eidsvold Chapter
Gayndah
Gin Gin
Gladstone
Goomeri Chapter
Gympie
Hervey Bay
Howard District
Isis
Kilkivan Chapter
Kingaroy/Memerambi
Mary Valley
Maryborough
Monto
Mount Larcom
Mount Morgan
Mount Perry
Moura
Mundubbera
Murgon
Nanango
Orchid Beach/Fraser Island
Preston
Rainbow Beach
Rosedale Chapter
Theodore Chapter
Tiaro
Tin Can Bay
Toogoom and District
Wondai
Woodgate Beach
Wowan

DELIVERING IMPACTFUL VETERAN OUTCOMES

"While many veterans and their families will flourish independently, some will require care. All veterans require camaraderie. And all deserve recognition in community commemorations. It's our duty and our honour to look after the needs of those who have served."

ROBERT SKODA
CEO, RSL Queensland



Care



In 2023, we supported 8,411 veterans through our services to improve their health and wellbeing – a 20% increase on the previous year.

RSL Queensland supports veterans and their families with impactful services, programs and advocacy, and helps them engage with the right services at the right time. We work with veterans and their families to identify proactive wellbeing goals, provide support in addressing more complex needs, and connect veterans and their families to relevant support services in a broader ecosystem.

RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centres

The first in a network of RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centres (VFWC) were opened in 2023, providing a centralised space of health and wellbeing support for the veteran community. The Centres are dedicated to improving the lives of current and ex-serving Defence members and their families, offering specialist support and expert advice from a variety of organisations, plus social opportunities, all under one roof.

In 2023, Centres were officially opened in Brisbane and Cairns, and the Townsville Mates4Mates office was renamed as an RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre, along with the addition of new services. A Centre on the Sunshine Coast was scheduled to open in early 2024.

Fully funded by RSL Queensland, the opening of the purpose-built, 2,500m² VFWC in the Brisbane suburb of Stafford – the largest of the Centres in Queensland – symbolised our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of the veteran and Defence community, and addressing the call for increased support.

Queensland is home to the largest population of ex-serving ADF members in Australia, and the needs of this veteran population are constantly evolving. With this in mind, RSL Queensland has actively supported the development of a connected service environment that offers clients easy access to an array of services provided by RSL Queensland and other vetted organisations.

Focused on a holistic approach, the Centres facilitate services from RSL Queensland and Mates4Mates, and, depending on the location, may include RSL Queensland District offices and other organisations such as Legacy Brisbane and Gallipoli Medical Research. Organisations utilising the Centres offer complementary services to meet the needs of veterans and their families, as well as current serving members.

The VFWCs form part of our vision to provide care, commemoration and camaraderie to the veteran community through the delivery of meaningful support services.

“We see the Centres as providing care through various forms – a holistic support model, and one that provides the right level of support and the right type of engagement for individual needs.”

ROBERT SKODA
CEO, RSL Queensland

“I connected with Mates4Mates and the team at RSL Queensland earlier this year. Since then, they’ve been nothing but warm, welcoming and supportive. This new RSL Queensland Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centre makes it incredibly convenient to access all services under one roof, meaning no more travelling all around town.”

BART DE VREE
Royal Australian Air Force veteran

Justice and Safety

DVA claims and appeals

RSL Queensland's expert Compensation Advocates continued to guide veterans through the sometimes complex DVA claims and appeals processes to help them get the most beneficial outcomes.

In addition to the claims and appeals conducted by RSL Queensland Sub Branches, in 2023 a total of 6,712 claims and appeals were submitted by RSL Queensland on behalf of veterans, their partners and their dependants.

Our advocacy assistance is provided free of charge and is available online, in person and over the phone.



Health

Wellness Programs

RSL Queensland continued to offer a wide range of initiatives and events to improve the wellbeing and social connection of veterans, Defence members and their families, with the programs expanding in 2023.

More than 1,300 veterans participated in wellness programs to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing in 2023.

We partnered with the following organisations to deliver wellness programs in 2023: 4 Aussie Heroes, Diggers Rest, Dig in Health Co, Happy Paws Happy Hearts, Kookaburra Kids, Legacy Brisbane, Operation PTSD Support, PTSD Resurrected Inc, RAEMUS Rover Racing, Survive to Thrive, Swiss 8, Trojan's Trek, Veterans Care Association Inc. and Waves of Wellness.

RSL Be:Well

RSL Queensland launched RSL Be:Well; an online learning platform providing free resources to support veterans during and after Defence service. Developed in conjunction with Gallipoli Medical Research, RSL Be:Well offers research-based, practical information and tools to proactively improve health and wellbeing.

Self-guided and interactive courses launched in 2023 included topics on managing sleep and insomnia and using food to better manage chronic pain. Additional veteran-centric mental, emotional and physical health topics are scheduled to be introduced in 2024.

Social support

Active Lifestyles

RSL Queensland Active Lifestyles events provided opportunities for veterans and their families to join in activities and experiences while connecting with fellow members of the veteran community.

The program expanded in 2023 to include additional activities across more locations, with events held in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Gympie, Glasshouse Mountains, Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Gatton and the Gold Coast.

In 2023, 355 people participated in our Active Lifestyles events – a 90% increase on the previous year.

