

Southport RSL Sub Branch Newsletter

Volume 11 Issue 3

August 2025



REMINDER
General Meeting
Sunday 24 August
10.30am
Bring your Partner

The President's Report

The past few months have been both productive and rewarding for the Sub Branch, with significant progress made on a number of ongoing initiatives.

Storage Sheds

Work on the storage sheds has advanced considerably, and we are hopeful that one shed will be ready to hand back by the end of this month. This marks a positive step toward completing the project and streamlining our storage facilities.

Visit by the Family of Mrs Qingfeng Zhao

Recently, the family of Mrs Qingfeng Zhao visited the Sub Branch to view her displayed medal. During their visit, they were presented with a Certificate of Appreciation on Mrs Zhao's behalf. Due to her failing health, Mrs Zhao had been unaware of the location of her medal, and this presentation brought reassurance and satisfaction to all involved.

State Congress – 21 June, Brisbane

The State Congress, held on 21 June in Brisbane, proved to be both informative and insightful. A broad range of matters was discussed, with one of the key highlights being an address by the CEO of the Australian War Memorial. He outlined the ongoing renovations and upcoming displays, scheduled to be officially opened by ANZAC Day 2026. All related documents and draft minutes from the Congress are available for members to read in the office.

Remembrance Day Preparations

Preparations for Remembrance Day are well underway. However, we are seeking volunteers to assist with selling merchandise in the lead-up to the event. If you are able to help, please contact the office as soon as possible.

Ongoing Support

As always, the Sub Branch remains committed to supporting our veterans and their families in every way we can.

**MY NEIGHBOR JUST YELLED
AT HER KIDS SO LOUD THAT
EVEN I BRUSHED MY TEETH
AND WENT TO BED.**

The Secretary's Report

The past three months have been both productive and eventful for the Southport RSL Sub Branch.

At the Annual General Meeting held in May 2025, a new Board was elected. We welcomed Craig Thomas as President, Harry Hanson as Treasurer, and Geoff Young and Heath Mason as Directors. At the same time, we farewelled Roger Broady from the Board. On behalf of the Sub Branch, I extend our sincere thanks to Roger for his dedication and contributions during his time as a director.

Under Craig's leadership, several members have devoted a considerable amount of time to clearing and reorganising our storage sheds. While we have removed a significant amount of accumulated rubbish since our relocation, I assure members that no memorabilia or historically valuable items were discarded. Select memorabilia is now proudly displayed at the Southport Bowls Club. The sorting of books and photographs continues, with the aim of consolidating our retained items into the smaller of the two sheds, which will result in reduced storage costs. Any surplus items will be offered to other Sub Branches, museums, schools, or libraries. As the Board feels it is better to have these items on display and not stores away. Notably, our old mannequins have been donated to the Southport State Emergency Services Group (SES) for use in their community education programs.

We are also pleased to report an upgrade to our IT systems. This includes new hardware to connect to the internet and the installation of an A3-capable printer — the only one issued to a Sub Branch in Queensland. This upgrade has already proven highly valuable, particularly for our Veteran Support Centre advocates handling claims requiring large-format documents. The printer is also being used to produce in-house posters, signage, and other materials.

The Sub Branch hosted a successful **Christmas in July function**, with 57 attendees enjoying a warm and festive afternoon. Based on the continued support for these events, we will again host a Christmas Luncheon in December. The Board is also considering additional social events to strengthen member engagement throughout the year.



**Michael Burg
at the Christmas in July Lunch**

In partnership with the Southport Bowls Club, the Sub Branch proudly hosted the **District Mid-Year Luncheon**, which brought together representatives from all Gold Coast Sub Branches. During the luncheon, District President Pat Fairon presented several awards recognising exceptional service to the veteran community. One of these awards was presented to our very own **Sandy Riebeling**, acknowledging her unwavering commitment to veterans' wellbeing. Sandy regularly contacts members on their birthdays, provides welfare checks, and supports members facing challenges, offering both advice and a listening ear. Her contributions have been recognised at both State and District levels. Congratulations, Sandy, and thank you for all you do.



