



RETURNED and SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

EPPING RSL SUB-BRANCH ROUTINE ORDERS



Vol 29 No4

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August-September 2026

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Message from the President



Following the busy ANZAC commemoration period, the sub-Branch has moved into a quieter phase of the year, allowing us to place greater emphasis on the social and fellowship aspects of RSL life.

A highlight of June was our Mid-Year Life Members Lunch, held at The Epping Club. This valued occasion provided an opportunity to recognise our Life Members, enjoy fellowship, reflect on the year to date, and acknowledge the many years of remarkable service and contribution they have given to the sub-Branch and the wider RSL community.

Sadly, towards the end of May, the sub-Branch farewelled two fellow members, Noel McCormack and Ian Shearman. Noel passed away on 25 May and Ian on 27 May. On behalf of the sub-Branch, I extend our sincere condolences to the families and friends of Noel and Ian. Their service and connection to our sub-Branch will be respectfully remembered.

The sub-Branch is also pleased to be supporting two Year 9 students from Epping Boys High School as they work towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award. We have arranged several activities for them, including updating and reorganising our military library and assisting with an audit of local military artefacts.

The students have already made a practical and lasting contribution by alphabetising the books in the sub-Branch office library and beginning the

process of entering them into a database created to maintain an accurate record of the collection. We appreciate their enthusiasm and the value of their work.

Looking ahead, the sub-Branch will conduct a Remembrance and Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Boronia Park Cenotaph on Saturday, 15 August 2026, commencing at 10:30 hrs, to commemorate Victory in the Pacific Day.

Victory in the Pacific Day, commonly known as VP Day, marks the end of the Second World War in the Pacific following Japan's surrender to Allied Forces on 15 August 1945. It is an important day of remembrance, particularly for those members of our Armed Forces who fought and died in the Pacific theatre. I encourage members to attend and pay their respects.

Lest we forget.

Andy Brayshaw

President, Epping RSL subBranch

VP DAY COMMEMORATION

(Victory in the Pacific)

The service to commemorate the end of World War 2 will be held at the Boronia Park Cenotaph on Saturday 15 August 2026.

Assemble at 1030 for service commencing at 1045.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

VALE

“WE WILL REMEMBER THEM”

During the months of June-July 2026, advice has been received of the passing of the following Service Members:

NAME	RANK	SERVICE	UNIT	SERVICE NUMBER	DATE JOINED	DATE DECEASED
Ian Henry SHEARMAN	PTE	ARMY	13 National Service Training Bn NSWUTR	2752573	31/07/2004	27/05/2026
Leslie John PRESTIDGE RFD ED	MAJ	ARMY	HQ Field Force Command	2172402	21/02/1995	18/07/2026

WELLBEING SUPPORT OFFICER

Andrew (Andy) Brayshaw

Mobile: 0435 879 258

Email: wellbeing@eppingsubbranch.com

Visit Andy in the sub-Branch office on Wednesday mornings between 9 a.m. and noon.

WSOs can offer:

referrals for training and employment pathways, housing providers, counselling and health services, and claims and compensation advocacy

support to claims Advocates,

visits to veterans at home, and in hospital and aged-care facilities

support services, such as driving and shopping trips

support at funerals

assistance organising domestic assistance or home maintenance services

assistance with administrative duties in a volunteer capacity

support organising and conducting social, family and Sport & Recreation Program activities

non-clinical and non-advocacy support to a veteran's family during time of grief, loss, and bereavement

ROUTINE ORDERS is issued 5 times per year, in January, April, June, August and October.

Contributions for inclusion in ROUTINE ORDERS, such as forward activities, interesting personal notes etc. are always welcome. Items for the next issue on Monday 28 September 2026 are required before Wednesday 16 September 2026 .

Earlier would be appreciated. Electronic copy preferred if possible.

