

City of Albury RSL Sub-Branch

Newsletter

▪ October Edition 2026 ▪



70th Anniversary Edition

IMPORTANT NOTICES

STAY INFORMED, STAY CONNECTED

MONTHLY GENERAL MEETINGS

Held on the 3rd Sunday of each month

General Meeting: 18 Oct | 11:00am

General Meeting: 22 Nov | 11:00am

General Meeting: 17 Jan | 11:00am

General Meeting: 21 Feb | 11:00am

General Meeting: 21 Mar | 11:00am

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

Wednesday 11 November at St Matthew's Church 516 Kiewa Street Albury, commencing at 10.30 am.

Guest speaker: Colonel Phillip Baldoni CSM

Following the service you are welcome at ANZAC House 527 Wilson Street for Coffee/Tea and nibbles.

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Friday 11 December 12.00 noon
Albury Golf Club, North Street.

RSVP by 4 December to Gary Treeve
0407 480 201

OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday to Thursday – 10.00am - 2.00pm

Christmas Closure

Closes Thursday 17 Dec and re-opens Tuesday 12 Jan 2027

COMMITTEE DIRECTORY

2026/27

PATRON: Justin Clancy MP

HISTORIAN: Howard Jones OAM



President
Rory Nelson



Vice President & Welfare
Harry Hacking JP



Secretary
Glenda Johnston



Treasurer
Paul Dunlop

Appointed Positions

Vice President: (2nd): Position Vacant

Assistant Secretary: Barbara Chappell

Assistant Treasurer: Kel Lyons

Assets Officer: Position Vacant

Funerals Team: Harry Hacking JP

Activities Officer: Gary Treeve OAM

Security Officer: Mark Lunnnon

ANZAC Day Coordinator: Vacant

Purchasing Officer: Noel Francis

IT Officer: Noel Francis

Media Officer: Graham Docksey OAM
(MIL) OAM JP

Fundraising Officer: Jan Francis

Newsletter Editor: Doug Hunter OAM
RFD

Library Coordinator: Kel Lyons

Welfare Team: Harry Hacking JP

Fundraising Team: Jan Francis, Judith
Crawford and volunteers

Chaplain: Fr Alan Kelb OAM

INTRODUCING OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Rory Nelson served ten years with the ADF, first with 49 Battalion RQR (Army Reserve) then Army Apprentices School (Regular Army) as an apprentice carpenter & joiner. He was awarded the Governor General's Medal for trade and military skills, and was promoted to Apprentice Battalion Sergeant Major while at the School.

He completed his apprenticeship at the School of Military Engineering. He was posted to 17 Construction Squadron RAE and served overseas deployments to Bougainville and East Timor.

He took his discharge in 2001 and relocated to his wife's hometown Albury where he established a successful building business.

He is married to Vicki and has two daughters and three grandsons.



PRESIDENTS CORNER

This 70 th Anniversary Edition newsletter from the Albury RSL Sub-Branch hits home for me: the meandering path life leads us through can be exciting, unexpected, fascinating, terrifying and sometimes tragic, but life will always carry on. The RSL NSW constitution mentions that the league binds Australians to the promise of never forgetting the service and sacrifice of those who have served before us. Over the last 7 decades, this Newsletter has taken different forms but has provided updates on leadership, past and upcoming events, veteran services, commemorations, military history, and community activities. This edition is no exception.

I want to thank our local business community for sponsoring this Newsletter. This has helped amplify it from a few sheets of A4 folded in half to its former glory, as it was published in the late 1950s and 60s.

PRESIDENTS CORNER

I can't thank you enough for your generosity and support. A big thank you also to our editor, Doug Hunter, for once again providing some very interesting reading. I would also like to thank our outgoing president, Graham, for his support and mentoring. He has handed over a terrific team and a financially strong Sub-Branch that I'm sure is the envy of many.

