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Media Release

19 March 2008

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT ENDORSE RECOMMENDATIONS OF MILITARY SUPERANNUATION REVIEW

Australia's leading ex-service organisations have called on the Federal Government to not endorse the recommendations of the Review of Military Superannuation.

The National Presidents of the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) and the Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), today lodged a formal response to the report of the review on behalf of 12 Ex-Service Organisations.

"The scheme proposed by the Review Team does not appropriately recognise the unique nature of military service, nor does it adequately compensate Australian Defence Force members for the increased risks to their superannuation under the proposed scheme," said RSL President, Major General Bill Crews.

"Although both the RSL and DFWA were still in discussions with the Review Team regarding additional data and analysis, at this juncture, the report's recommendations could not be supported," said DFWA President, David Jamison.

The RSL, DFWA and the wider ex-service community are particularly concerned that the Review:

- failed to demonstrate that future ADF members would not be worse-off under the proposed scheme.
- failed to demonstrate that future ADF members and their families would not be worse-off in the event of death and disability under the proposed scheme.
- failed to demonstrate that future ADF members would be adequately compensated for the greater risk to their superannuation entitlements inherent in the proposed scheme.
- failed to make appropriate recommendations to address the shortcomings of current schemes (particularly issues relating to indexation of pensions).

The full response lodged by the RSL, DFWA and supporting ex-service organisations can be downloaded from www.rsl.org.au or www.rdfwa.org.au

Contacts

DFWA
David Jamison
0416 107557

RSL
Bill Crews
0410 627 873

GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH RSL SUB-BRANCH

SUNDAY APRIL 13 at 10:30 am at the JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE UPSTAIRS LOUNGE

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER The Hon Bob Kucera APM, JP, MLA
Member for Yokine and Convenor, State Parliamentary Friends of Israel

"BEERSHEBA REVISITED – Impressions of the battlefields of Beersheba
Revisiting the last great victorious cavalry charge"

ALL WELCOME

DOING BUSINESS

WITH RSL

8:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.

ANZAC HOUSE

28 St George's Tce, Perth
PO Box 3023,
Perth Adelaide Terrace, WA 6832
Website: www.rslwahq.org.au
Email: rslwahq@inet.net.au
Tel: 9287 3799
Fax: 9287 3732

RECEPTION

Monday to Friday - general enquiries
Email: reception1@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3799

OFFICE CO-ORDINATOR

Monday to Friday - PA to State President & State Secretary,
Listening Post
Email: rslwahq@inet.net.au
Tel: 9287 3799

MEMBERSHIP

Monday to Thursday - membership enquiries, Sub-Branch enquiries
Email: membership@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3705

WELFARE

Monday to Friday - welfare applications, emergency housing, food & lodging grants, SS&A Relief Trust Fund applications. Overseas pensions
Email: welfare@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3707

ADVOCACY

Monday to Friday - S31 reviews, Veteran Review Board, Admin Appeals Tribunal
Email: rslwahq@inet.net.au
Tel: 9287 3708

FINANCE

Monday to Wednesday - all account enquiries, Sub-Branch credits
Email: accounts@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3706
Sub-Branch Insurance, information, claims, grant application assistance, DVA, Lotterywest (ABN, tax)
Email: State.Acc@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3703

PENSIONS

Monday to Friday - pension entitlements, claims preparation
Email: pensions1@rslwahq.org.au
Pensions2@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3709
9287 3710, 9287 3711

ANZAC CLUB

Monday to Friday - facilities bookings, catering/hospitality
Email: anzacclub@rslwahq.org.au
Tel: 9287 3724

PRESIDENT'S PEN

With ANZAC Day but a few weeks away it is time again to reflect on the sacrifices made by our servicemen and women in battle. This year we commemorate the 93rd anniversary of the ill-fated Gallipoli Landing that saw the cream of our young men perish on the cliffs of the Gallipoli Peninsula. We also remember on the 25th April, 2008 the 90th anniversary of the Battle at Villers-Bretonneux where the 51st Battalion AIF initiated its famous bayonet charge and fought successfully to turn the tide of the First World War in favour of the Allied Forces. This led, of course to the signing of the Armistice later in the year in November. In more recent times we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Coral/Balmoral in Vietnam. As in the past there is a continuing desire for the community to participate on our commemorative services and this year should see an increase in numbers attending and paying homage to those who gave their lives in the cause of freedom and democracy. RSL, in association with other Ex Service Organizations and the local community has accepted the task of conducting ANZAC Day Services and I trust such Services will again honour our fallen comrades. I look forward to hearing of successful Services throughout the State.

