

Membership has its say

Congress resolutions cover many topics

The 82nd RSL ACT Congress began with a welcome to the guest of honour, Major General Steve Gower AO AO(Mil) (Ret'd), the Director of the Australian War Memorial, who formally opened the congress. The President also thanked General Gower for his help in facilitating the wreath-laying ceremony, earlier that morning, at the Memorial.

Motions, all carried, were:

Pharmaceutical co-payments: that the pharmaceutical co-payment for accepted conditions on the Gold and White Cards and for special rate recipients and war widow/ers be removed. Moved by Woden Valley Sub-Branch and seconded by Campbell-Russell Sub-Branch.

Future of the League: that a state committee be formed to identify the likely future requirements of ACT serving members, veterans, and those ex-service personnel without qualifying service, and to approach RSL National HQ with these findings. Moved by Campbell-Russell Sub-Branch and seconded by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch.

Eligible service: that the concept of eligible service be preserved and that "warlike", "hazardous" and "peacetime" service be clearly defined.

Moved by Peacekeepers Sub-Branch and Seconded by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch.

Rationalisation of overseas payments: that payment of Australian benefits to veterans and war widow/ers living overseas be made direct to their local bank accounts without the loss of value. Moved by Campbell-Russell Sub-Branch and seconded by Tuggeranong Sub-Branch.

Benefits for children of deceased veterans: that the benefits for eligible



The wreath-laying before the Congress.

dependant children of veterans paid under the VEA be the same as those for eligible children under MRCA, where the veteran's death is service-related. Moved by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch and seconded by Campbell-Russell Sub-Branch.

Shingles treatment: that the Returned and Services League request DVA to provide vaccination (Zostavax) for all veterans, especially those who have

previously suffered from chicken pox. Moved by Campbell-Russell Sub-Branch and seconded by Woden Valley Sub-Branch.

Gold cards: that the Returned and Services League investigate the seeming anomaly of refusal by some medical practitioners to service Gold Card holders because of the low reimbursement rate by DVA. Moved by Campbell-Russell Sub-Branch and seconded by

Barton-Capital Sub-Branch.

Service Home Loan: that the Service Home Loan be increased to \$150,000. Moved by Tuggeranong Sub-Branch and seconded by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch.

Funeral allowance: that the funeral allowance for eligible veterans who die of accepted conditions be increased from the current level of \$2,000 to the amount under MRCA, which is \$9,297.00 as at 5 July 2007 (DVA Fact Sheets BR01 and MRC17 refer). Moved by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch and seconded by City of Canberra Sub-Branch.

DFRDB: that the Returned and Services League continue to pressure the Federal Government to treat DFRDB as a funded scheme, or at least partly funded, for taxation purposes and that the tax exemptions be applied in a manner similar to those applied to funded schemes. Moved by Belconnen Sub-Branch and seconded by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch.

DFRDB: that the Returned and Services League continue to pressure the Federal Government to apply the greater of CPI or male total average weekly earnings adjustments to military superannuation. Moved by Woden Valley Sub-Branch and seconded by Barton-Capital Sub-Branch.

DFRDB: that the Returned and Services League continue to pressure the Federal Government that the pre-commutation value of the pension be applied once the commutation amount has been repaid (generally based on a life expectancy calculation). Moved by Tuggeranong Sub-Branch and seconded by City of Canberra Sub-Branch.

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Questions for prisoners of war book

In the first book, *Aussie Soldier up Close and personal*, Big Sky Publishing looked at the core values of the Australian soldier. The publishers are now researching *Aussie Soldier — Prisoners of War*, the second in this series. In this book we wish to tell the story of the Army's men and women who were captured and held prisoners of war from the Boer War to Korea. Australian soldiers who were prisoners of war are asked to contribute to this book.

The stages of being a prisoner of war that we will examine are capture, processing, daily life, escape, humour, war crimes, compassion/mateship, and repatriation.

Big Sky Publishing would also like to include a chapter on Australian seamen and airmen prisoners of war.

Personal details being sought are name, DOB, enlistment year and in which state, age on enlistment and, if applicable, discharge; date of discharge; what corps you joined; what operation or deployments you were involved in leading up to your capture; your brief military history (units served, rank, honours and awards, postings etc); and whether you consent to having your story included in *Aussie*

Soldier — Prisoners Of War?

The publishers want respondents to provide as much detail as possible.

The aim is to provide readers with an insight into what the soldiers who were made prisoners went through and share some of their experiences with them but former POWs do not need to answer all of the questions — just those that have personal meaning.

The questions

1. What were the immediate events that occurred just prior to your capture?
2. Capture — Describe the method by which the enemy captured you. Was it an order from a superior, or a decision based on the circumstances? What were your initial emotions?
3. Processing — How were you treated initially? Did the enemy show compassion, indifference or other emotions? What questions did they ask you?
4. Daily life — In your prison camp/s, what was the daily routine? What were the food and sleeping arrangements like? Was there any entertainment? What was the workload like? Did Red Cross or equivalent parcels arrive?

5. Escape — What were the feelings and actions towards escape? Did you attempt escape and what was the result? Did you witness other escape attempts? What were the results?
6. Humour — How important was humour as a POW? What pranks or conversations were important or entertaining? What nicknames did you give the guards?
7. War crimes — We understand that this question may be difficult and apologies if it is uncomfortable. Can you describe acts of cruelty, breaches of the Geneva Conventions or brutality shown towards our soldiers or yourself? How did you and your mates react? Were the perpetrators ever brought to justice?
8. Compassion/mateship — What acts of kindness and mateship did you witness while being a POW? What impact did these actions have on fellow prisoners or the enemy? Did the enemy show any acts of compassion to prisoners?
9. Repatriation — At what point did you consider yourself free? How did you hear that the war was over? How did your guards react to this? How were you treated by your rescuers or the Allied soldiers who freed/re-

ceived you? How did you feel being on Australian soil and having your first beer? How did your family react? How hard was it to re-establish relationships with family and friends? How were you supported by the government, friends, families and other agencies?

10. Apart from the listed chapters can you identify any other aspect of being a POW that Australians need to hear about and why?
 11. How has your POW experience shaped your life?
 12. Do you have any other military or personal experience/story you want told?
- Anybody wanting further questions or wish to assist in other way contact one of the authors:

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Questionnaires should be returned by no later than 30 July 2008 to either of the above emails. Hard copies can be sent to:

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