If you haven't already, please have a look at our Facebook page. We'll be doing much more in this space. Over the past two months, we have tripled our followers and had more than 300,000 people view our page. If you would like to help run the Albury RSL Sub-Branch Facebook page, please get in touch. Good communication is an important part of connecting with our community and fulfilling our purpose as an RSL Sub-Branch.

Vietnam Veterans Day was well attended, with a coffee van parked outside ANZAC House. This has prompted the committee to consider purchasing our own coffee van as a way of bringing veterans together. A coffee van creates a relaxed opportunity for people to stop, have a chat, learn more about the RSL, discover available services and meet other veterans and members. It could also help raise funds for veterans in need while encouraging greater involvement in the Sub-Branch.

There is plenty happening this quarter, including the safeTALK conference in late September and a pickleball competition hosted by Howlong RSL Sub-Branch, supported by an RSL NSW Sport and Recreation grant. Legacy Albury also held its Annual Handover Dinner, which was well attended by RSL Sub-Branches from across the region. Albury RSL has committed to working more closely with Albury Legacy to ensure we continue supporting our veterans and their families.

Remembrance Day is fast approaching and will again be held at St Matthew's Church, Albury, on Wednesday, 11 November. Our monthly meetings have resumed after the winter break and have been well attended. If you have the time, please come along on the third Sunday of the month. We have plenty on the agenda, and your involvement helps strengthen our Sub-Branch and our community.

Incorporation of the club is also imminent and may already be complete by the time this newsletter is released.

Finally, thank you to the committee and members for supporting me as I take on this position. If you're a veteran reading this and would like to become more involved with the RSL, please get in touch. We'd be very pleased to hear from you.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW PATRON

Justin Clancy has been the Member for Albury in the NSW Legislative Assembly since 2019.

He was raised on the family farm at Bowna just north of Albury and continues to live in the district. He was educated in Albury and later Sydney, and qualified as a veterinarian.

He conducted vet clinics in Albury and Wodonga prior to entering politics. He was appointed deputy leader of the Liberals in the Legislative Assembly in 2025.

He has strong connections with local community groups, and the sub-branch welcomes him to the position of patron.



ADVOCATES AT ALBURY SUB-BRANCH



Wayne Taylor

Albury RSL Sub Branch Compensation Advocates Wayne Taylor and Steve Hession can assist with compensation claims and appeals.

Contact Wayne

waynet@alburyrsl.org.au | 0494 087 854

Contact Steve

steveh@alburyrsl.org.au | 0494 768 188

Please leave your contact details if unavailable, and they will get back to you.



Steve Hession

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

70th ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Seventy years ago, then-president Kevin Walls, with a few helpers in the sub-branch, began a newsletter.

Over the decades, others have picked up the baton and produced a newsletter to let members know what is happening in the sub-branch and what services are available.

This anniversary edition pays tribute to all who worked to keep the newsletter alive.



Communications are essential to any military operation, and the same is true for the well-being of an organisation such as ours.

With the generous support of our sponsors, we can acknowledge the foresight and dedication of members past while informing our current members about the activities and services available today.



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RSL DAY CLUB

A SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

The RSL Day Club welcomes all seniors in our community — no defence background is required.

Join us every Thursday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at ANZAC House, 527 Wilson Street, Albury.

Enjoy gentle exercise, quizzes, games, social activities, guest speakers and entertainment, with morning tea and lunch provided.

Cost: \$10 contribution

Door-to-door transport may also be available — just ask us for details.

We understand you may have other appointments and commitments, so there's no expectation to attend every week.



Day Club members on Thursday 6 August. A good day was enjoyed by all, as we do every Thursday.

**For more information or to become a member,
contact Day Club Coordinator Danny on 0477 224 751.**

VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY



Twenty-seven members gathered in the Memorial Garden at the rear of ANZAC House for a service to honour all who served in the Vietnam conflict 1962-1975 and to remember those who did not return.