Sandy and Michael with their Medallions

The surprise award on the day was presented to me, following a nomination by District staff. The award recognised my forty-six years of service with the RSL in both Queensland and New South Wales. I was deeply honoured and humbled by the gesture. As Sandy and I both said on the day — we do not serve for recognition, but to support and stand beside our fellow veterans.

We also warmly welcomed back **John and Sandy Riebeling** following a brief absence from the Board. John will provide much-needed support in managing IT aspects of the Secretary's role, including the newsletter and other ongoing projects. Sandy has resumed her essential welfare work, continuing her outreach to members.

Finally, I'd like to remind all members that none of us are getting any younger. In the coming months, our Veterans' Morning Teas will feature guest speakers discussing end-of-life planning — an important but often overlooked topic. Dates and details will be circulated shortly, and I strongly encourage members to attend.

Additionally, please ensure your contact details are current. If a member passes away, we ask that families, friends, or funeral directors

inform the Sub Branch, so we can offer appropriate support and arrange a **Poppy Service**, where applicable.

Thank you all for your continued support of the Southport RSL Sub Branch.

**My family told me to get
help for my drinking...so
I hired a bartender**

A Veteran's Tale

Corporal AT Dean

2/3 Ordinance 22nd Brigade, 8th Division AIF
Part 2

Another one we (Smithy and I) fell into was on the duty roster. Duties were allotted by unit. We were fifty-two strong and infantry and artillery were thousands strong. Smith and I were allotted kitchen duties and we immediately questioned our skipper, Major McKay. He made us a deal — do one day on the job, report back and if we were not happy, he would find us another job. He was a very cluey man our skipper. We reported back and said we would keep the job. It entailed looking after two x 44-gallon drums outside the soldiers' mess where they emptied any remains in their mess tins. As the drums got over half full, we put a rope around them and dragged them over a polished terrazzo floor and down a chute in the ship's side. It was like skating on an ice rink. In moving from one spot to another we passed by the kitchen and service points for the Officers' mess. The stewards there were all English and told us from the word go "if you want anything just yell". We had roast food and vegies, ice cream, all sorts of desserts and fruit and had it for sixteen days. Who said there was no taste in army food? It was delicious. Life on the Mary was rather pleasant. In the convoy was the Aquitania, Mauritania, Nieuw Amsterdam and our escort was HMAS Hobart. We stayed that way until after we left Fremantle, then we separated. The Mary was the only one for Singapore. The other three were going to the Middle East. We had our moments. We travelled far south of Tasmania into Antarctic waters, which was rather cold. We had one day in the Indian Ocean in cyclonic conditions and I had never seen such waves. They were over fifty feet

high. We hit them head on. The waves were over a quarter of a mile between. She would plough into the trough with water coming high up the masts and then climb over the next one. When She reached a point of balance it was downhill again. Her screw(?) would come out of the water and the whole ship would rattle and roar like thunder. There was only 24 hours of this and I bet the engineers would have been thankful as they had to regulate the ship's motors under those conditions.

It was a shame what the troops did on that ship — carved names on the woodwork and pinched the small fittings for souvenirs. It was sacrilege.

The departure of the Queen Mary from Sydney was something one could only experience once a lifetime. There were thousands of pleasure craft from rowboats to big yachts circling the ship. It was a nice fine day with lots of police launches to see they didn't get too close. Hundreds of balloons with messages enclosed which the Police were trying to stop the private craft from picking up. Ships' hooters and whistles blowing and the most impressive all was a Maori woman in a small launch singing the Maori Farewell (Now is the Hour) in a beautiful, loud and clear voice. We went out through the Heads with a flotilla of pleasure craft way out to sea to join the convoy.

The most money I have ever seen — before and since — was on board the Queen Mary. On the Aft deck after lunch every day the troops conducted a "Two Up" game. Three pennies, not two, as it's a faster game and on every toss, there was a result. Early in the voyage the Orderly Officer of the day entered the ring and said: "I'm sorry men but I have been ordered to stop this game." A voice in the crowd called out: "It's a long swim to shore Sir." He departed and the game was never interrupted again.