HMAS SYDNEY

The recent finding of HMAS SYDNEY will eventually draw closure to the mystery that has surrounded its sinking in November 1941 with the loss of 645 lives. Through modern technology the ship that has eluded generations of searchers for nearly 67 years will finally give up its secrets. It is hoped that the discovery will enable historians to piece together the last hours of the battle that saw its loss.

RSL is determined to ensure that the site is classified as a war grave so preventing the removal of anything or tampering with any remains that may be contained in the wreck.

I believe that Government shares that position.

At the March meeting of State Executive it was resolved that we approach National RSL to present a case to have the HMAS SYDNEY Memorial at Geraldton designated a National Memorial that will forever honour those who perished in one of the greatest sea disasters of the Second World War.

Battle for Australia.

One of the initiatives of the new Commonwealth Government will be the designation of the first Wednesday in September each year as the Battle for Australia Day. It expects to have the required legislation through by September 2008 to confirm such recognition. While some may argue for a range of different dates for such a commemoration the important fact is that we now have such a date to honour those who defended Australia when for the first time our country was in serious threat of invasion. I hope Sub Branches will plan to honour that occasion accordingly.

Remembrance Day 2008.

Remembrance Day 2008 will be commemorated on Tuesday 11th November, 2008 with the traditional Service being held at the State War Memorial in Kings Park followed by the Luncheon at RAAFA Estate Bullcreek. With escalating costs the organizing committee was obliged to seek an alternative luncheon venue to keep charges at a reasonable level. At this stage we are confident we can contain costs at the same level as 2007 and produce a dinner and entertainment that will be appropriate for the occasion.



Remember Indigenous Service

National Reconciliation Week 2008 will take place around Australia from 27 May to 3 June, 2008 providing an opportunity to focus on reconciliation between Indigenous and non- Indigenous Australians. This year is the 41st anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, the most successful in the nation's history, in which more than 90 per cent of voters said 'yes' to acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australian citizens.

The theme for this year's activities is **Reconciliation-It's all our story** and reflects on the contribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous campaigners who worked side by side to make the Referendum such a great success.

As part of National Reconciliation Week, DVA, the RSL and Indigenous veterans will work alongside ex-service and community organizations to hold a ceremony in Perth to commemorate the contribution of Indigenous servicemen and women.

A service will be held at the State War Memorial in Kings Park on Wednesday May 28th at 10.00am. For more information on the ceremony please contact June Cuneo at DVA on 9366 8465 or email june.cuneo@dva.gov.au.

Retirement Village

RSL has just about completed formalities for the purchase of land for our new retirement village at Jurien Bay. Once the purchase has been confirmed detailed planning will take place to stage the building of just over 100 units and a community centre that will feature state of the art facilities. RSL villages are well known for their standards of excellence and expressions of interest in securing units in the development are running high. With easy access from Perth and Mid-West locations the development is proving to be an instant success. If you require further information on this project please contact RSL's Aged Care operations at RSL Care, 16 Freedman Rd, Menora, WA. Tele: 93700200

Website Development.

Over the coming months we plan to upgrade of website to make it more responsive to members and the general public seeking information about the RSL. With people turning to the RSL for information about almost anything that has something to do with veterans, battles, lost medals etc we have found that by having an interactive website we will be able to satisfy that demand in a more professional manner. As our activities become more diverse and the increased demand for information from members and the public grows we need to be more responsive in a professional manner. We hope that this initiative will benefit everyone – particularly our country members as it will break down the barrier of distance. Our Website is www.rslwahq.org.au. Why not visit us – you will find all you want to know about Perth's ANZAC Day organization.

RSL Corporate Golf Day

The Annual RSL Corporate Golf Day and President's Cup is to be held at Meadow Springs Golf Course Mandurah on Thursday the 24th July, 2008.



One of RSL's major supporters – BGC – will host the event

Please reserve that date and encourage your Sub Branch to participate.

Full details and nomination forms will be issued with the next edition of the Sub-Branch Signal.

RSL Cadet of the Year

Due to a decision by the Cadet Defence Force in Canberra in February, the tour to Vietnam by the National cadets has been cancelled. Efforts to book a group tour for our three cadets to travel overseas as civilians have not been successful due to the time element. The committee is now in the process of planning a trip to Canberra in May so they can attend the 40 Year Commemoration of the Battles of Coral & Balmoral to be held at the Australian War Memorial on the 13 May 2008. At least the cadets will get a chance to talk to some of the veterans from that era. Visits to Duntroon and ADFA are also on the agenda. The decision to cancel the well organised tour to Vietnam at such a late date was very distressing to the cadets and the RSL.