Nigel Horne, Father Alan Kelb, Gary Treeve, Glenda Johnston participated in the service; Graham Docksey, piped by Roger Buck laid the wreath at the memorial and Justin Clancy MP Member for Albury delivered a moving address. In noting that it was the 60th anniversary of the Long Tan battle, Justin said:

“Sixty years is a long time. Long enough for young servicemen to grow old. Long enough perhaps, for memories to fade in the wider community. But never long enough for us to forget.”

Justin spoke then of Private Richard Norden VC whose award was only announced in 2024, almost six decades after the battle of Coral, and presented last year to his widow.

Justin said, “There is something deeply moving in that. Because the passage of time did not make Richard Norden any braver. The medal did not create his courage. It recognised a courage that had always been there.



Justin Clancy MP speaking at the service.

“And perhaps that has a particular resonance for our Vietnam Veterans. Because we know that recognition was too slow in coming. Those who served did what their nation asked of them.

VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY

"Today we have an opportunity to say again what should have been said: Thank you. We honour your service. And we remember."

The service concluded with the Reciting of the Ode and the playing of Last Post and Rouse.



RAAF WEDGETAIL IN WAR ZONE

In April 2026 an aircraft with a strange profile was seen approaching Albury airport. It did not land. It was a Boeing E-7A Wedgetail airborne early warning & control (AEW&C) aircraft operated by RAAF No 2 Squadron stationed at Williamstown NSW. The plane with its prominent shark-like dorsal fin and top-hat, was engaged in a training exercise including landing approaches. Albury along with other regional airfields are routinely used for this purpose.

The E7A Wedgetail is a highly sophisticated aircraft fitted with multi-role electronically scanned array (MESA) radar having a range of 400km. With a flying time of nine hours, an area the size of Western Australia can be monitored. The aircraft can employ electronic warfare self-protection measures and has multiple communications systems. It has a pilot and copilot and up to 10 air-battle managers and airborne electronics analysts. The plane can if needed be refuelled in flight.

Between November 2009 and June 2012 Australia took delivery of six E-7A aircraft modified to include the MESA radar located in the top-hat on the dorsal fin. The first operational sortie occurred in April 2012 when a Wedgetail assisted with the search for the missing Malaysian Flight 370 in the Indian Ocean. Overseas deployments followed.

In October 2021 a Wedgetail was stationed in the Middle East flying sorties over Iraq in support of coalition forces conducting strikes against Islamic state (ISIS). On one occasion, in November, the aircraft flew a 17-hour command and control mission. It needed air-to-air refuelling twice. The Iraq deployment ended in 2019.

Four years later, there were two deployments to Europe on NATO duties protecting supply lines to Ukraine and monitoring Russian air intrusions. The first occasion was a six-month deployment to Germany ending in April 2024, the second was to Poland between July and October 2025.



RAAF E-7A Wedgetail early Warning & Control Aircraft. Note the 'top-hat' on the dorsal fin housing the sophisticated radar giving the plane its distinctive profile.

RAAF WEDGETAIL IN WAR ZONE

The Australian Wedgetail was instrument in detecting Russian fighters violated Estonian airspace on 19 September and managing the NATO response.

More recently on 24 March 2026, following the outbreak of the war between Israel & USA and Iran, and a request from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a Wedgetail was deployed to the Gulf to provide early warning of missile and drone attacks. The Australian government made clear it is not taking offensive action against Iran. The purpose is to keep Australians safe. There are around 115,000 Australians travelling or working in the Middle East, 24,000 in the UAE alone.

Defence Minister Richard Marles visited the mission on 4 June and reported the ongoing success and importance of the deployment. At the time of the visit, the aircraft had flown 40 missions. "They are saving lives," Minister Marles said.

The Gulf mission is ongoing. Future developments are uncertain but one thing is more likely, vigilant Albury residents might one day again see the distinctive aircraft circling the airport.

RAISING THE PROFILE OF ANZAC HOUSE



Would a coffee van on the forecourt of ANZAC House help raise awareness of our presence and the services we provide to veterans, their families and the wider community?