Activities in our 2023 program included abseiling and kayaking, adventure park and wildlife, blacksmithing, cave tour, ceramic painting, electric mountain biking, kokedama workshop, leatherwork, Mary Valley Rattler train tour, metalsmithing, painting, sailing, Treetops High Ropes Adventure, and a turtle tour.

"This was my first Active Lifestyles event and it exceeded my expectations. Professionally organised and friendly. I had an awesome day."

ACTIVE LIFESTYLES PARTICIPANT
Electronic Mountain Biking

Employment

RSL Employment Program

In 2023, the RSL Employment Program celebrated five years of supporting veterans and the partners of current and ex-serving Defence members in their search for meaningful employment. The program also surpassed the milestone of placing more than 1,000 members of the veteran community into jobs with employers around Australia.

285 jobs were secured through the program in 2023. Veterans made up 74% of those who secured jobs, and partners of veterans or Defence members made up 26%.

This year, we listed 954 unique roles on our online jobs board, secured apprentice positions with Energy Queensland for 12 veterans, and partnered with the following organisations to secure employment opportunities or start to build employment pathways: Aruma, Australia Post, BAE Systems, Boeing, Bolton Clarke, Brisbane Motorways, Compass Group, CyberCX, Disaster Relief Australia, Elphinstone Group, Energy Queensland, Hobart City Council, L3Harris (Apprenticeship Campaign), Mackellar Mining, Suncorp, Thales, Ventia and various local, state and federal government bodies.

For the first time, we also ran events for veteran and partner job seekers and employers, including up-skilling workshops, and information and employer sessions, with 14 events held across Queensland and Tasmania in 2023.

The RSL Employment Program won the 'Excellence in Supporting Veteran and/or Partner Employment' category at the 2023 Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards. This is the second time that the program has won this award, and the fourth time it has been nominated.

"The program team really helped give me some direction for my career, revamping my resume and helping me with some of those technical skills for interviews. Queensland Rail has a certain method of interviewing, and the team knew this, so with their help I was able to land my current role."

KRISTIAN LAING
Air Force veteran and Train Station Supervisor, Queensland Rail



Active Lifestyles



Happy Paws Happy Hearts



Operation PTSD Support



RSL Employment Program

Education and skills

Scholarships

The RSL Scholarships Program empowered ex-Defence personnel and their children, as well as the partners of current or ex-serving Defence members, by supporting them through tertiary study or vocational training. Each scholarship is valued at up to \$5,000 a year for a maximum of three years.

In 2023, 69 scholarships were awarded to veterans, their partners and their dependants to increase their employability.

Scholarship recipients can use the funding for course fees, administration fees, textbooks and equipment required to complete their course.

“It’s been great having the support, help and funding to study what I want to do. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the RSL Scholarships team.”

BLAKE ALLEN
Ex-serving ADF member and RSL scholarship recipient

Housing

Homelessness Program

RSL Queensland continued to partner with The Salvation Army to deliver our Homelessness Program, which helps veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness into immediate emergency accommodation. Once they’re safe, we help them find permanent rental accommodation and link them into our holistic range of support services to address their living conditions, which is generally an outcome of complex underlying factors.

In 2023, 202 individuals and families were helped into safe, permanent housing through our Homelessness Program, with a total expenditure of \$2.39 million.

Short-term accommodation

RSL Queensland’s short-term accommodation facility, Angus House in Brisbane, continued to provide subsidised accommodation and meals for veterans needing to access specialist medical treatment, convalesce after treatment, or take time out from a domestic situation.

In 2023, 1,011 nights were provided in short-term accommodation at Angus House.

Independent living

To support veterans and their families in securing affordable long-term housing, RSL Queensland continued to operate more than 80 self-contained housing units throughout Queensland. We currently have independent living units in Ayr, Cairns, Emu Park, Gayndah, Mareeba, Mount Perry, Proserpine and Yeppoon.

Income and finance

Emergency financial support

RSL Queensland provides some emergency funding on a one-off basis to help veterans who are having trouble meeting their financial obligations for groceries, electricity, rent or transport.

In 2023, we provided \$761,000 in emergency financial support under our Wellbeing Program – an increase of more than \$80,000 on the previous year.

Financial counselling

A new partnership between RSL Queensland and Bravery Trust commenced this year, enabling veterans to receive expert support from a dedicated Bravery Trust financial counsellor. This support helps veterans and their families who come through our Homelessness Program or are identified as needing ongoing financial assistance to better manage their budget, supporting them to move towards financial independence.

In 2023, 107 veterans were referred to Bravery Trust for financial counselling.



RSL Scholarships Program



Homelessness Program



Accommodation



Emergency financial support

Recognition and respect

Funerals and poppy services

For veterans who have no known family, RSL Queensland continued to arrange – through the League – dignified funeral services attended by RSL representatives.

We actively sought out and gave recognition to unmarked graves in which veterans were interred, ensuring descendants could properly honour their memory. RSL Queensland members also provided poppy services to complement the funeral of a service person.

Bereavement and family support

RSL Queensland continued to support families who have lost a family member who served in the Defence Force by providing emergency financial assistance and advice on compensation and entitlements.



Funeral and poppy service

Family support

GALLIPOLI MEDICAL RESEARCH

Gallipoli Medical Research (GMR) is committed to understanding the impact that military service has on veterans and their families, from both a physical and a mental health perspective. The long-standing partnership between GMR and RSL Queensland is built on trust and a shared vision to create a brighter future for veterans through research.