The departure from the convoy in the Indian Ocean was a grand sight. The Queen Mary circled the other three ships at a spot very close; the bands were playing, flags were flying and the troops were singing and shouting. It was quite a sight to remember. We went north and the other three ships were heading west to the Middle East. Only the day before we separated, we had a submarine alarm and in ten minutes you could not see a ship or the escort — all scattered over the horizon. We asked one of the crew later if he knew what speed the Mary reached and he said the engine room crew said

about 34 MPH. It felt just like a car when you hit the accelerator — something one does not forget.

We lost HMAS Hobart as escort and picked up a British destroyer HMS Dunkirk for escort to Singapore, which we reached a few days later.

Our destination was the Naval Base on the north coast of Singapore Island. The city itself was about 26 miles south. The Naval base is also about half a mile from Johore state with Johor Bahru its chief city. A visit to Johore Bahru is recommended if only to see the Sultan's Palace and the causeway. We were transported to Nee Soon village, which is, or was, a village alongside a lot of military barracks. Life was never as good as Nee Soon. We were in the same barracks as the Hong Kong Artillery Engineers — all English men who thought they were superior. Our Officers had a different building to us. We ourselves had sheets on the beds, two Indian boys looked after us, made our beds, cleaned our boots, waited on us in the mess, took our clothes to the laundry. Due to the climatic conditions, we were changing our clothes up to three times a day. They were soon back, washed, ironed and folded and you never had trouble getting some other person's clothes. That is how every soldier's life should be.

Regarding the Naval Base, I had two more visits there over a period of time. Firstly, I heard that RMS Queen Elizabeth was there in dry dock and decided it was a once in a lifetime chance to see her. There were two entrances with guards, barbed wire fences etc. I got through the first with the aid of my army pay book. The Indian guard was not too sure but it was my lucky day. The second was a bit of a headache but I was finally paraded to the Commander of the guard who was an English man who finally too my pay book and said, "you have one and a half hours and you won't get on board. I said "okay" and I spent the time all around underneath her etc but I touched the RMS Queen Elizabeth. The Second time was during the war we were sent down to retrieve material as the base had been deserted. It would be an experience — you could see how the workers had left during a bombing raid. Material still on the lathe, torpedoes on their trestles, one complete building full of sea mines, valuable tools such as micrometres lying around the benches just like boys (?) Meccano sets. It was heart breaking.

Some Historical Notes

By Claude Palmer

AUGUST, HISTORICAL MONTH

The month of August is historical for Australia, anniversaries of importance, but barely commemorated.

4 August: 1914: Britain declared war on Germany, hence Australia also at war.

5 August: 1944: Japanese PoW's held at COWRA, NSW, attempt to escape.

6 August: 1945: First atomic bomb dropped by USAF on HIROSHIMA, JAPAN.

12 August: 1966: Indonesian "Konfrontation" operations ceased. The forgotten war, to contain Indonesian aggression against MALAYSIA, and, potentially, PNG. Australian Units deployed included 3 RAR, 1 Fd Sqn RAE, and 17 Const Sqn RAE.

15 August: 1945: Victory in the Pacific-the end of WW2!

18 August: 1966: SOUTH VIETNAM: Battle of LONG TAN: D Coy 6 RAR, 161 Bty RNZA, APC Tp RAAC, and 9 Sqn RAAF, defeated a superior North Vietnamese Regular/ Viet Cong Force, the objective of which was to inflict such a defeat as to persuade the Australian government to withdraw from VIETNAM.

22 August: 1942: 18 (AIF) Bde deployed at MILNE BAY, PNG.

30 August: 1942: 7 (Militia) Bde, mainly recruited from SE Qld, 18 (AIF) Bde, 75 and 76 (Kittyhawk) Sqns RAAF, stop the Imperial Japanese advance, thus saving PORT MORESBY and KOKODA, inflicting the first land defeat of Japanese forces in the Pacific. The turning point in the Battle for Australia, from then on, Allied troops won every major engagement with the Japanese.