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REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

When: 10.30 am Wednesday 11th November
Where: St Matthew's Church - 516 Kiewa Street Albury

Introduction by the MC, Nigel Horne, JP.
Entry procession accompanied by the Church Organist.
The Defence Force Catafalque Party will be mounted.

Please join with Dianne McKie as she sings the Hymn 'The Recessional' accompanied by the organist and the choir.

God of our fathers known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine
Lord god of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget.
The tumult and the shouting dies.
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and contrite heart,
Lord god of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget.

Opening Prayer by Father Peter MacLeod-Miller.

The poem 'In Flanders Fields' will be recited by Air Force Cadet..... from 412 Squadron Albury.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae (1872–1918)

REMEMBRANCE DAY

SERVICE

Guest Speaker: Colonel Phillip Baldoni,
CSM, Commander Joint Logistics Unit
- Victoria.

The wreath laying ceremony will begin.

The Ode will be recited by the RSL
President: ALL Repeat: 'WE WILL
REMEMBER THEM'.

The Last Post – Billy Stewart.

One Minute Silence.

ALL Repeat: 'LEST WE FORGET'.

Rouse – Billy Stewart.

Prayers – Father Alan Kelb, OAM.



Hymn 'Amazing Grace'.

Please join with Dianne McKie
accompanied by the choir, Piper Roger
Buck and the Church Organist in the
second and the last verses.

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'twas grace that taught my heart to
fear
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and
snares
I have already come
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus
far
And grace will lead me home.

The lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand
years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing god's praise
Than when we first begun.

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

Final Prayers – Father Peter and Father Alan.

The Lone Piper will now enter the church playing “Hector the Hero”

Please join Dianne McKie as she sings the National Anthem.

Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are one and free;
We’ve golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature’s gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history’s page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We’ll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who’ve come across the seas
We’ve boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.

The Australian Defence Force Catafalque Party will now be dismantled.



REMEMBRANCE DAY

SERVICE

Song: Dianne McKie accompanied by the choir and the church organist. Please feel free to join-in with the chorus.

I came from the dream-time
From the dusty red-soil plains
I am the ancient heart
The keeper of the flame
I stood upon the rocky shores
I watched the tall ships come
For forty thousand years I've been
The first Australian

I came upon the prison ship
Bowed down by iron chains
I fought the land, endured the lash
And waited for the rains
I'm a settler, I'm a farmer's wife
On a dry and barren run
A convict, then a free man
I became Australian

I'm the daughter of a digger
Who sought the mother lode
The girl became a woman
On the long and dusty road
I'm a child of the Depression
I saw the good times come
I'm a bushie, I'm a battler
I am Australian

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come
We'll share a dream and sing with one
voice
"I am, you are, we are Australian"

I'm a teller of stories
I'm a singer of songs
I am Albert Namatjira
And I paint the ghostly gums
I'm Clancy on his horse
I'm Ned Kelly on the run
I'm the one who waltzed Matilda
I am Australian

I'm the hot wind from the desert
I'm the black soil of the plains
I'm the mountains and the valleys
I'm the drought and flooding rains
I am the rock, I am the sky
The rivers when they run
The spirit of this great land
I am Australian

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come
We'll share a dream and sing with one
voice
"I am, you are, we are Australian"

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come
We'll share a dream and sing with one
voice
"I am, you are, we are Australian"

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

The Official Party now departs lead by the Piper to the tune
“Highland Cathedral”.

Thank you for your attendance.
Please join us for morning tea at ANZAC House.





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ALL ABOARD THE VUNG TAU FERRY

Between 1965 and 1972, HMAS Sydney made 25 return journeys between Australia and South Vietnam earning the nickname 'Vung Tau Ferry'. Launched in 1944 as HMS Terrible, a Majestic Class light aircraft carrier, the ship was purchased by the Australian Government in 1948 and re-commissioned as HMAS Sydney. It was the third of three ships to bear that name.