The partnership achieves its mission of improving the quality of life for veterans and their families through evidence-informed programs that meet the needs of veterans.

Introduction of MT-Ready tool supports transition to civilian life

GMR researchers, in partnership with RSL Queensland, developed a world-first tool to predict how likely a Defence member is to have a difficult transition to civilian life, and which areas of reintegration they might need support with along the way.

Released in 2023, the research-based tool, called the Mental Readiness for Military Transition Scale (MT-Ready), assesses the mental readiness of service members prior to transition. It is hoped that this research tool may have a significant impact on the lives of Defence members by enabling them to identify whether they will likely benefit from support in three key areas:

- future focus and optimism
- anger and perceived failure
- civilian connections and social support.

RSL Be:Well revolutionises veteran wellbeing

A recent collaboration between GMR and RSL Queensland has developed RSL Be:Well, an innovative online resource dedicated to enhancing the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of veterans. The tool offers resources tailored specifically for veterans and includes the latest health insights presented through a range of easy to understand and actionable activities.

The first topics under RSL Be:Well were released in 2023, with veterans able to choose health topics that resonate with their interests and engage with interactive short modules tailored to their needs.

“Our partnership with RSL Queensland is instrumental in advancing our mission to improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. Their generous support enables us to make tangible progress in addressing critical gaps in veteran care. As we move forward, there remains significant work to be done in this space, and we’re grateful for RSL Queensland’s continued partnership as we strive to make a lasting impact.”

MIRIAM KENT

CEO, Gallipoli Medical Research

Miriam Kent

CEO, Gallipoli Medical Research

gallipoliresearch.com.au
enquiries.gmrf@ramsayhealth.com.au





MATES 4 MATES

Here for those impacted by service.

In 2023, Mates4Mates remained steadfast in our commitment to tailor services that meet the evolving needs of veterans and their families seeking care and connection. Our devoted and passionate staff demonstrated unwavering dedication to serving veterans and the Defence community. Funded by RSL Queensland, Mates4Mates provides support and rehabilitation services to current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members and their families.

To ensure we continued to provide safe environments for veterans and their families to access Mates4Mates support, new sites were established in Ipswich (South East Queensland), Stuart Park (Northern Territory), and Brisbane (South East Queensland) in collaboration with RSL Queensland. Official openings for these centres were attended by distinguished guests and stakeholders, noting the key value of Mates4Mates services within the local communities.

These Veteran & Family Wellbeing Centres prioritise the care of veterans and their family members. By co-locating Mates4Mates and RSL Queensland services alongside other ex-service organisations, we collectively enhanced our accessibility and collaboration for the health and wellbeing of the Defence community.

Growth in clients

In 2023 we saw a 40% increase in our client contacts, with more than 38,000 occasions of services across social connection activities, mental health and physical rehabilitation services, and the Skills for Recovery programs. This translated to more than 3,900 individual clients accessing Mates4Mates services and coming together to share experiences and connect with like-minded individuals who understand their journey.

While our overall growth in clients and services expanded in 2023, notable growth occurred in regions outside of Queensland, particularly in the Northern Territory and Tasmania. Additionally, there was an increase in veterans and family members accessing mental health (31.5% increase) and physical rehabilitation (32.4% increase) services, both in our centres and through telehealth.

As a member of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide reference group, which continued its hearings across Australia in 2023, Mates4Mates is committed to continuous quality improvement, and is proactively implementing improvements aimed at delivering better outcomes for veterans and their families.

Our commitment to expanding services and locations was also integral to providing more comprehensive support to a growing number of clients.

A pivotal focus in 2023 was recognising the importance of directly consulting with veterans and families to inform service delivery. Seeking advice from these cohorts enhanced the understanding of the veteran lived experiences and needs, informing future projects.

Lastly, Mates4Mates celebrated a significant milestone – our 10th anniversary. Since our inception by RSL Queensland in 2013, we have supported more than 11,000 individuals through their services. We take pride in their achievements and look forward to the continued positive impact on those needing our services.

As we forge ahead alongside veterans and their families, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the staff, clients, supporters and partners who have played instrumental roles in supporting those impacted by service. The accomplishments of 2023 reinforce our confidence that the future of Mates4Mates will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients.

Emma Whitehead
CEO, Mates4Mates
mates4mates.org
1300 4 MATES



Commemoration



Pictured: Duncan Lovering, Zane Allen and Paul Tochev at the 2023 Brisbane ANZAC Day service.

RSL Queensland enables and supports commemorations in honour of the service and sacrifice of veterans. We engage with the community, elevate days and services of commemoration, and educate the public on their significance, to ensure that the contribution of every person who has served and sacrificed in defence of our nation is recognised.

ANZAC Day

To encourage commemoration of ANZAC Day on 25 April, RSL Queensland launched 'That's the ANZAC spirit', a campaign highlighting the values exemplified by the ANZACs and the many brave service men and women who followed in their footsteps. The awareness campaign encouraged Queenslanders to recognise and remember service people past and present by joining the community and coming together on ANZAC Day.

440 ANZAC Day services and events were held around the state by RSL Sub Branches and promoted to the public via the anzacspirit.com.au website.

