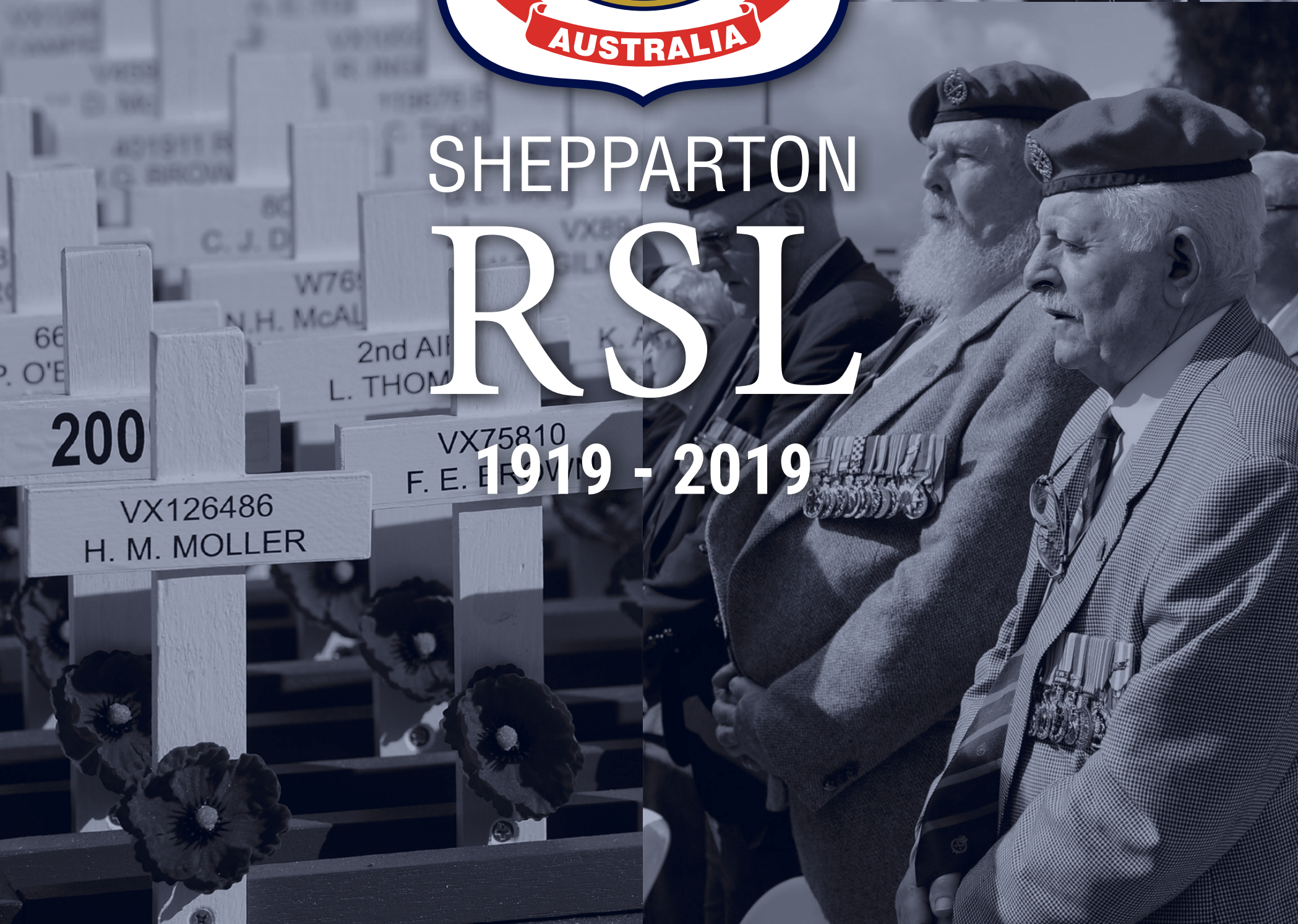




SHEPPARTON RSL

1919 - 2019



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Making plans for the future

Dedicated to providing a space its patrons deserve, the Shepparton RSL is undergoing major redevelopments internally and externally, with the aim of growing its customer base and creating a complete RSL experience.

General manager Grant Tarrant gave a glimpse into the future of the building, and how the RSL aims to maximise its functionality by developing a universally accommodating location.

