## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Dear Bendigo District RSL Sub-Branch Inc. Members and Families,

I trust this report finds you well as we move into spring (and hopefully some warmth) following what has been a bitterly cold winter.

## Welfare

Our Welfare Team has continued its vital work in what has been a challenging environment for many veterans and their families. Rising cost-of-living pressures, changes in personal circumstances, and the unique needs of veterans in our area and beyond have created significant demand on our welfare support. Much of this work often goes

unseen, but I assure you it remains a cornerstone of what we do, and it has been carried out with dedication and compassion.

## **Outreach and Engagement**

Our Sub-Branch remains active across our facilities, in the local community, and throughout the broader region.

Progress on the Central Victorian Veterans and Families Hub continues to move forward as we await the specified conditions for the \$5 million grant from the Federal Government. The Hub remains a collaborative effort, working closely with the Bendigo District RSL, RSL Victoria, Bendigo Legacy Club, and the Vietnam Veterans Association Australia, Bendigo Branch to ensure the needs of veterans and their families are at the heart of this initiative. Working group members are being consulted for their expertise and lived experience to help shape the Hub's future.



Engagement with veterans remains strong through our Veteran Nights (despite the cold evenings), as well as our popular morning teas, informal gatherings, walking groups. Arts Program and the Sheds Program, which continue to provide opportunities for connection and wellbeing.

At the Bendigo Military Museum, we farewelled the Map Makers exhibition, commemorating the 110th Anniversary of the Royal Australian Survey Corps. We now welcome The Art of Sacrifice exhibition by George Petrou OAM. This moving collection honours over 100 years of Australian military service, inviting reflection on both personal and collective sacrifice. Through his powerful artworks, George challenges all Australians to consider the depth and meaning of sacrifice, while honouring veterans and their loved ones.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Collaboration

We continue to maintain strong partnerships with the RSL State Executive, Region 7, and other Ex-Service Organisations.

On 11th August, we were honoured to host the newly elected RSL Victoria State President, Dr. Mark Schröffel, and RSL Victoria CEO, Sue Cattermole. Their visit followed the release of RSL Victoria's independent review, commissioned to ensure the organisation remains able to meet the evolving needs of the veteran community. Delivered in June 2025, the review outlined several key recommendations to guide the future transformation of RSL Victoria. Both Dr. Schröffel and Ms. Cattermole engaged with Sub-Branches across the state to discuss these recommendations and the direction ahead.

## **Looking Ahead**

The annual Poppy Appeal is now in sight. This vital fundraiser remains one of the most important ways we support our veteran community, and its success is due to the tireless efforts of our Appeals volunteers. We look forward to another strong result this year.

Let us continue in our mission to be a beacon of support, advocacy, and respect for our veterans and their families.

If you feel that you may be able to volunteer some time as a part of this vital fundraising event, please email: appeals@bendigorsl.com.au

Warm regards, Glenn Ludeman

Sub-Branch President Bendigo District RSL Inc.

The Bendigo Military Museum and the Bridgewater Bakery have completed a project to return the East Bendigo Primary School copper plates and Honor Board to their original home.

The Primary School was officially opened on 7 April 1916 and approximately two months later, on 16 June 1916, Arbor Day was celebrated at the school with the planting of an 'Anzac Avenue' along a path from the front gate on Strickland Road ('the pathway') to commemorate the landing of soldiers at Gallipoli.



On the 11th December 1920 the school's 'Anzac Avenue' was officially opened. Embossed copper plates, mounted on wood, were fixed in front of the trees in memory of individual soldiers from the East Bendigo district who had seen active service in WWI. The plaques were removed from their locations at some stage before 1964 and the trees were controversially removed in 2016. The copper plates and the WW2 Honor board have now been returned to their original home at the redeveloped primary school.









\*Terms and conditions apply

www.bendigorsl.com.au

# **VETERAN SUPPORT- WELFARE**

The BDRSL Welfare and Charitable Sub-Committee (WCSC) delivers direct proactive support, connection and outreach to the Veteran community through face to face and telephone contact, and off-site visitation. Service personal identified through networking / word of mouth / direct referral are supported in-house and followed up directly by the Welfare Advocate. Other contacts are connected to appropriate adjunct agencies to facilitate both autonomous support and ease of access to those support interventions. The WCSC strongly networks with all local and State-wide ESOs and support agencies to establish and cement sound relationships of support, trust, and integrity.