In the lead-up to 25 April, our ANZAC Day campaign focused on the characteristics of the ANZAC spirit that live on in us all: courage, humour, ingenuity, mateship and endurance. We invited all Australians to honour our Defence community and commemorate in a way that was meaningful to them: by attending a local RSL service, lighting up the dawn at home, participating online, or taking the opportunity to connect with their local community.

"ANZAC Day is a significant and uniquely personal time for all Australians – for me, it's an opportunity to stand side by side with my fellow veterans, family and friends, to remember those who served and sacrificed for our nation."

CHERISA PEARCE
RSL Queensland member

We also partnered with Queensland-based national sporting teams the Dolphins (NRL), Queensland Firebirds (Netball) and Gold Coast Suns (AFL), to weave commemorations into their respective ANZAC rounds.

Our Postcards of Honour educational activity supported more than 50 RSL Sub Branches to

engage with more than 170 primary schools and an estimated 11,000 students. Thousands of postcards were written to honour and thank veterans for their service.

Run Army

Ahead of ANZAC Day, RSL Queensland and the Australian Army teamed up in support of Run Army, held on Sunday 23 April. The annual event is dedicated to supporting current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and raised funds for Legacy Brisbane. RSL Queensland sponsored the event, which attracted more than 5,000 participants, drawn mainly from the Defence community.

Indigenous Veterans' Ceremony

The 17th annual Indigenous Veterans' Ceremony was held on 26 May, the first day of National Reconciliation Week 2023, at the Shrine of Remembrance, Brisbane. RSL Queensland hosted the ceremony to recognise and honour the invaluable contributions of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have served and sacrificed for our nation.

The ceremony was an opportunity for the community to acknowledge that many Indigenous veterans were treated neither equally, nor fairly, both during and particularly after their return from service, and to create a deeper understanding of our military history.

"It's an opportunity to share my story and to share the truth – that in the past, even though Indigenous and some non-Indigenous personnel and veterans were not equally treated, both during and after service, we're still here. We did serve and we'll continue to serve."

MARSAT KETCHELL
Navy veteran, Elder, community leader, and keynote speaker at the 2023 Indigenous Veterans' Ceremony

“We need to continue to engage Australia’s youngest generations to give them an understanding of their military heritage and the sacrifices that have been made towards the freedoms we enjoy today.”

MAJOR GENERAL STEPHEN DAY DSC AM
State President, RSL Queensland

Korean Veterans’ Day

27 July 2023 marked the 70th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that effectively brought an end to the Korean War. Korean Veterans’ Day is commemorated each year on that date, with several ceremonies and events held by RSL Sub Branches. RSL Queensland supported this commemoration by raising awareness of the invaluable contribution of Australian service personnel in this conflict and this significant anniversary.

“Korean Veterans’ Day means everything to me. I remember Frank McDuff, and Jimmy and all. I honour all these blokes. They were great soldiers – some of the finest men Australia produced, I reckon. They were a credit to their uniform. They were a credit to their country.”

MATTHEW RENNIE OAM
Korean War veteran, shared his story to commemorate Korean Veterans’ Day.

Vietnam Veterans’ Day

Vietnam Veterans’ Day is commemorated annually on 18 August, the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. 2023 also marked the 50th anniversary of the issuing of the proclamation by the Governor-General, by which Australia’s involvement in the war officially ended. RSL Queensland promoted commemorative initiatives being held by organisations in Queensland, including RSL Sub Branches and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

“In 1966–67, there was general support for the commitment to Vietnam and our soldiers. But towards the end of the 1960s, it was starting to have an impact. Some of my friends were not well-received when they came home. Some suffered, with the ‘Vietnam was not a real war’ business. I never experienced that, but I know others who felt hurt.”

KEL RYAN
Vietnam War veteran, shared his story to commemorate Vietnam Veterans’ Day.

Remembrance Day

RSL Queensland broadened our ‘Remember to Remember’ campaign in the lead-up to Remembrance Day, encouraging Australians to join the commemoration on 11 November at ANZAC Square, or at one of more than 130 services held by RSL Sub Branches around the state. Promotions included a Wall of Remembrance in Brisbane’s Queen Street Mall and city landmarks illuminated in red. We also worked closely with the District and Sub Branch network again to deliver ‘Draw to Remember’, enabling around 8,500 Queensland school children to sketch commemorative chalk murals in honour of service people past and present.

“This Remembrance Day, may my great-granduncle rest in peace. May his service and sacrifice – and that of all the thousands of other Australian service people who have paid the ultimate price serving their country – always be remembered.”

TOM ECCLESTON
2023 Premier’s Anzac Prize recipient and guest speaker at the RSL Queensland Remembrance Day Ceremony.

Engaging through commemorations

To broaden our engagement with Queenslanders of various ages and locations, RSL Queensland partnered with organisations to sponsor or support their commemorative events, activities and services.

Premier’s Anzac Prize

RSL Queensland partnered with the Queensland Department of Education to sponsor the annual Premier’s Anzac Prize, providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Queensland students and teachers to explore the ANZAC story and legacy.

Prize recipients participate in research, fundraising, community engagement and a tour of Europe, visiting key historical sites including World War I battlefields. It is a unique opportunity for young Queenslanders to gain in-depth insight into the ANZAC legacy through research, workshops, and visits to significant sites on the Western Front.