Routine Orders editor Barry Hoschke bhoschke@tpg.com.au.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY AUGUST – OCTOBER 2026

AUGUST 2026

Monday 3	Families of Veterans Guild of NSW -War Widows	1030
Monday 10	Epping RSL sub-Branch Committee Meeting	1800
Saturday 15	VP Day	1030
Wednesday 19	Stand Easy	1300
Monday 31	Epping RSL sub-Branch Monthly General Meeting	1930

SEPTEMBER 2026

Monday 7	Families of Veterans Guild of NSW -War Widows	1030
Monday 14	Epping RSL sub-Branch Committee Meeting	1800
Wednesday 16	Stand Easy	1300
Monday 28	Epping RSL sub-Branch Monthly General Meeting	1930

OCTOBER 2026

Sunday 4	DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS	0200
Monday 5	Families of Veterans Guild of NSW -War Widows	1030
Monday 12	Epping RSL sub-Branch Committee Meeting	1800
Wednesday 21	Stand Easy	1300
Friday 23 - Sunday 25 RSLNSW State Congress at Tamworth		
Monday 26	Epping RSL sub-Branch Monthly General Meeting	1930

STAND EASY

Stand Easy is an informal daytime gathering on the third Wednesday of the month between 1300 and 1500 hours. It is held in 45 on Rawson at The Epping Club.

This provides an opportunity for all members of the sub-Branch to relax with a drink and nibbles and solve the problems of the world. Those who are unable to attend the evening monthly meetings catch up on sub-Branch activities and enjoy companionship.

Upcoming Stand Easy meetings will be held on:

19 August
16 September
21 October
18 November
16 December

Rationalising the Defence Estate — But at What Strategic Opportunity Cost?

Assessing the Defence Estate Audit Report through the lens of mobilisation, reserve forces and community resilience

RUSI NSW | Abridged SIG Article | June 2026 | Mark Hoare

The Defence Estate Audit is a serious and overdue attempt to grapple with a sprawling, expensive and often dysfunctional property portfolio. Its core finding is stark: Defence's estate is unnecessarily extensive, increasingly unsafe, unaffordable and misaligned with contemporary strategic requirements. The Audit's ambition to redirect capital from legacy southern holdings toward a modern, north-weighted force posture is sound and consistent with current Defence planning guidance.

This essay accepts the broad thrust of the Audit's recommendations but argues it contains a significant blind spot: it downplays the Defence estate's role as the connective tissue between the ADF and the community that provides its recruitment base, its mobilisation potential and its broader national resilience. Strategic soundness at the level of capital investment does not automatically translate into strategic soundness at the level of Defence's reliance on community proximity — a proximity that also underpins ADF Cadets as a future recruitment pathway.

A Report That Gets Much Right

There is a striking case for rationalisation. Defence holds more than 3.8 million hectares, over 70 major bases and 30,000-plus structures, with at least \$12.2 billion projected for estate sustainment over the forward estimates. Many facilities are failing safety and fire standards, and Reserve and Cadet facilities are chronically under-used — some parading only once a week. The Audit's prescription — divest underused urban holdings, consolidate fragmented Reserve and Cadet facilities, invest northward, and adopt alternative financing and commercial discipline — reflects sound estate management and the Defence Strategic Review's push toward a northern network of bases, ports and barracks. Defence has avoided these reforms for too long.

Where the Audit Falls Short: Force Generation and Mobilisation

The Audit's Terms of Reference required it to consider force posture and force generation, yet it gives this limited serious treatment. Local armouries, drill halls, ranges and depots are not simply inefficient real estate — they are the link between the ADF and the communities it must draw on in extremis. Centralising forces at sites such as Holsworthy will reduce community engagement and Reserve recruitment, retention and Cadet service.

Reserve service depends disproportionately on local presence and the flexibility to build a military career alongside a civilian one. A shift toward centralised, block-training cycles built on a Regular curriculum may build capability but risks shrinking the Reserve recruitment pool, particularly if paired with an assumption that digital recruitment can substitute for local, word-of-mouth engagement. For the full-time force, dispersal to more isolated northern locations also affects family, schooling and spousal employment — with likely consequences for retention.