This quarterly report provides an overview of activities, initiatives, and developments pertaining to the WCSC during the reporting period of 1st December 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025. The report highlights key achievements,



challenges, and ongoing efforts to enhance the welfare and support of veterans and their dependents in the region.

#### **VETERANS ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT:**

#### Outreach

In September 2023 the WCSC commenced an ambitious program to contact all Veterans and ex-service personnel on the RSLs database and within the district. Two primary volunteers delivered this initiative with support from others. The telephone contact of close to 900 ESP concluded in March 2025. At the time of writing the WA was in the process of completing follow-up initial contact with approximately 40 personnel.

## Follow Up

If initial telephone contact has not been successful – messages left, no voicemail, address but wrong ph. details etc. - the Militatry Welfare Advocate (MWA) will attempt to contact again and will ally make the decision to visit the last known address of the member. Consequently, contact details have been found to be outdated, members have moved to higher supported accommodation - nursing homes, palliative care etc. – or have deceased and that information not passed on.

At the point of visitation contact details for the MWA are left, neighbors are questioned, and a follow-up letter of introduction and offer of support is sent to that address.

This diligence and perseverance ensure that the WCSC continues to be successful in locating members who have fallen off the radar, who may be in need of support, and are not aware of what resources can be accessed through BDRSL

### **Ongoing support**

Initial straw analysis undertaken post-contact identifies approximately 18% who are in need of or request support for common themes such as financial support, assistance with house/garden tasks, opportunities for social inclusion and connection, and service compensation advice. Most contacts require no further assistance and all express gratitude for the initiative.

If agreed, personnel are contacted on their terms as required to provide and embed support frameworks and options until they can autonomously direct their intentions.

Other personnel may be contacted / visited monthly for example to follow up initial points of interest, and to keep social connection and contact.

Others are linked with the Veteran's Activities Officer to engage with regular social/fitness activities and connection that are provided through BDRSL.

## **VETERAN SUPPORT- WELFARE**

## For the reporting period 1/12/24 - 31/05/25 the WCSC has:

- Received 125 first off client-initiated contacts.
- Outreached to 241 home/residential care/nursing home addresses, and
- Sent 59 follow-up letters of introduction and offer of support.

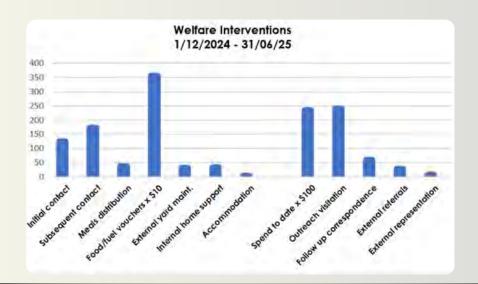
#### Financial Assistance

Requests to BDRSL Welfare for financial assistance are invited to meet appropriate benevolence criteria as required by RSL VIC. In this reporting period financial assistance has been approved and provided for diverse requests such as:

- End-of-lease cleaning of carpets etc for a Navy Vet.
- Purchase of a gas space heater for winter warmth and comfort.
- Purchase of children's double bunks/mattresses/linen etc. for a Veteran building a home with his 4 children.
- An internal landing and elevated floor to enable a senior Vet to continue to live in her own home.
- Regular assistance what used to be initially routine tasks around the yard- gardening/pruning/digging/tree removal etc. Support was provided for more than 30 hours of subcontracted garden maintenance.
- The provision of short-term assistance for food/petrol vouchers, groceries purchase etc. for 21 personnel (cost: \$3550)
- Distributed 37 bistro meals to 21 applicants.

For this reporting timeframe BDRSL WCSC has financed veterans support to \$23,500.