Point & Shoot

RSL Queensland sponsored a tour of the Point & Shoot Australian veteran photography exhibition to Brisbane and Townsville. The exhibition showcased a powerful collection of imagery and stories from Australian veterans, bringing a voice to the unique experiences of serving personnel.



Indigenous Veterans' Ceremony

Korean Veterans' Day

Vietnam Veterans' Day

Remembrance Day

Premier's Anzac Prize

Camaraderie

Support across the community

Cardwell RSL Sub Branch, Far Northern District

Nestled between the oceans and the rainforest, Cardwell is a tropical paradise. But in 2011, Cyclone Yasi tested the community's resilience. Elevated from the worst-hit areas, Cardwell RSL Sub Branch became the recovery centre for the SES and emergency services. It provided refuge and forged its place in Cardwell as a community hub.

When the Sub Branch was struggling with numbers in 2021, they engaged with local schools, hosted ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies, sold raffle tickets and hosted a barbecue every Sunday. These activities have continued and by the end of 2023 membership had increased to 35 ex-service members, 85 social members, and 18 volunteers. Providing camaraderie and mateship to members, especially veterans, is at the heart of the Sub Branch's work.

A centenary of care and camaraderie in the north

North Queensland District

In March 2023, RSL North Queensland District celebrated 100 years of providing vital care, commemoration and camaraderie to the veteran community. A weekend of events marked this milestone, including a wreath laying ceremony and centenary dinner attended by RSL Queensland

officials, local, state and federal elected members, representatives from Queensland's Emergency Services, the Australian Army, and members of the broader RSL District Network.

The events also recognised the ongoing contributions of volunteers and members to the local veteran community. Reflecting on their impact on the veteran community, members looked to the future and their core focus of recognising the legacy of service people and fostering greater belonging for all veterans.

A life dedicated to service

Central Queensland District

Volunteers like Kevin Plumb are the backbone of our organisation. 'Kev' joined the Sarina RSL Sub Branch when he left the Army in 1968. Since 1971, the Vietnam veteran has held many roles, giving him something to focus on. Kev has always advocated for veterans, starting with the removal of overseas postal costs for service personnel and families.

Since 1993, Kev has been a Pension and Welfare Advocate (currently with Walkerston Pleystowe RSL Sub Branch), helping veterans navigate the claims process, providing updates, reassurance and mateship. For Kev, it's about doing what is right. In February 2023, RSL Australia awarded Kev its highest honour, the Meritorious Service Medal, for his contribution to the veteran community.



Far Northern



North Queensland



Central Queensland

Lending a hand to mates in need

Mount Larcom RSL Sub Branch,
Wide Bay and Burnett District

Mount Larcom is a community of only 360 people, but the Mount Larcom RSL Sub Branch boasts a mighty spirit. In 2018, there were just three active veteran members; now, there are 70 League and non-League members, including veterans from the Vietnam through to Afghanistan conflicts.

The Sub Branch organises school visits, veteran support initiatives, awards, and commemorative events for ANZAC Day and Beersheba Day to promote peace and remembrance. In 2023, they refurbished their building’s kitchen and barbecue area to host volunteer and community events and promote camaraderie within their Sub Branch and the community.

Small but mighty Pittsworth connecting community

Pittsworth RSL Sub Branch, Western District

Pittsworth may be small, but it has long connections to Defence with many local links to WWI, WWII, Malaya, and Vietnam. It’s also the base of 19 Air Cadet Unit, and close to Leyburn Airfield and Oakey Army Aviation Centre. Housed in the 1930s School of the Arts, the Pittsworth RSL Sub Branch has a

remarkable memorabilia collection featuring medals, photos and a restored 1944 WWII Jeep.

Whether it’s a chat and a cuppa, visiting veterans in aged care, taking members to appointments or engaging an RSL Advocacy team, the Sub Branch continued to provide ongoing support in 2023. The ANZAC Day Dawn Service and gunfire breakfast are popular with locals, with a unique practice of laying books, which are later donated to schools, in place of wreaths.

Avenue of Honour brings community together

Sunshine Coast and Regional District

The RSL Sunshine Coast and Regional District unveiled the new Bli Bli Avenue of Honour and cenotaph with a community ceremony, just in time for ANZAC Day in 2023. Eight years in the making, the Avenue of Honour is made up of shrubbery and commemorative plaques with the names of operations or areas where Australian Defence Force personnel have served. It is the only place in Australia to display all 14 operations and 12 peacekeeping operations. Community support for the Avenue of Honour is very strong, with a group of approximately 100 veterans living in the Parklakes estate, known as the Halcyon Veterans, serving as custodians of the memorial.

A treasure trove of local wartime history

Ipswich RSL Sub Branch, Moreton District

The Ipswich RSL Sub Branch has been working hard to preserve military history, housing more than 1,800 artifacts, exhibits, photographs and documents from the Boer War to Timor-Leste as part of the Ipswich War Museum.

It’s a unique collection, with 80% of the artifacts originating from Ipswich and surrounding areas. In 2023, a WWI medal set was donated to the museum, including a Military Cross, Queen’s Coronation medal and original citation from King George V.

Handcrafted Honour Boards take pride of place, listing 644 WWI Ipswich veterans missing from the original boards, and six nurses and 54 individuals killed in action. Another board mentions Sister Constance Mabel Keys, a decorated WWI nurse, and one of the first nurses to enlist in 1914.