As Major General (Retd) Mick Ryan has observed, Australia's National Defence Strategy contains no real discussion of national mobilisation or the transition from peace to conflict. The Audit risks compounding this at the structural level: consolidation that reduces the appeal of part-time service shrinks the very pool from which mobilisation would draw. Recruitment alone does not produce trained personnel — ranges, depots and training centres must also be maintained and accessible, and centralisation itself becomes a vulnerability against an adversary with long-range strike capability.

A further concern is the Audit's near-exclusive northern orientation. Ports, airfields, power generation, communications nodes and fuel storage across southern Australia are not peripheral — they sustain any force operating in the north. As the Russia-Ukraine war and China's recent Tasman Sea live-fire exercises illustrate, no part of Australia's territory is beyond the reach of long-range strike. Divesting dispersed southern holdings without a

parallel program to harden and replicate critical logistic nodes carries real strategic risk. Resilience demands dispersal, not concentration.

Heritage, Museums and Community Bonds

The Audit recommends divesting historically significant sites, including the Victoria Barracks in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, treating heritage obligations largely as impediments to efficient management. This risks understating the contribution visible military heritage makes to the ADF's social licence and recruitment appeal. Defence maintains at least 130 museums and history rooms, but eighty percent are largely inaccessible to the public — a missed opportunity rather than merely a storage problem. Organisations such as the RSL, which sustains commemorative events like ANZAC Day and increasingly draws on Cadet units, have raised legitimate concern that these divestments — and the parallel relocation of Reserve and Cadet units — will further erode Defence's connection to local communities.

Recommendations for a More Complete Approach

- Require a mobilisation impact assessment before any Reserve or Cadet facility is divested or consolidated, developed alongside the Strategic Review of ADF Reserves.
- Preserve local presence in significant recruitment catchments, treating it as a capability asset rather than a cost of square meterage; explore co-location with civil emergency services or police.
- Attach binding community-access obligations to heritage divestments, rather than nominal heritage listing, and consider transfer to state or local stewardship with Commonwealth support.
- Develop a National Mobilisation Baseline that sets a minimum geographic footprint for force expansion and mandates dispersal and hardening of critical logistic infrastructure across southern as well as northern Australia.
- Treat Cadet facilities as a strategic investment rather than overhead, remediating rather than surplus-ing them, and factoring the lifetime recruitment value of Cadet-origin ADF members into any cost-benefit analysis.

Conclusion

The Defence Estate Audit is a serious piece of work that identifies real problems and credible solutions, and its recommendations on divestment, northern investment and commercial discipline should largely be supported. But estate strategy and force strategy cannot be separated. An estate rationalisation program that depletes the geographic and community infrastructure for force generation and mobilisation may produce a more efficient estate in peacetime, but a less capable one in crisis. The task now for government and Defence is to implement these reforms without hollowing out the foundations of the force Australia may need to generate tomorrow.

The views expressed in this essay are those of the author, who is also the Vice President of a NSW RSL local sub-Branch, and do not represent the official position of RUSI NSW.



VALE Leslie John PRESTIDGE RFD ED

John, as we knew him, was an active member of the RSL Sub-Branch for some 4 decades, having joined the Epping RSL Sub-Branch in 1995.

It was in 2004, in my early years as President, when the sub-Branch needed a secretary, I approached John Prestidge seeking his interest in such a significant role in sub-Branch administration. He took on such responsibilities with a zeal that involved much of his personal time outside the hours at the sub-Branch office.

With his acceptance of this position, as sub-Branch secretary, our friendship started, which lasted for the next 2 decades. Within the RSL administration, we shared a close team effort concerned with veterans' matters, while at all other times we enjoyed a close friendship concerned with family, as we shared similar personal situations.