On 31 August 1951, HMAS Sydney escorted by HMAS Tobruk sailed for Korean waters to relieve HMS Glory. She carried the 21st Carrier Attack Group (21 CAG), equipped with Hawker Sea Fury fighters and Fairey Firefly attack aircraft of RAN Fleet Air Arm, a total of 38 aircraft.



HMAS Sydney prior to departure to Korean waters, August 1957. Fleet Air Arm aircraft on flight deck.

HMAS Sydney was attached to US Seventh Fleet and tasked with patrols mainly along the west coast of the Korean peninsula. RAN planes carried out airstrikes against North Korean units and supply lines often deep inside enemy territory. She became the first aircraft carrier of any Dominion navy to see wartime service.

A welcome addition to the ships complement was a US Sikorsky Dragonfly helicopter specifically for rescue missions. This proved fortuitous when on 26 October a Firefly was shot down during an attack on a railway tunnel. It was 120km inside North Korean territory. This was at the very limit of the Dragonfly's and the Sea Furies' range.

Nevertheless, the US pilot volunteered to rescue the two downed crew. While RAN Furies flew cover, the helicopter reached the crash site and picked up the crew. All aircraft were on the extreme limit of fuel. The Furies made it back to HMAS Sydney landing in near darkness while the Dragonfly diverted to Kimpo airbase and landed on a pad illuminated by truck headlights. It is thought to have been the deepest rescue mission of the war. The American pilot received both the Imperial Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) and the US Navy Cross.

On 13 May 1956, HMAS Sydney having handed over the flagship role to her recently arrived sister-ship HMAS Melbourne, faced an uncertain future.

ALL ABOARD THE VUNG TAU FERRY

However, the threat of conflict in Southeast Asia and the need to be able to deploy troops quickly in the region resulted in the decision to refit the ship as a fast troop transport.

Work began to convert the carrier for its new role and on 7 March 1962 HMAS Sydney was recommissioned as a Fast Troop Transport. Her first deployment was in May when she carried troops, stores and ammunition to Malaysia in support of the conflict with Indonesia. The Indonesian submarine threat was real during the voyage.

The entry into the Vietnam theatre occurred on 27 May 1965 when HMAS Sydney sailed carrying 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment and 1 Troop A Squadron Prince of Wales's Light Horse. Captain, John Crabb, refused to dock at Saigon, judging it too vulnerable to attack, especially VC swimmer-sappers with limpet mines. Instead, he chose to unload at Vung Tau 100km up the coast.



Soldiers of 5 RAR line the deck of HMAS Sydney at Woolloomooloo on their arrival home, 10 March 1970. The LCMs which facilitated loading and unloading are seen slung alongside, three on either side.

Vung Tau had only rudimentary docking facilities so unloading was done using barges ferrying between the ship and shore. This was a slow process taking several days and, mindful of the VC mine threat, the ship had to withdraw into deeper water well offshore during darkness.

The unloading problem was resolved in 1967 when six Mechanised Landing Craft (LCM) were carried slung along the ship's side giving Sydney her own

ship-to-shore capability. Unloading could now be completed in six hours.

Between May 1965 and her final journey in February 1972, HMAS Sydney transported more than 16,000 troops, 6,000 tons of cargo and 2,375 vehicles to Vietnam. Sub-branch member Gary Treeve was on this final voyage.

The ship was decommissioned in November 1973, having sailed 600,000 nautical miles, a million kilometres, in service. She was sold to a South Korean company and broken up for scrap.

THE RSL BADGE CHANGED

In October 2025, RSL Federal Council adopted a new badge design. Most noticeable is the replacement of the St Edward's crown with the Tudor crown. Other changes are rosemary and poppy emblems replacing the rose, thistle, leek and shamrock on the right side of the crown.

The most noticeable difference between the two crowns is the high domed arches of the Tudor crown contrasting with the depressed arches of the St Edward's crown.