Lest we Forget.

Note from the Editor:

My only complaint regarding reports like the above, and it is one that comes up time and time again, is the lack of reference to significant RAAF Units in some of the conflicts.

In this instance, I refer to the entry of 12 August - the end of Confrontation. There were significant RAAF units involved, made up of No

78 Wing, which consisted of Nos 3 and 77 Squadrons (Sabres), No 2 Squadron (Canberras), No 5 Squadron (Iroquois) and the radar unit that controlled them all, 114MCRU.

OK, so what is the speed of dark?

A Check List of Papers Which Should be in Order and Kept in a Safe Place

Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificates & Divorce Papers

These document important family details.

Your Will

This is a legal document that expresses your wishes regarding the distribution of your property after your death. It authorises a person (your executor) to act according to your wishes. It also prevents confusion arising among dependants, relatives, and friends. Ensure that codicils are kept with your will. Your will should reflect your current wishes.

Property Deeds

These include title to your house and land. They prove ownership of property. If the property is under mortgage, the original title will be held by the mortgagee (bank, building society, etc.)

Lease Arrangements

These papers provide details of the property that you are leasing.

Taxation Records

You should keep copies of at least your most recent returns and assessments. This is necessary in deciding how to deal with financial affairs.

Insurance Policies

Includes policies for house, contents, personal effects, income, loan renewal or cancellation.

Life Assurances & Superannuation Policies

These provide a record of the payments and income to which you or your dependants are entitled.

Papers Detailing Other Assets: Shares, Debentures, etc.

These state your title to valuable property.

Details of Bank Accounts, Loans, and Other Investments

This provides information on your financial situation and location of funds.

Personal Information Sheets

This information sheet contains important information summarising your personal, family, medical, and investment details. It will help you family in dealing with your affairs and following your wishes.



**"Nurse, let me know when
a bell-ringer gets here."**

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR Short Stories – A Request

by John Riebeling

I have been the editor of this newsletter for over ten years and it has been a pleasure to do so. However, one of the ongoing problems I am constantly faced with, is the lack of stories coming from the members of our Sub Branch.

In the past I have been able to publish some stories that are so long that they are serialised over one or two issues and some that are so long they can only be covered in several issues.

One of the major regrets that I felt when my mother and father passed away was the lack of stories about their lives. I was not going to allow that to happen to my own children and set about recording to the best of my memory, the

events that have shaped my life. *"The Life and Times of Edwyn John Riebeling"* currently has some 405 pages that runs to 258,485 words.

My point here is twofold; first, I am a great believer of preserving history and the written word is the best way to do that. Second, I am convinced there are stories out there that need to be told.

I recently took another look at a set of short stories that were given to me by our late member, David Mattiske. There are some 31 short stories in his book and a forward. I now present you with that forward to encourage you to fire up your computer and start to write.

FORWARD

After two hundred years and five, six or seven generations, Australians have developed a desire to record stories about themselves, their families, friends, and neighbours. The literary review pages of the newspapers are resplendent with accounts of a vast variety of newly published family histories and incidents that portray Australian life in fine detail. The fabric of Australian society, the character and habits of its people are there for future generations to see, examine, and hopefully find something that is both interesting and beneficial.

*The reason for the birth of so many of these stories is the much-maligned computer. Ross Eastgate made an interesting comment when he kindly reviewed *Fire Across the Pacific*, my story of the remarkable campaign of H.M.A.S. Shropshire as she bombarded her way across the Pacific from Milne Bay to Tokyo during World War Two. He wrote,*

"Facts - places, dates, times, events are the bones of history. The flesh is provided by the personal narratives of those who participated in or influenced the great events and not so great events of the past. The advent of the computer means that anybody with basic computer skills, and a good story can cobble together a reasonably informative and entertaining personal memoir".