"Quite a few years ago prior to me starting here, the club were looking at doing a masterplan," Grant said.

"Stage one was the car park which is done, and we also had plans of doing some solar because of the increase in electricity costs."

Ninety extra parking spaces have since been added to the complex in the first step of the process, while more than 250 solar panels were put in place earlier in August.

As well as the exterior features, the RSL rolled out a new and improved airconditioning system as part of the first stage of development, investing about \$100 000 in order to house patrons comfortably throughout the entire year.

Moving forward, the next phase of the plan will involve a complete facelift of the bar and gaming areas, which will modernise the core of the building and give guests an array of entertainment options.

Grant said the RSL had already had presentations from architects regarding the project and would look to hone-in on a decision in the near future.

"The board will sit down over the next two or three months and pick which one they want to go with, and that will see us through the next 12 months," he said.

"I'd say within the next six months, so by around the middle of next year, you will probably see the next stage of our redevelopment."

And lastly, the third step of the plan will be an overhaul of the function room and bistro area, which Grant believes will expose the RSL to a broader demographic of potential customers.

"It will involve enhanced dining options and a kids' play area for families, and we will create some nice outdoor areas so we can have outdoor functions as well as a nice sports bar," he said.

"(There will be) better facilities available and a new bar which will be totally reconfigured, potentially we will look at putting admin and boardroom upstairs.

"It will be a long journey and it will take a while, but what we will see in the end will be a state-of-the-art venue which will definitely be updated, fresh and new — it will be a significant investment into the RSL."

“It will involve enhanced dining options and a kids' play area for families, and we will create some nice outdoor areas so we can have outdoor functions as well as a nice sports bar.”

- Grant Tarrant



RSL general manager Grant Tarrant is overseeing a major redevelopment of the facility.
Pictures: Rodney Braithwaite



Shepparton RSL board members, front, Karen Holmes, president Bob Wilkie, senior vice-president Brian McInnery, Shane O'Keefe, (back,) general manager Grant Tarrant, treasurer Darryl Butcher, Sandy Davis (JP), vice-president Bruce Davis, secretary Peter Martin and Ted Ball. Absent Stan Whitford. Picture: Megan Fisher

A century of care

Formed a century ago, the original philosophy of the foundation members of the Shepparton RSL sub-branch remains the focus for the modern-day custodians.

The welfare of veterans and their families is at the forefront of the RSL's operations, coupled with the concept of creating a welcoming space for the greater community to gather.

Previous generations have overseen the development of a vibrant precinct, in the form of the Wyndham St complex, which gives veterans, families and organisations a place to meet and generate income to support former and serving personnel.

President Bob Wilkie, who is in his fifth year of leading the sub-branch, said the RSL also played an important role in educating the community about sacrifices that were endured on their behalf.

The annual Anzac Day and Remembrance Day events give the opportunity to acknowledge service men and women on those important days and, by becoming an RSL club member, support could be given year-round.

Funds generated by the club's day-to-day operations and the donations received during the charitable appeals

selling Anzac badges and poppies are invested into various programs administered by the welfare team.

From providing financial relief, assisting with funeral arrangements, supporting veterans' children with school fees to helping with the training of therapy dogs are some examples of the club's enduring commitment.

A strong support network helps veterans access mental health services, co-ordinates visits to hospitalised veterans and funds maintenance services, such as mowing lawns or home repairs for those unable to complete the tasks themselves.

The RSL's support of disadvantaged youth is ongoing and each year, six students attend a holiday camp in Portsea, funded by the local club.

"We're very active in the community; we've donated \$10 000 towards the upgrade of the Mooroopna War Memorial and \$50 000 to the memorial for Sir Murray Bouchier," Bob said.

"We also help some of the smaller sub-branches, whose only revenue is from membership, and we work with

organisations like the Rotary Club of South Shepparton to support research into PTSD in defence personnel."

A significant employer in Greater Shepparton, the RSL club offers good value, low-cost meals, an expansive bar area, private function facilities and regular free entertainment.

"The club is a meeting place but not only for veterans, we treat everyone the same," Bob said.

In fact, of the present-day tally of over 8000 members, the majority are social or community members. About 450 are service members and 400 are affiliate members, a membership class open to family members of service personnel or emergency services staff including police, ambulance, fire and SES.