John and I were of the same age, and we had shared a common experience in the Australian Defence Forces; he in the Australian Army and I was in the RAAF, and from such disciplines we enjoyed a competent and friendly working relationship, handling the sub-Branch administration until John stood down as secretary in 2026. As a recognition of his contribution to the RSL, John was awarded the honour of Life Membership of the RSL

John's life work was with car mechanics and in his many years in the Reserve Forces, where he served with the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, which is often referred to as the *army fixers*. His appreciation of things mechanical made him our go-to man when things were not working in the sub-Branch office.

John, ever the quiet operator, handled the occasional crisis with a calm that belied his concern to get it right.

John was ably supported by his wife Merrill, who was also involved in many sub-Branch programs and was so proud of his son Bradley and daughter Kaylene and his grandchildren.

Life is a collection of personal experiences by which we understand ourselves and appreciate our family and friends. When such a connection with family and friends is broken by death, loneliness overtakes us as that daily bonding has gone. We are left with the memories of other days, which are precious to us, and the recall of which is personal and sustaining. John has gone from our visible world, but he is with us all as we recall and share those wonderful days when we were younger.

The members of the sub-Branch committee and all the veterans of the Epping RSL sub-Branch will have lovely memories of a man dedicated to his family and of his efforts in service to his mates.



VALE John Prestidge

John Curdie OAM

Epping RSL sub-Branch Vice President

June 2026 Life members and Mid-Year lunch



National commemorative service: 25th anniversary of Australian service in Afghanistan 2001-2021

DVA News 13 July 2026

On Sunday 11 October 2026, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) will deliver a national commemorative service at the Australian War Memorial to commemorate and honour all Australians who served in Afghanistan, the families who supported them and coalition allies they served alongside.

From 2001, more than 35,000 Australians served in Afghanistan and the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) in relation to Afghanistan. In response to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, Australian forces contributed to a multinational attempt to bring security to Afghanistan, stabilise the wider region, and defeat terrorist activity.

For more than two decades, Australians have also contributed reconstruction efforts focused on creating safe conditions for democratic governance, mentoring and training, and humanitarian aid.

We remember the Australians who lost their lives during or as a result of their service and acknowledge the physical and mental impacts that service has had on many of our veterans and their families.

On 11 October, we invite veterans, families of veterans and community members to come together and attend the national commemorative service in Canberra. The service will be broadcast live on ABC iView for those unable to attend in person.

Whether you're attending the national service in Canberra, watching at home, or taking part in local community commemorative activities, we encourage you to reflect on the service and sacrifices of Afghanistan veterans in a way that is personal to you.

A unique way you can share in the commemorative spirit is through a personal reflection to our Wall of Remembrance. The 'Wall' is an evolving, community-led tribute where all Australians can share a contemplation or memory of a loved one connected to the ADF.

As the 25th anniversary of Australian service in Afghanistan approaches, we invite you to share a tribute.

For more information about the national commemorative service, including accessibility and transport options, and to register your attendance (for free), please visit www.dva.gov.au/Afghanistan-anniversary.

Exercise Pitch Black officially takes off

DEFENCE NEWS 20 JULY 2026

The Prime Minister Anthony Albanese today officially opened Exercise Pitch Black 2026 in Darwin, Australia's premier international air combat exercise.

Over the next three weeks, 100 aircraft and around 2,500 personnel from the Royal Australian Air Force and 20 other nations will take part in training activities and exercises in the skies over Australia's north.

The biennial exercise is an opportunity to strengthen relationships among our partners and allies by building interoperability through realistic, high-end training from RAAF Bases Darwin and Tindal in the Northern Territory, and RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland.

Aircraft from the United States, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Republic of Korea, India, Singapore, Germany, France and Spain as well as embedded personnel from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Fiji, Canada, Brunei, Malaysia, Finland and Sweden will all take part in this year's exercise.

By working together with our partners, we are able to develop the capability of the Royal Australian Air Force, strengthen our nation's security and help keep Australians safe.

The community in Darwin and right across the north also play such an important role in the success of Pitch Black, which can only happen with their support.

WHAT IS VP DAY?

Copilot

VP Day in Australia is celebrated on 15 August to mark Japan's surrender in World War II, signalling the end of the war in the Pacific.