Shropshire's story was essentially an account of a very short period in one's life, centred on naval service during wartime. But looking back over the decades one realises that there has been contact with many people and events that provide a microcosm of life in Australia. These people and events are often modest, even nondescript,

sometimes quite unknown outside a very small circle of acquaintances, and yet they represent something that needs to be preserved, whether they be from "the bush", the city or suburbs, from the Great Depression, from country pubs or river boats on the Murray, the wars, or today's affluent society.

The Australian scene has been captured from early days by great story tellers, "Banjo" Patterson, Henry Lawson, Dorothea McKeller to name a few. It would be a task beyond one's capabilities to try and emulate such talent, but here is my modest contribution.

David Mattiske OAM

**If at first you don't succeed,
skydiving is not for you.**

VETERANS' LEGISLATION

The "New" Act

The Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment, and Support (Simplification and Harmonization) (VETS) Act will come into effect on 1 July 2026. This legislation responds to Recommendation 1 of the interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The current three Act system will be simplified so that all Claims lodged after 1 July 2026 will be determined under VETS, purporting to make the system easier for Veterans and Families to understand their earned entitlements and receive support, and for Advocates to assist with Claims and Appeals.

That Advocacy is implied at all is cause for concern. The Productivity Commission commented that "...legislation requiring a beneficiary to seek advocacy is BAD LAW"! Issues raised in Inquiries from Dunt 2009 to Senate 2017, involving onus of proof, beneficial interpretation, and Statements of Principles (SoP) seem to have been overlooked. Whilst there are benefits in VETS, interpretation will be crucial for useful outcomes for Veterans. Of recent years, most Advocates agree that DVA staff have demonstrated a more compassionate approach generally, there remain both DVA staff and Veteran Review Boards (VRB) who will apply every technicality to deny a genuine Claim, despite long-standing Federal Court

decisions that benefit of doubt and interpretation be to favour the Veteran.

Statements of Principles

The Repatriation Medical Authority and their SoP's were introduced in 1994 by the (then) Keating government to reduce their final Budget. At first rejected by the Senate, the Amendments were passed by inserting the documents into the Budget itself, thus ensuring passage into Law. Given the complexity and diversity of human immunology and ADF duties, the very notion that every disease and injury relationship to service can be documented defies logic, demonstrated by the numerous amendments to SoP's over the decades. Thus, hundreds of genuine claims have been rejected, and, given that SoP's continue under VETS, this injustice will continue. That the opinions of practicing, registered, Specialist Medical Doctors, can be, and are, ignored by DVA and VRB's, in favour of a single line in an SoP, also defies logic.

Comparison with Social Security

It is interesting to note that Centrelink currently offers their clients advice and assistance, indeed, fills out their Applications for Taxpayer-funded benefits! Prior to the Keating government DVA cutbacks, DVA used to do likewise, representatives regularly visiting RSL's to do so.

Status of VRB Access and Defence and Veterans' Services Commission

As of 21 Apr 2025, ALL Veterans may have claim decisions reviewed by the VRB. However, onus of proof for SRCA/DRCA claims remains upon the Veteran. On 29 Sep 2025, the "independent oversight body" Defence and Veterans' Services Commission will commence. That such an additional bureaucracy is deemed necessary raises the question of the Repatriation Commission itself-originally established as an independent authority to represent the Veteran Community! Any objective managerial analysis would conclude that funding for the new Commission, and/or, the RMA, might be better spent.

Summary

Whilst accepting that VETS promises improvement in ADF Community needs, issues of onus of proof, beneficial interpretation, SoP's, and simplicity of Veteran application without

the need for advocacy remain. Only actual experience post 1 July 2026 will prove any overall reform.



"We could have flipped through your family album and saved twenty bucks."

Carrying the ANZAC Spirit into East Timor

By Heath Mason

At just 20 years old, I found myself standing on the deck of HMAS Jervis Bay, heart pounding, eyes locked on the approaching coastline of East Timor. It was 1999, and I had never set foot in another country—let alone one in conflict.

