

Busy pre-ANZAC month

ACT State Branch
President's Report

March was a very busy time for the RSL nationally, dedicated to many national committee meetings as outlined below.

The ACT State Branch has become more settled into new premises at Manuka and I'm sure that you all agree it's more convenient to visit Branch Headquarters as far as parking is concerned.

Our Welfare and Advocacy Section, in the capable hands of Arthur Craig and his wife Kathleen, have now been established at the new location.

Finances in good shape

The National Finance Committee met at National Headquarters on March 2 and prepared the statements of accounts ready for the National Executive meeting later that week. The League's finances are in a good state, thanks to National Treasurer David Sinclair.

Ministerial guest

The National Veterans' Affairs Committee met at National HQ on March 3 and 4. I was represented by the CEO, James Davidson, and our Welfare & Advocacy officer, Arthur Craig. In the afternoon I represented the branch at an annual function at the residence of the British High Commissioner. In the evening the National President hosted a dinner for the National Directors with the Minister, Alan Griffin, as the official guest. He gave a very good briefing on departmental matters that prepared the Executive for the meeting next morning.

ANZAC Day ceremonies

After a meeting of the branch's ANZAC Day March subcommittee, a follow-up meeting was held with Australian War Memorial staff, to complete details for the ANZAC Day Ceremonies — dawn service and memorial service and march. It was decided that a further meeting of all parties involved in the ceremonies be held in the second week of April, to include all civil organisations.

Raise a Glass

The National Trustees met on March 25. The balance of accounts of all the

A field of poppies



Group Captain Andrew Elfverson with some of the children after the assembly.

Gungahlin Sub-Branch Remembrance Day assembly was an outstanding success, the children doing a great job making their own poppies that formed a "field of poppies" on either side of the Australian flag.

The guest speaker was Group Captain Andrew Elfverson, who spoke to the children about the significance of Remembrance Day, its symbols and why it is so important to all Australians.

The most moving moment was when Mr Ian Brown played the *Last Post* and *Rouse* on the bugle — so much more poignant than a recording.

All this combined with the attendance of so many Defence parents in full uniform made it a very memorable assembly.

Gungahlin Primary School principal Mr Dennis Yarrington has committed to continuing the observance of Remembrance Day each year with a special assembly.

Trust Agenda were discussed and found in order.

Past ACT President Garry Brodie was appointed and past ACT President Derek Roynance were reappointed to the National Trustees Committee.

The launching of the *Raise A Glass* promotion was held in Sydney on March 29, at which I was represented by the CEO because I was required at the National Trustees' meeting.

The CEO reported that the promotion had begun on a favourable footing and that it would be administered by the

Victorian Branch because of the proximity of Fosters in Melbourne. Video presentations have begun.

Hellenic Memorial ceremony

On March 29 I laid a wreath at the annual Greek OXI Day commemoration ceremonies at the Hellenic Memorial and represented the National President at the ceremony.

J J Merrick
President

Deeming rates reduced again for veterans

Reductions in the deeming rate became effective from March 20 and were included in payments made from March 26.

Department of Veterans' Affairs payments affected by the deeming rate include service pensions and the income support supplement.

The deeming rate was reduced from 3 per cent to 2 per cent for the first \$41,000 of a single pensioner's financial investments (\$68,200 for a couple) and from 4 per cent to 3 per cent for the balance of financial investments over these amounts.

The values of listed shares and securities, too, were revalued from March 20.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said, "The Government has taken action to reflect the unique economic environment Australians are facing, ensuring [that] pensioners and social-security recipients who rely on own-source income receive some financial relief.

"The lower deeming rates will assist veterans during these difficult financial times."

This is the third reduction in the deeming rates since November 2008.

Deeming rates are now half what they were for much of last year and are at their lowest since 2004.

Because of the reduction of the deeming rates, part-rate pensioners paid under the income test, their financial investments mainly in term deposits, shares, managed investments and other accounts, may receive an increase in their pension payments to reflect the reduction in their assessable income.

Veterans already paid at the maximum rate are not affected by the deeming change.

The impact of these changes is dependent on the person's individual circumstances. DVA pensioners who would like further information should contact the Department on 133 254.

Check the Bulletin Board for reunions, old mates and events — Page 11

Peacekeepers' memorial design approved

Marcus Trimble, of the Sydney Architecture and design firm Super Colossal, is the successful entrant in the national competition launched in September 2007 to design a fitting monument to Australian peacekeepers.

Veterans' Affairs Minister Alan Griffin unveiled on December 19 the design for a the memorial to honour Australians who have given their lives in peacekeeping operations around the world.

The memorial will serve also to symbolise the continuing work of the hundreds of Australian peacekeepers restoring order and security at present to communities affected by war and civil unrest.

The model shows how the completed structure will feature two large stone monoliths, separated by a passage of

golden light representing the hope peacekeepers bring to war-torn communities.

Marcus Trimble says of the preferred design, "It's a great privilege to work on a memorial such as this. We are really pleased with the concept we've created and how it illustrates the hope peacekeeping forces represent for communities experiencing conflict."

A site has been approved for the new memorial at the southern end of ANZAC Parade, Canberra. However, the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project Committee need to raise another \$2 million before construction can get under way.

Committee chairman Major-General Tim Ford (Ret.), says, "We very much want to see the memorial completed in time for Australian Peacekeepers' and



Peacemakers' Day on September 14, 2009. "Australia has a long and proud history of peacekeeping for more than 60 years. This memorial will be a fitting monument to the service of these brave men and women who exemplify the Australian values of openness, fairness, egalitarianism, mateship, initiative, and respect for diversity and

social justice for all people."

Since 1947 more than 66,000 Australians have been engaged in peacekeeping globally from the Middle East and Sudan to East Timor.

More details/images of the Memorial design and how to support the project are available at:

www.peacekeepingmemorial.org.au