Prompt triage and response from the Sub-Committee enables Veterans to attain the support they need, when they need it, and without the drawn-out humiliation that might accompany cap-in-hand crisis Agency requests. More urgent approval from the WCSC Chair and the BDRSL President is accessible on demand.



Direct support - TOTAL \$646,698 Volunteer hours - TOTAL \$212,381 \$859,079 for Veteran Welfare, Health & Wellbeing Programs & Community Support for 2025

## VETERAN SUPPORT- WELFARE

Initial contacts include any 1<sup>st</sup> up telephone contacts, offsite visits, ad hoc walk ins, and call outs.

- Subsequent contact includes all post-initial contact Face to face, phone, email/text.
- Meals distributed: individual fresh & frozen take away bistro meals.
- Financial support food/fuel.
- Hours external provider engagement
- Hours internal home support cleaning etc. engaged.
- Accommodation.

#### Total outlaid to date

- Outreach covers onsite face to face home/hospital/supportive care visitation.
- Follow up written correspondence if no response.
- External referrals include: DVA/white card issues, legal advice, Mental Health and Welfare
- support, financial support, Veteran's support services.
- External representation includes: any initiated networking and collegial opportunities with sector colleagues
- and associated agencies.

## Outreach and connection continue to identify issues such as:

The impact of advancing age and the lessening of cognitive and physical capacity. The manifestation of these can have a further impact upon self-esteem and self-confidence.

The need for social connection which is absent from a lot of Veterans lives. A significant number speak of a sense of loneliness in their lives. Proactive inclusion is achieved through invitational outreach to the BDRSL Sheds program, Veteran's in-house social functions, and other affiliated community activities.

Many Veterans need to seek support to complete routine domestic tasks such as gardening chores or internal / external home maintenance. Amongst other issues that this raises there are greater incurred financial expenses.

The difficulty incurred in working through compensation issues with DVA. To this end see 3 below.

## **External Support:**

BDRSL WCSC is well linked into local sister RSLs - Castlemaine/Heathcote/Shepperton/Rochester/Charlton for example, and key allied health organisations such as Lifeline Loddon Mallee, Veteran's Counselling Service, Uniting Agewell, Estia, Bupa, Anglicare for example have been networked within this report period.

#### **Upcoming Initiatives:**

- 1. The WCSC continues to consider ways to resurrect the Hospital Visitation Program that was in place before the impact of Covid closed contact and on-site visitation.
- 2.The Welfare program continues to consider recruitment to bolster the endeavours of current members and sustain the committee.
- 3.The Welfare Hub is being used fortnightly though continues to be under-resourced and utilised. Recent endeavours to address that include the attendance of a trainee Compensation Advocate to discuss issues related to military compensation. The VetCen or CVVC, Central Victorian Veteran Support Centre at the railway station is also available to offer Veteran support.

The Welfare Charitable Sub-Committee is strongly committed to supporting the welfare of Veterans. The committee fosters a strong pro-active and supportive community for veterans in the region by supporting our veterans through effective welfare programs and initiatives to a place of wellbeing.

## COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES



#### **Commemorative Events:**

This year the Commemorative Activities Sub-Committee has been busy with the team organising a number of Services over the last few months. Once again, it's wonderful to say that the following commemorative activities have been conducted in 2025:

- 1st July 2/22nd Lark force Wreath Laying Service
- 27th July End of the Korean War Wreath Laying Service
- 15th August Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day Wreath Laying Service
- 18th August Vietnam Veterans Day Commemorative Service, hosted by Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Bendigo Branch
- 31stAugust Malaya and Borneo Day Wreath laying Service
- 14th September National Peacekeepers Day Commemorative Service

The Commemorative Activities Sub-Committee continues to uphold the legacy of our veterans through meaningful commemorations and community engagement. The dedication of the members and their commitment to preserving history remains the cornerstone of our efforts.

Dale Hodges Commemorative Activities Sub-Committee Chair





















# **BENDIGO MILITARY MUSEUM**

The Bendigo Military Museum continues its efforts to honour the service and sacrifice of local veterans by preserving the rich military history of our region. We remain focused on working with the community to improve our collection and exhibits whilst planning for the future to provide a museum the Sub-Branch can be proud of. Our curator Lena, is on Maternity leave and we've welcomed Del to our team as she has taken over Lena's role and responsibilities.