A new home for a growing Sub Branch

Caboolture-Morayfield and District RSL Sub Branch,
Brisbane North District

With a growing membership base, the new Caboolture-Morayfield District RSL Sub Branch office opened just in time for Remembrance Day.

The new accessible location is near their memorial, welcoming veterans and their families to access services, and attend commemorations and social activities.

The Sub Branch hopes the new facilities, like the kitchen and library, will help build greater social connections and camaraderie amongst members. Now they’re settled, the team is focusing in on recruiting new volunteers to help manage the space. Looking to the future, they hope to expand to the neighbouring building to accommodate the local war widows' organisation.

Sub Branch opens first clubhouse

Forest Lake & Districts RSL Sub Branch,
South Eastern District

After three years of hard work, Forest Lake & Districts RSL Sub Branch has a purpose-built clubhouse that members are proud to call home. In 2019, the local National Servicemen's Association (Nashos) gifted the Sub Branch a derelict WWII building in the Wacol Heritage Precinct. Formerly part of the Wacol Army Barracks, the Precinct includes a chapel and hall managed by the Nashos, and a military museum run by the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and Ex-Members Association Inc.



Sunshine Coast and Regional

Western

Wide Bay and Burnett

Moreton

Brisbane North

The clubhouse, which was finished in 2023, is a testament to the dedication of the Sub Branch community. Every part of the clubhouse has been thoughtfully designed, from the handmade commemorative quilts and artworks to the barbecue area and communal hall where regular social gatherings are hosted.

Canungra's Vietnam War Memorial relocated

Runaway Bay RSL Sub Branch, Gold Coast District

A collaboration between the Kokoda Youth Foundation, the Land Warfare Centre, Runaway Bay RSL Sub Branch, and the local community has moved the Canungra Vietnam War Memorial to a more accessible site outside the Centre's entry.

The granite wall of the original memorial from inside the Kokoda Barracks, along with signs, plaques and artifacts, are joined by a new life-size bronze statue of an Australian Vietnam War soldier.

Information boards about the history of the Centre and the Vietnam War have created an accessible space for education and remembrance. Local volunteers, businesses and organisations, and a Department of Veterans' Affairs 'Saluting Their Service' grant supported the project. Pavers at the new site are engraved with the names of supporters for both the original memorial and this project.

Spreading Christmas cheer to RSL families

RSL Queensland State Branch

With generous support from sponsors and veteran-owned suppliers, RSL Queensland staff and volunteers packed more than 550 Christmas hampers for veterans and their families in 2023. This is the fourth year hampers have been delivered around the state, providing meaningful care and support to older veterans and war widows, those experiencing homelessness or financial hardship, and recognising those who have done outstanding work in their communities.

Volunteers packed hampers with delicious Christmas goodies, gifts, essential food and supplies from Queensland and veteran-owned businesses. There was also a \$100 supermarket gift card to help each recipient enjoy a special Christmas meal.



South Eastern



Gold Coast



State Branch

Advocating for veterans



RSL Queensland creates and builds awareness of the current and future issues that impact veterans and their families across the state. We share our knowledge, expertise and experience to help decision-makers develop legislation, form policies and undertake reforms that secure positive outcomes for veterans and their families. We also work with all stakeholders to ensure action is taken to achieve and sustain the intended outcomes.

In 2023, we implemented our 2023-2025 Advocacy

Strategy, with strategic priorities underpinning the work of our dedicated advocacy function, and an eight-step advocacy process governing the way we identify, research and deliver our advocacy and government relations priorities.

The Strategy provides clarity and structure to how our organisation can work purposefully across the whole portfolio of human services in state and federal governments, to ensure the real-world experiences of veterans are considered at every opportunity.

Priorities	Desired outcome	2023 achievements
Empower veteran voices	Veterans and their families have meaningful ways to help shape RSL Queensland advocacy. Their experience informs our participation in reviews and processes to develop legislation, guidance and frameworks about government-led support that impacts them and other ESOs in our advocacy activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used formal and informal channels to call for investment in the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families Invited and facilitated veteran-led ESOs to co-design forums and activities
Tell the stories of veterans and their families	RSL Queensland influences the shape and direction of government decision-making and actions to deliver positive outcomes for veterans and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent inclusion of a strengths-based narrative across formal submissions, informed by the lived experiences of Queensland veterans and their families, and ABS data Listened to members and raised their issues at state and national forums and engagements
Position RSL Queensland as a thought leader and government partner	RSL Queensland creates and leads debate, creates agency and influences change. When RSL Queensland calls for action, stakeholders engage and support our position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of formal submissions, advocacy, information and position papers Joint submissions with other ESOs Brought the ESO sector and government representatives together through forums

RSL Queensland provides leadership and facilitates collaboration between ex-service organisations (ESOs), which leads to sector improvements and better outcomes for veterans and their families.

The twice-annual Queensland ESO Forum, which RSL Queensland facilitates in partnership with Legacy Brisbane, provides opportunities for joint working and connection into the Queensland and Australian governments.

In 2023 we also supported and informed the delivery of two National Forums for ESOs, which brought organisations from across the country together to consider the sector's response to the work of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, and explore the establishment of an ESO peak body to create a collective voice for the sector.