Historical Significance

Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day commemorates Japan's acceptance of the Allied demand for unconditional surrender on 14 August 1945, with the formal announcement made to Australians on 15 August 1945. For Australia, this marked the end of World War II, following Germany's surrender three months earlier, and brought relief after years of conflict in the Pacific region. Nearly one million Australians served in the armed forces during the war, with around 40,000 not returning home, including over 17,000 who died fighting Japan and about 8,000 who died in Japanese captivity.

Commemoration and Celebrations

On VP Day, Australians celebrated the end of the war with spontaneous street gatherings, church services, parades, and gala concerts. In Sydney, crowds of 100,000 to 150,000 people filled the Domain to celebrate, while in Melbourne, celebrations included notable moments such as Lois Anne Martin wearing a handmade "VP" jumper. The day was officially gazetted as a public holiday in Australia, and newspapers widely reported it as VP Day, distinguishing it from the term VJ Day (Victory over Japan) used by Britain, the United States, and New Zealand.

Military and Ceremonial Context

The formal surrender ceremony took place aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945, with General Sir Thomas Blamey representing Australia and several Royal Australian Navy ships present. VP Day also serves as a time to honour the contributions and sacrifices of Australian service members in campaigns across Singapore, Borneo, Malaya, Papua, New Guinea, and New Britain.

Modern Observances

Today, VP Day is commemorated with ceremonial events, wreath-laying, and educational programs to remember the veterans and the historical significance of the day. It remains a moment for Australians to reflect on the courage, cooperation, and sacrifices that contributed to the Allied victory in the Pacific.

Do you know why you shouldn't write with a dull pencil?

Because it is pointless.

How did the hamburger introduce his wife?

Meet Pattie.

Parallel lines have so much in common.

It's a shame they'll never meet.

What do you call a pony with a sore throat?

A little horse.

I am that Soldier

By Andrew Brayshaw

When I was just a boy at school, with dreams too big to hide,
I played at soldiers with my friends, with courage at my side.
A wooden stick became my rifle, a playground turned to sand,
I marched through fields of childhood games a future close at hand.

I always knew the path I'd take, the calling from within my chest,
To wear the uniform with pride and give my very best.
For twenty-four long years I served, through conflict, loss and pain,
In the Falklands cold and Gulf War heat, I answered duty's name.

In Croatia and Bosnia, when broken hearts had bled,
I carried hope within my hands, to comfort young and old.
A Combat Medic on the ground, where fear and silence meet,
I heard the cries; I held the line and knelt beside defeat.

Yet when one chapter closed at last, my service was not done,
I crossed the world to serve again, beneath the southern sun.
The Australian Army called to me, and I answered once again,
For nineteen years I stood with pride, through sacrifice and pain.

From boyhood games to battlefields, from schoolyard dust to war,
The dream I carried as a child became my life and more.
So, when you speak of service, of courage, heart, and scares,
Remember those who walked the road, beneath uncertain stars.

For I was once that little boy, with dreams no time could kill,
And through the years, through peace and war I am that soldier still.





Epping War Widows visited the Seven Hills-Toongabbie RSL for lunch on 30 June 2026. Great food, great friends and a great time.

We also visited their Military Museum. What a fantastic collection they have; including guns, cannons and military vehicles used in various wars. It's well worth the trip out to Seven Hills just to view their museum.

On 1 June 2026 the State Member of Parliament for Epping, Ms Monica Tudehope MP, came to The Epping Club to present Heather Gillam with a Community Recognition Statement for her years of dedicated service to the Epping branch of the War Widows Guild (see photographs on the back page).

Meetings are held on the first Monday of the month at 10.30 am except for public holidays.

Next meetings :

Monday 3 August

Monday 7 September

Monday 12 October due to Labour Day holiday on 5 October

Monday 2 November

Monday 7 December

Coordinator: Jo Burgess 0404 107 794

**am's NSW Government Award Celebrated at
The Epping Club, 1st June 2026**



Arr: John Curdie