## Strategic Planning:

We have commenced planning for the redevelopment of the old Billiard Room to showcase the various operations and theatres from Korea to Afghanistan. We are now in the design and scoping phase to determine what it may look like and what the cost will be. We have engaged Ian Ross Consulting to assist with the project management as he was also involved in the Museum redevelopment 10 years ago. Challis Designs are our preferred tenderer for the design work, and we are negotiating with them. This will undoubtedly be an expensive exercise, and we will be reliant upon grants and donations to complete this important component of our Military history, but recognition of the recent operations is well overdue.

The BMM is also in discussion with the Bendigo Heritage Association as there is strong interest from both parties to explore future collaboration and evolving opportunities. Our first meeting was held in early Sept where we discussed the possibility of a "partnership" arrangement focusing on the following:

- Joint marketing management, planning and coordination.
- Sharing resources to allow the BMM to open in alignment with BHA opening hours
- Access to BHA Project Management resources

No decisions have been made as yet but as Chair, I believe our current business model is not fit-for-purpose and we need to take action to ensure the long-term survivability of the Museum. Entering into a partnership with BHA and leveraging their skills, resources, knowledge and experience will greatly assist us in achieving that.



#### **Exhibitions:**

The Mapmakers - Charting Australia's Defence: The Legacy of the Royal Australian Survey Corps has now concluded and the launch for the new exhibition "The Art of Sacrifice" took place on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2025. The exhibition showcases George Petrou's deeply personal journey - an artist's tribute to Australia's service personnel, born from his own battle with cancer. Please make the time to view this impressive exhibition.

- George Petrou: The Art of Sacrifice: 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2025 18<sup>th</sup> January 2026.
- Nasho '57: 98 Days at Pucka: 31st January 2026 26th July 2026.
- Persona: A contemporary Veterans artist tour 8<sup>th</sup> August 31<sup>st</sup> January 2027.

#### Coordination:

Our Cataloguing team continues to do great work and they have catalogued 9132 items as of 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 2025. The Ex-Fortuna crew and Passchendaele Barracks are also continue to work away and add to the catalogued collection. We have recently acquired a new scanner that will scan our 35mm negatives. This is a huge task and will take considerable time to complete but it will be worth the effort.

# **BENDIGO MILITARY MUSEUM**

## **Group Bookings:**

There has been a steady flow of visitors through the Museum and we have hosted 15 groups to date with 314 patrons. Some of these groups included the Narre Warren South Scouts, Kyabram Men's Group, Spring Gully Probus and the Macedon Ranges Car Club. We have another 4 groups booked in, in the near future. Many thanks to Kym and his team once again for pulling these together.

Finally, the Museum and the Bridgewater Bakery have completed a project to return the East Bendigo Primary School copper name plates and WW2 Honor Board to their original home. This has been very well received by the public given the controversial removal of the trees in 2016. Make sure you drop into the bakery and see the display.

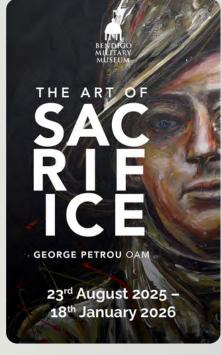
Another callout for anyone who may want to volunteer .... if you are interested in volunteering a few hours, particularly as a Tour Guide, please feel free to contact us via email at <a href="mailto:museum@bendigorsl.com.au">museum@bendigorsl.com.au</a> or call the museum on 5442 4513 on Wednesdays between 11.00am and 2.00pm.

Regards Steve Burke Chair, Bendigo Military Museum Sub-Committee









# **APPEALS**

Firstly, may I offer my heartfelt sympathy and condolences to all within the veteran and wider community on the loss of Carl Chirgwin, our Immediate Past Chair of the Appeals Sub-Committee and RSL Appeals Coordinator. His passing is a great loss, and his contribution will be felt for a long time.

As the newly appointed Interim Chair I will do my best to honour Carl's legacy.