Also this year, RSL Queensland staff were members of, or advisers to, the following groups:

- Queensland Veterans' Council
- Queensland Veterans' Reference Group
- Queensland Consultative Forum
- Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) Region 1 Advisory Forum
- Repatriation Medical Authority
- National Aged Care Affiliate Working Group
- Advocacy Working Group reporting to ESORT
- RSL Australia National Veterans' Affairs Committee
- RSL Royal Commission Working Group
- National Forum for Ex-Service Organisations

In line with our Advocacy Strategy, we continued to share the lived experiences of the veteran community, with a focus on their social and economic

contribution, through formal submissions to inform government and agency policies.

In 2023, RSL Queensland made a pre-budget submission to the Queensland Government, as well as providing expert advice through RSL Australia on the following submissions to Australian Government departments:

- federal pre-budget submission
- DVA Legislation Reform submissions
- Harmonisation of Funeral Benefits for Veterans submission
- Administrative Review Reform submission
- Medical Transition submission
- establishment of a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Wellbeing (Implementation Body to follow the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide) submission
- Step-up to Incapacity Payments for Veterans Studying pilot advocacy paper
- Advocacy and Advocates (Advocacy Training and Development Program – ATDP) submission
- establishment of an ESO Peak Body information papers
- reports from each of the three National Forums for ESOs information papers
- Retrospective Invalidity Superannuation information paper.

Supporting our members



2023 members	
Service members	34,347
Auxiliary members	1,610
Non-League members	2,224

Membership figures at December 2023

Across our Districts and Sub Branches, our members delivered more than 558,725 volunteer hours on welfare and pension activities, commemorative events, fundraising and Sub Branch support.

RSL Queensland's network of 10 Districts and more than 230 Sub Branches provide care, commemoration and camaraderie within their local communities. We've continued to provide engaging and innovative support across the state, allowing Sub Branches to focus on supporting members, veterans and their families.

Support to Districts and Sub Branches

- Ongoing financial support through the Charitable Objects Fund to help Districts and Sub Branches provide charitable and welfare support to the veteran community. This included funding for veteran welfare funeral tributes, commemorations, accommodation, costs of medical and dental expenses, first aid training and social connection activities.
- Assisting 120 Sub Branches to lodge their Annual Information Statement to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).
- Successfully concluding the Sub Branch Support Grants Trial, with 40 Sub Branches being awarded a total of more than \$2 million in grants for building repair and renovation works for appropriate facilities to welcome and support veterans and their families.
- Providing access to additional fundraising opportunities through merchandise sales by reimbursing the cost of commemorative merchandise for ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day. A total of \$1.3 million was reimbursed in 2023.
- Assisting 125 Sub Branches with their funding needs to purchase or upgrade assets and undertake building repairs.
- Helping Sub Branches submit a total of 134 grant applications to federal, state and local authorities, and other bodies. This was a 30% increase on grant applications submitted in 2022.
- Securing \$1.15 million in grant funding, with \$3 million in applications pending for 2024.
- Continuing to provide training sessions to volunteers across the 10 Districts, including membership management, governance, finance, and knowledge portal. More than 90 group sessions were held throughout the year.

- Improving access to information via upgrades to online portals and systems. This enabled more commemorative services and events to be registered and promoted to the public. In 2023, more than 800 Sub Branch events were listed on the RSL Queensland website, an increase of 13.26% compared with the previous year.
- Launching a new initiative for ANZAC Day, called 'Postcards of Honour', to support Sub Branches to engage with local school students. More than 50 Sub Branches engaged with more than 170 primary schools and an estimated 11,000 students through the commemorative program.
- Working closely with the network to deliver 'Draw to Remember', enabling 70 Sub Branches around Queensland to engage with 196 schools and around 8,500 students in the lead-up to Remembrance Day.

Initiatives

- Developing a new governance training approach for our responsible persons that includes ACNC online training courses, with an updated reference manual, and online guides to reflect Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and ACNC changes.
- Delivering a simple recognition system through Districts via the "Coin of Appreciation" acknowledgement.
- Supporting Sub Branches with the submission of constitutional issues that require State Branch Board approval.
- Engaging with ESOs and the broader community to drive recruitment for Sub Branches.
- Helping Sub Branches fill casual vacancies on committees by advertising opportunities on the RSL Queensland jobs portal.

In 2023, we saw significant growth in our membership, ending the year with an additional 1,118 members compared to 2022 – demonstrating the strength and value of community connection and camaraderie to veterans and their families.

Funding our future



The RSL Art Union enables life-changing opportunities for prize draw winners, and veterans and Defence members, by funding the much-needed care and support provided through RSL Queensland.

Transforming winners' lives

The RSL Art Union remains Australia's largest prize home lottery, with 10 multi-million-dollar prize home draws in 2023. These included beautiful beach homes, apartments, and house and gold prize packages.

Prizes are life-changing for the winners, like Sue*, an RSL Art Union VIP member who won the RSL Art Union VIP Hero Draw 18. Sue's prize was worth more than \$3 million, which changed her life for the better after a tough year. Based on the Gold Coast, Sue couldn't believe the news when she heard she had won, saying: "I'd better go make a cup of tea and sit down. My Christmas has just gone from zero to hero!"

Sue has supported the RSL Art Union as a VIP Club member since 2006, and always admired the services RSL Queensland offers to veterans and families. "I love to stay up-to-date on all the work RSL Queensland does, the work you do is simply amazing," Sue said.