The committee would like to thank the many sub-branches/associations who have made donations to the cadet programme over the years. The latest donations have been received from the Nollamara RSL Sub-Branch, Mt Lawley RSL Sub-Branch, WRAAF Association WA and Tom's Small Boat Training.

RSL Trailer Booking

Bookings for the Community Youth & Education Display Unit can be made by phoning Chris Campbell on 0409370548. A deposit for \$300.00 from the sub-branch will be required at ANZAC House two weeks before the pick-up date. This amount will be refunded on return of the unit in good condition.

State Congress

State Congress is to be held at the Mercure Hotel, Irwin St, Perth over the weekend 28 – 29 June, 2008. We are looking forward to strong support from Sub Branches and robust debate on Congress Motions. Our Patron, The Governor of Western Australia Dr Ken Michael AC will open the Congress and visiting speakers will include Federal and State members of Parliament. We will also be presenting RSL Awards of Meritorious Medal and Life Membership. The Returning Officer will also announce the result of the election for State Executive

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

AS AT 26 MARCH 2008

Service Members 7,141
Affiliates: 873 Total: 8,014



HQ POSTAL ADDRESS

RSL WA Branch
PO Box 3023
Perth Adelaide Terrace WA 6832

VC Library

The mammoth task of reorganizing the Library at ANZAC House is progressing to the stage where all books have been accessioned and placed on the shelves. Many of the 'rare' books are still being assessed and we hope to have them on display over the coming months. State Executive has decided that the Library will be a Reference Library only with no borrowing permitted. As the collection contains many irreplaceable books it would not be the best interests of the League to permit them out on loan.

Claims under SRCA and MRCA Legislation.

DVA reports that claims made under the above two pieces of Legislation are now taking on average 120 days to action a claim. In turn claims under the VEA have now been reduced by 50% over the same period. These figures clearly indicate that the emphasis is now moving from the older generation of veterans to those veterans who are now serving or have in our more recent conflicts such as East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Reduction of Funding by DVA.

The Department has had its budget for salaries and other benefits cut by \$54 million. This cut in the budget does not impact on the payment of pensions to the veteran community of the cost of medical services, procedures or hospitalization. However, it will impact on the number of services provided by DVA staff in each state and the time frame of those services administered by staff of DVA.

Transfer of Veterans Files.

Due to a change in the arrangements for applications made under Freedom of Information for veterans or advocates to view a veteran file from WA will now be forwarded to either Brisbane or Sydney. Files which are considered active will be forwarded to Brisbane whilst those that are considered inactive will be stored in Sydney. We are still assessing what impacts this will have in relation to the need to access these files in respect of a pension claim particularly time lines.

Telephone Trial for Veterans likely to experience heart failure.

A telephone trial is currently being evaluated for veterans with the possibility of heart failure to be able to telephone in to a dedicated number to discuss symptoms and receive advice on how to manage their condition whilst at the same time be educated about their condition without the need to attend a doctor. This will enable veterans to self manage their condition whilst increasing their own knowledge.

Important Closing Dates are: **30th April, 2008**

*Nominations for Meritorious Medal
Nominations for Life Membership
Submission of Congress Motions*

6th June, 2008

*Nomination of Delegates etc
Payment of Congress Charges
Dinner Attendance
Competition Entry Form*

Deployment of Reservists.

It is important that the WA State Branch of the RSL be informed as to who of our Reservists are being deployed overseas so that assistance if required can be offered to families whilst their Reservist partner is deployed.

TIP Training.

There is a proposal Interstate for TIP Training to be conducted on weekends so enabling potential Advocates to be trained who would otherwise due to other commitments be unable to attend on weekdays. This will be particularly important for younger practitioners who will be required in the future to assist in making claims under the MRCA.

Veterans Home Care.

DVA are putting forward a proposal to enable General Practitioners to visit homes of those receiving home care so as to observe how they are coping in the home, rather than just undertaking a telephone interview which is not a satisfactory way of undertaking this assessment. Increased funding will be made available to the GP for this purpose.

Defence Family Health Centres.

It has been announced that the Government is considering establishing 12 Defence Family Health Care Clinics on Defence Bases.

Exposure to Atomic Testing.

We have been successful in having exposure to atomic testing placed back on the RSL agenda. This has been prompted by a report by a group in New Zealand who has studied the effects of this testing on veterans during the Maralinga and the Monte Bellos Island tests. Accordingly as this report is highly technical it has been referred to the Repatriation Medical Authority for their consideration and review as it also involves the possible need to amend two Statement of Principles associated with this testing.