Thank you to all the Appeals Sub-Committee members for supporting me through my first meetings and helping to guide the Appeals Fundraiser.

The Appeals Sub-Committee would be very grateful for any assistance with the 2025 Poppy Appeal, which will run Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November inclusive.

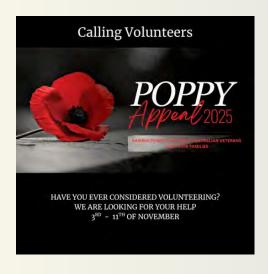
There are many ways to be involved whether it's helping with set-up and pack-down working bees, selling badges at our various sites around town, or distributing and collecting honesty boxes at schools and businesses.

If you are a regular volunteer and have not heard from our Appeals Admin Team via email in the coming weeks, please don't hesitate to make contact via <u>appeals@bendigorsl.com.au</u> or by phoning the Sub-Branch Office on 5442 2950.

If we've missed you, we'll make sure it's corrected straight away.

If you, or someone you know, would like to become an Appeals volunteer, then you are welcome to register via our website at:bendigorsl.com.au/bendigo-district-rsl-sub-branch/volunteer-support/ or you can contact the Sub-Branch Office for more information.

With Thanks Robert Haughton Chair Appeals Sub-Committee











# **CENTRAL VICTORIAN VETERANS**

- Numbers attending the CVV Catch Up held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month, have remained steady despite the cooler weather.
- The CVV Sub-Committee supported and assisted in the running of the recently held Bendigo District RSL Sub-Branch Formal Military Dining Night on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2025.
- A submission for approval of the purchase of CVV Lapel Pins has been lodged with the BDRSL Sub-Branch Committee.

Tim Hughan Chair Central Victorian Veterans Sub-Committee.











# **ACHEIVMENTS**

# Martin Beekes Wins Top Honour for Club Manager of the Year at CCV Gala

Martin Beekes has been recognised as Victoria's top-performing manager, taking home the coveted Club Manager of the year, at the 2025 Community Clubs Victoria (CCV) Gala Dinner and Awards Night, held on Saturday, 05 July.

The prestigious awards night, which honours excellence across more than 1,000 licensed clubs throughout Victoria, awarded Mr Beekes the accolade for his standout achievements.

CCV Chief Executive, Andrew Lloyd, congratulated Martin on his achievement and reflected on the significance of this year's awards.

"On behalf of CCV, I extend my congratulations to Martin on this well-deserved recognition, which highlights his leadership within both the industry and the broader community," Mr Lloyd said.

"In a time when many clubs continue to face operational challenges, it's more important than ever to celebrate the dedication, resilience, and positive impact of our clubs and their incredible staff."

A huge congratulations to our General Manager on a very well deserved award. Club Manager of the Year 2025







# **ACHEIVMENTS**

# Bendigo District RSL Wins Top Honour for Regional Mental & Social Wellbeing Award at CCV Gala

Bendigo District RSL has been recognised as one of Victoria's top-performing venues, taking home the coveted Regional Mental & Social Wellbeing Award at the 2025 Community Clubs Victoria (CCV) Gala Dinner and Awards Night, held on Saturday, 05 July.

Martin Beekes of the Bendigo District RSL said his Club provides vital support to Central Victoria's veteran community through its Welfare Advocacy program, offering assistance with mental health, housing, medical needs, and social wellbeing.

"Backed by over 250 volunteers and dedicated staff, BDRSL delivered nearly 10,000 hours of service in 2024 and has built strong partnerships with more than 46 health and community providers to ensure tailored, timely support," said Mr Beekes.

"A key initiative involved personally contacting nearly 900 veterans to check in and offer help, with 20% requiring follow-up support for issues like isolation, grief, physical limitations, and DVA-related concerns. Financial aid is also provided where needed, including food vouchers, relocation support, and emergency expenses.

"The RSL also ensures veterans receive appropriate honours through its Funeral Ritual, while continuing to reach out to those in nursing homes and supported accommodation. Through this broad, compassionate approach, BDRSL plays a crucial role in maintaining the wellbeing and dignity of local veterans."