"I'd better go make a cup of tea and sit down. My Christmas has just gone from zero to hero!"

SUE*

2023 RSL Art Union winner

**Name changed for privacy*

Changing veteran futures

This spirit of mateship continues, with proceeds from every ticket sold in the RSL Art Union going towards supporting veterans and Defence members and their families through a range of support services and programs.

In 2023, 87.3% of RSL Queensland's available funding, supporting our charitable Objects, was directed towards investment in leading health and wellbeing support, advocacy, partner programs, education, research, and social and community services for veterans and their families.

Those we help

We help veterans like Vincent Hale, who served for more than 20 years and is now an active member of Tiaro RSL Sub Branch. During an RSL Queensland Active Lifestyles activity, Vincent met an RSL Queensland Compensation Advocate, who started the process of supporting him to navigate a DVA claim. This resulted in knee surgery to ease the pain Vincent had experienced since service.

"I'd like to say to the supporters of the RSL Art Union 'thank you very much', because without their support, a lot of the services wouldn't be available."

VINCENT HALE

Veteran and member of Tiaro RSL Sub Branch



Sustaining our future

In 2023, the RSL Art Union felt the effects of the challenging economic climate experienced by the broader Australian community. To effectively respond to this and ensure we could continue to generate the funds required to support the growing needs of the veteran community, RSL Art Union focused efforts on operational improvements and efficiencies.

Specifically, in 2023, RSL Art Union redeveloped its website to be more mobile responsive and provide a better ticket purchasing experience. In consultation with RSL Queensland members, and with customers in mind, the website now optimises the prize line-up, enhances the value proposition for VIP members, and focuses on sustainable growth into the future.

Largest prize home in Australian history

The RSL Art Union also continued to deliver record-breaking prizes, with a \$12.6 million beachfront apartment complex on the Gold Coast surpassing the previous prize draw record set in 2022. Among the other stunning prize homes on offer in 2023 were a \$4.1 million hinterland haven, a \$4.5 million luxury Peregrine Beach house and Tesla, and a \$3.2 million beachside apartment in Sydney. All of these prizes gave winners the chance to own their dream home, while at the same time knowing proceeds were going to a charity that supports veterans and their families.

Building for the future

To achieve greater long-term sustainability for RSL Queensland, foundational work was undertaken on the Capital Management Framework (CMF) in 2023. The CMF brings stronger governance, balance sheet management and increased transparency to our financial operations, enabling the organisation to tell its story more easily to stakeholders.

With a review of operations across the organisation, improved planning and greater diversification of revenue channels, our view to longer-term financial sustainability will help ensure we can continue to fund support services to meet the growing needs of veterans and their families, now and into the future.



COMMITTEES

The Board of RSL Queensland is supported through a number of committees, each with a specific focus, that assist in developing and managing the organisation’s governance structure and capabilities by providing advice and recommendations.

Each committee is comprised of Board members and independent external experts, with skillsets in the particular area under consideration.

The Sub Committee structure has been established to ensure RSL Queensland can deliver its governance responsibilities in pursuit of our charitable Objects and our mission to provide care, commemoration and camaraderie to enable veterans and their families to live with dignity and respect.

Audit & Risk Committee

The Audit & Risk Committee provides advice and recommendations to the RSL Queensland Board to ensure an understanding and appreciation of the present and future risks regarding the financial and general operations of RSL Queensland.

The Committee focused on key outcomes, including:

- the workplace health, safety and welfare (WHSW) dashboard reporting initiative and endorsement of the WHSW Framework review
- ongoing development of the audit and risk frameworks
- Business Continuity Plan development and scenario desktop exercise
- endorsement of the Capital Management Framework (CMF)
- finalised Enterprise Risk Management Policy, Framework and Standards along with Risk Appetite Statement reviewed and endorsed for Board approval.

Chairpersons:

Barry Vains OAM (January to November) *not pictured*

Nicholas Gould (November to present)



Nominations, Remuneration and Board Governance Committee

The Nominations, Remuneration and Board Governance Committee provides advice to the Board on matters relating to shaping and maintaining the desired culture across RSL Queensland. This includes training, talent management and cultural initiatives, processes and remuneration frameworks, as well as recommendations to the Board on governance issues.

The Committee continued to support the Board throughout 2023 and provided advice on a range of issues, including:

- pay ranges and sector remuneration to retain key staff and attract the right staff to key roles, particularly noting the importance in the context of a tight labour market
- review of Board competency and skills
- Board education and Director development program.

Chairpersons:

Ian Hall (January to April) *not pictured*

Wendy Taylor (June to present)



Investment Committee

The Investment Committee provides support and makes recommendations to the Board in relation to investment matters and exercises any delegated authority from the Board regarding RSL Queensland’s investment portfolio.

Over the course of 2023, the Committee worked with the Executive Leadership Committee to evolve the concept of a CMF, providing advice and support as the CMF continued to develop. The CMF was endorsed by the Committee for Board approval.

Other key focuses of the Committee included:

- advising on the relevance of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors for RSL Queensland, and the proposed process for developing and implementing an ESG policy
- overseeing the implementation of the Investment Policy Statement
- monitoring the performance of the investment portfolio.

Chairperson:

Dr Adam Walk



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