The St Edward's crown is attributed to Edward I (the Confessor) who ruled England 1005-1066, however tradition suggests it goes back to Alfred the

Great, and links it with his visit to Rome as a child where the Pope crowned him in anticipation of his eventual ascension to the throne, and that this was the crown used on that occasion. The story is disputed. The crown was however used for six centuries for the crowning of English kings from Edward I to Charles I (1625-1649).



Tudor crown with its high arches, commissioned by Henry VII, destroyed in 1649 and re commissioned by Victoria. Designated the authorised design by Charles III.



The Tudor crown also has a long history, dating back to Henry VII (1485-1509) [the devious Henry Tudor for those who are familiar with the BlackAdder series]. Either he or his son Henry VIII (1509-1547) commissioned a new crown. It was used for his coronation and the other Tudor monarchs, Edward IV, Mary I and Elizabeth I. The Stuart kings, beginning with James I reverted to the St Edward's crown.

THE RSL BADGE CHANGED

Neither crown survived the turmoil following the English Civil War, the execution of Charles I, and the abolishment of the monarchy in 1649. Both, together with the rest of the crown regalia were broken up, the gold and silver melted down and the jewels sold.

In 1660 when parliament restored the monarchy and invited Charles II (1660-1685) to return as king of England, Scotland and Ireland. A new crown modelled on the old St Edward's was made and used at the coronation.

From 1689 however, possibly because of its 2.23 kg weight, the crown was placed on the altar during coronations, and a lighter crown was used for the actual crowning. George V (1910-1936) revived the use of St Edward's crown for his coronation. George VI and Elizabeth II followed suit, as did Charles III.



St Edward's crown with depressed arches, dates to Edward the Confessor, destroyed 1649, re-commissioned for Charles II. Designated the authorised design by Elizabeth II.

In 1870, for whatever reason, Queen Victoria had ordered a new Tudor crown to be made, and in 1901 designated it the authorised heraldic crown for the British Empire.

Elizabeth II, early in her reign changed the authorised design to the St Edward's crown, but in 2022 Charles III changed tack again, restoring the Tudor as the authorised design.

Consequently, our RSL badge has changed.

— PEACE KEEPING —

Australia has a proud history of peacekeeping having participated in 63 missions to the present day. National Peacekeepers' Day is observed on 14 September. This date commemorates the anniversary of Australia's first involvement in peace-keeping operations when in 1947, four Australians became the world's first peacekeepers in the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia).

One of Australia's longest peacekeeping operations was the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) which began in 2000 and concluded in 2017, a mission involving about 7200 Defence Force (ADF) and 1000 Federal Police (AFP) and civilians. Of the ADF, about 500 were Army Reserve.

Solomon Islands comprises an archipelago of almost 1000 islands and atolls stretching from PapuaNewGuinea southeast towards Vanuatu and Fiji. It became independent in June 1976 as a constitutional monarchy with Elizabeth II as head of state. The population is approximately 800,000 with the majority living on two islands, Guadalcanal and Malaita. The national capital Honiara is on Guadalcanal.

Longstanding quarrels between the people of Guadalcanal and Malaita since colonial times increased following the end of WWII and intensified after independence. Many Malaitans migrated to Guadalcanal for work.

Unemployment and a decline in services caused communal unrest. Gangs of Guadalcanal residents, 'Gualies', attacked Malaitan settlements to 'encourage' the migrants to leave and return home. The Malaitans responded in kind, forming gangs to defend their neighbourhoods.



ADF soldiers destroy weapons before a crowd of locals in a football stadium. Photograph by war correspondent Tim Page, 24 August 2003. AWM P04959.

This tit-for-tat community violence continued for a decade with the gangs becoming increasingly organised and armed and forming the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army, later renamed Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), and the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was unable to control the violence and by 1998, the nation had fallen into armed chaos and anarchy. Solomons Islands has no military.

— PEACE KEEPING —

On 5 June 2000, the MEF staged a coup in Honiara, taking the prime minister hostage and occupying the police headquarters. Australia reacted, sending three hundred troops and two warships HMAS Tobruk and HMAS Manoora to evacuate Australian nationals. The deployment ended on 10 August with 1500 Australian and foreign nationals evacuated and a level of calm restored in Honiara.