CCV Chief Executive, Andrew Lloyd, congratulated Bendigo District RSL on their achievement and reflected on the significance of this year's awards.





# WHAT'S ON

We are getting fired up for another exciting Twilight Market. The market will be held on the 21st November, starting at 4.00pm. If you or someone you know would like to have stall at our market, please book online at Trybooking.

https://www.trybooking.com/DAKAE







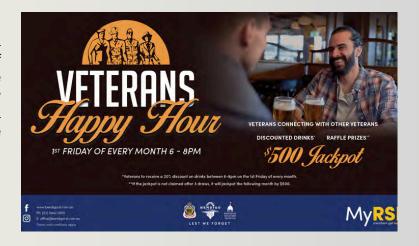
DJ Bingo is crashing the party and bringing the beats, the laughs, and the prizes. Don't believe us? Gather your squad and get ready for a night of song, music, and LOLs.

Oh, and did we mention it's FREE? Call 5442 2950 to secure your spot and let us know you're coming to party with DJ Bingo!

Operating on the third Wednesday of each month

With the Veterans Jackpot increasing by \$500 a month, there is never a better time to get yourself along to our monthly Veterans Night. There are three chances to win the cash, with the first draw at 6.30pm, plus a Veterans Happy Hour. We have a couple of gift cards to give away and a meat raffle open for everyone to enter. Veterans Night is held on the first Friday of each month.

Looking forward to seeing you here.



# **WINNERS**

Congratulations to all of our many winners over the past few months. Members of the MyRSL rewards program have many chances to win, just by being a member of the club. From member's jackpots to monthly promotions and kiosk rewards.

It's the people that make our club so special.

































www.bendigorsl.com.au
Ph: (03) 5442 2950
E: office@bendigorsl.com.au
\*Terms and conditions apply









# **GIVING BACK**

The Bendigo District RSL is excited and proud to sponsor a number of causes including local sporting and support groups as well as statewide and national institutions.

It is very important that we, as a charitable organisation, assist community groups at a grass level which it is hoped will help build a happier, healthier and vibrant community.

Below are a few of the organisations the Bendigo District RSL is happy to suppport:

15th Force Support Squadron

309 Army Cadets

8th 7th Battalion, Royal Victoria Regiment

Cancer Council of Victoria

Legacy Australia

Kangaroo Flat RSL

Gurkha Welfare Trust

Integra Service Dogs

410 Squadron Aust Airforce Cadets

Australian Navy Cadets

Royal Victoria Regiment Association Inc.

Victorian Rifle Association Inc.

Castlemaine & Kyneton Rifle Clubs

Central Victorian Rifle Club

Bendigo Clay Target Club inc.

Calival United FNC (Pink Sports Day)

Bendigo Cricket Club Inc.

Bendigo Easter Fair Society Inc.

Bendigo Jockey Club

Bendigo RSL Eaglehawk Edinburgh Shield

Bendigo Tennis Club Inc.

Bendigo Legacy

Central Victoria Veterans Support Centre

Lifeline

Bendigo Eight Ball Association

Vietnam Veterans Association. Bendigo branch

Neangar Park Golf Club Inc. Bendigo City Football Club

North West Lightening Inc. (Hockey)

Radio KLFM

Mandurang South Pony Club Sandhurst Cricket Club Inc. Bendigo Tennis Association

Be.Bendigo

Victorian RSL Lawn Bowls

Loddon Valley Football Netball League

North Bendigo Bowls East Bendigo Bowls Breeze Tennis Academy

National Breast Cancer Foundation

Blue Ribbon Foundation Bendigo VRI Bowling Club

**RSL Victoria** 

Bendigo BMX Club

Golden City Soccer Inc.

Bendigo Tourism

Black Dog Ride (Mental Health Fundraiser)

Inglewood Football/Netball club

Gold Raiders Bowls Club

Bendigo Health Foundation. (Charity Golf Day)

Neangar Park Golf Club Castlemaine Rifle Club

A shout out and a big thank you to the crew at <u>Dough si Dough Sourdough Bakery Strathfieldsaye</u>, for their support of local Veterans.





# **PROMOTIONS**





