I was part of the Australian Defence Force deployment under INTERFET, a peacekeeping mission that would mark a turning point in my life. We were answering the call to help restore peace and stability after violence had gripped the nation following its vote for independence.

As the ship sliced through the water toward Dili, I didn't know what to expect. We had trained hard, but no training could fully prepare you for the unknown. I remember the weight of my pack, the heat rising off the steel deck, and the silence between mates as we looked at each other—young, green, and ready. The smell of diesel, salt, and sweat lingers in my memory to this day.

But we weren't alone. We carried with us the enduring legacy of the ANZACs—the same spirit that drove men ashore at Gallipoli in 1915. Courage. Mateship. Endurance. Sacrifice. These weren't just words in a brochure; they became real in every step we took and every decision we made.

There was a deviation in our original plan—what was meant to be a straight disembarkation turned into a more cautious, strategic approach due to reports of unrest onshore. Tensions were high. We were briefed, re-briefed, and finally deployed with our senses sharp and hearts steady.



I was young, but I wasn't alone. I was with a brotherhood of Australians determined to make a difference. Some were fresh like me, others seasoned, but we were united under the rising sun of our nation's colours, there to protect, to assist, and to stand with the people of East Timor during one of their most vulnerable times.

That mission didn't just define my service—it helped shape who I am. Every time I look back on it, I'm reminded of the legacy we carried and the new chapter of history we helped to write—

not with weapons, but with presence, resolve, and humanity.

The ANZAC spirit lives on in every generation of servicemen and women, and I was proud to carry it ashore on that foreign beach.



“Walk on the inside. That’s the 10th time a cab has pulled over.”

EXERCISE FOR PEOPLE OVER 60

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side.

With a 5-lb potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there for as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax.

Each day you will find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb potato bags. Then try 50-lb potato bags and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. (I’m at this level).

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.



“With my luck lately, I’d say your chances are about 50-50.”

B.S

FRIDAY

Join Us for Blue Shirt Friday
At the Southport Bowls Club

The Southport RSL Sub Branch invites all members to come together every Friday from 10:00am onwards for Blue Shirt Friday—a social event dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of our members

Enjoy great company, meaningful connections, and a chance to relax among friends. Whether you are a regular or it’s your first time, all Sub Branch members are welcome to join this uplifting initiative.

Wear your blue Sub Branch Polo shirt, show your support, and make every Friday a special one!

We’ll see you there



Sunday Breakfast
8am-11am

Barista Coffee and cakes available also.

Twilight Bowls!!
Every Thursday from 6pm
Everyone Welcome.
\$15 pp Green Fee's. 3 bowl Pairs.
Complimentary Finger Food, Great Drink prices & Prizes to be Won.
More info & to register—Call Ashleigh 0425 739 166
or the Club—07 55312626
Southport Bowls Club—2 Marine Pde, Southport.

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you.



Special Dish
Sunday Roast

Every Sunday at the Bowls Club.
Includes season vegetables, potatoes and gravy

Available 11:30am-2:30pm

To book a table phone 5531-2626

Southport Bowls Club- 2 Marine Parade, Southport

Current Board Members

Craig Thomas	President
Ken Orr	Deputy President
Harold Hansen	Treasurer
Michael Burg	Secretary
Claude Palmer	Director 1
John Riebeling	Director 2
Geoff Young	Director 3
Kevin Lloyd-Thomas	Director 4
Sandra Riebeling	Director 5
Heath Mason	Director 6

Southport RSL Sub-Branch Inc.
Corner Marine Parade & Queen Street
PO Box 31
SOUTHPORT BC QLD 4215
T 0484 280 750
E secretary@southport.rslqld.net.au
W www.southportrsl.org

Editor: John Riebeling
Contributors: Cpl AT Dean
H Mason
C Palmer
D Mattiske

Sponsors: Ms Angie Bell MP, Federal Member for Moncrieff (Printing)
Mr Rob Molhoek MP, State Member for Southport (Mail)