A new Solomon Islands government was elected, but neither of the warring militias accepted the result. Diplomatic efforts by Australia and New Zealand resulted in a shaky ceasefire and the Townsville Peace Agreement being signed on 15 October. A small Peace Monitoring Team was deployed with mixed results.

In April 2003 an outbreak of violence brought a request for Australia to intervene. It was clear that unarmed peacekeeping in the Solomon Islands was not enough, so Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was established. It was a partnership between Solomon Islands, Australia, New Zealand and 13 countries of the South-West Pacific region. The aim was to help Solomon Islands restore peace and lay a foundation for stability, security and prosperity.



Three members of RAMSI, a 2RAR soldier, a NZ police officer and a Solomon Islands officer, talk with local people at a village in northern Malaita. Photograph by official war photographer Stephen Dupont, 5 November 2003. AWM P04225.270

RAMSI differed from most peacekeeping missions, it was led by an experienced Australian diplomat, Nick Warner. The mission, codenamed Operation Helpem Fren, Solomons Pijin for 'Helping Friends', was a policing operation with ADF support.

The first step for RAMSI was to disarm the militants, but equally the underlying causes of tension, in particular land management on Guadalcanal and compensation payments to dispossessed, were addressed.

A total of 3,730 weapons were handed in, including 700 military-style weapons and over 300,000 rounds of ammunition.

— PEACE KEEPING —

The collected weapons were destroyed publicly by ADF personnel in front of large crowds.

By early September, Australia had a regional and military coalition force of 2,000 troops supporting 200 RAMSI police and 50 AFP protective service officers. RAMSI police officers had the powers to gather evidence, arrest, detain and charge individuals. The focus was on investigating and prosecuting criminals, militants and corrupt police. Key militant leaders were arrested and community confidence in the mission grew.

RAMSI was tested in April 2006 when rioting erupted in Honiara. A large crowd, mainly Malaitans, collected outside the parliament to protest results of the general election. The gathering quickly turned violent. Rocks were thrown at police, cars and local businesses were looted and burned.

Australia, New Zealand and Fiji immediately rushed in more troops to restore law and order and the Australian Government agreed that RAMSI would remain in place till such time that Solomon Islands could securely self-govern. This became the long-term goal of the mission. It would last more than a decade.

Thousands of police, military and civilian personnel from across the South-West-Pacific served with RAMSI, working closely alongside Solomon Islanders. Sub-branch member Greg Halpin served with RAMSI.

The situation had sufficiently stabilised in 2013 that all military were withdrawn, and RAMSI became solely a policing mission. A team of AFP officers remained to train and support local police officers until the mission ended on 30 June 2017.

Three Australians lost their lives while serving with RAMSI: AFP protective service officers A Dunning and R E Lewis, and one soldier Pte J M Clark 3 RAR.

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Ex Service Women's Association ALBURY WODONGA



We welcome current or ex-defence force members to join us at our monthly meeting at ANZAC House on the second Tuesday of each month at 11.30am.

Meetings are held from February to December.

Currently our members range from WWII onwards.

There is a small annual membership subscription.

A Welfare Officer is available for anyone requiring advice about DVA services.

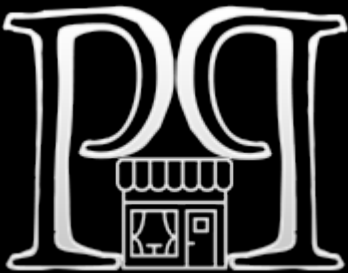
For further information please contact:

President Marj Howard 0409 038 953 or 6025 8197.

We would love to meet you and have you join us.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Manning Reception, looking after Pensions and Welfare, assisting in the kitchen, catering, cleaning up, setting up the meeting room, cooking on the BBQ, gardening and lawn care, setting up chairs at outside events and the Committee for their ongoing dedication and compassion for their fellow members.



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