Bob said while the perception might be the RSL was only for older people, there was plenty to attract all age groups.

"I'd certainly encourage the younger veterans to get involved and also the wider community to join, it's a very social space and people should come and see what the place is all about."

play *your* part

Supporting Australia's service veterans and the wider community is as simple as becoming a social member, enjoying a meal, buying a drink or having a good time at the Shepparton RSL Club. Funds generated from gaming and hospitality underpin the generous financial contributions the club makes to not only veterans and their families but also to community organisations, special events and disadvantaged people.

For just \$11 per calendar year, social members can enjoy discounts on food and drinks, entry into exclusive promotions, a chance to win cash and earn RSL rewards points, and at the same time aid the club's important community work.

• **Service and Affiliate memberships also available**

Sales support veterans

In the lead-up to Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, Bruce Davis is a familiar face around town.

With his trademark moustache and engaging grin, the Shepparton RSL vice-president oversees the sale of badges and poppies that mark these memorable days.

For Bruce, who shares the appeals manager role with his wife Sandy, the reason for his involvement is quite simple – it's his way of giving back.

"Any person who puts on the Australian uniform in the ADF deserves to be looked after when they've finished their service, both in domestic defence or in the theatre of war," Bruce said.

"After the help the RSL gave me when I was having some problems it's my way of giving back."

In the weeks before April 25 and November 11, Bruce marshals his team of volunteers, who sell commemorative items in large outlets such as Fairleys IGA, Shepparton Marketplace, Riverside Plaza, Bunnings Warehouse, Shepparton Regional Saleyards, Coles and Kmart in Vaughan St and John Anderson Pharmacy.

Upwards of 70 small businesses also support the two most important appeals on the RSL calendar, with 100 per cent of the funds used to support veterans and their families.

Financial assistance to provide emergency accommodation, mow lawns, maintain homes, supply some medical equipment (such as mobility scooters) and pay children's education fees are just some of the ways the RSL welfare team can assist.

Bruce considers the Anzac badges and poppies as badges of honour to be worn in support of service men and women

who didn't return, and for those that are now serving overseas or protecting Australia domestically.

"We always have a huge and generous response from the general public, I think last Remembrance Day we raised about \$59K," Bruce said.

"Sometimes people just give us a donation, instead of taking a badge or poppy. It's the public that decides how much money we get from these appeals."

Bruce said his story was typical of many others that have served, and it's what drives him to continue to fundraise to support veterans.

In 1973 and fresh out of school, the then 17-year-old joined the Army, and spent 12 years based at Puckapunyal, Wagga Wagga, Watsonia and Singleton, assisting when natural disasters, such as fire and flood, struck Australia.

"I only joined the RSL about four years ago; I suppose I didn't join earlier because as I didn't serve overseas, I didn't feel a part of the RSL as such," Bruce said.

When he retired from his civilian job as a chef at Goulburn Valley Health, Bruce sought assistance from the Goulburn Valley Veterans Centre for injuries sustained during his Army tenure.

"I found it difficult to reintegrate when I left the Army," he said.

"But I found the mateship and comradeship I was looking for in the back office of the veterans' centre.

"Everyone wrapped their arms around me and took care of me, now I'm giving back to them and the other service men and women."



Veterans Joe Clarke and Bruce Davis volunteer every year to sell Anzac Day badges and Remembrance Day poppies. Picture: Ray Sizer

“ After the help the RSL gave me when I was having some problems it's my way of giving back. ”

- Bruce Davis

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Trainee advocates Karen Holmes and Craig Bolwell, administrator Kevin Gray, co-ordinator Paul Blackwell and advocate Shane O'Keefe. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite

Ready and willing to help

Navigating the complex legislation that deals with veterans' entitlements can be challenging – and that's where the volunteers from Goulburn Valley Veterans Centre can help.

The dedicated team operates autonomously from the Shepparton RSL, but receives valuable financial support from the club to carry out this important work.

Level two advocate and centre co-ordinator Paul Blackwell said many veterans were unaware of the assistance they were entitled to, and for some individuals, dealing with the various government agencies was confusing and increased stress.

"Anyone and everyone who has served can come in here and we will help them," Paul said.

Liaising primarily with the Department of Defence and Department of Veterans Affairs, the team can assist with accessing service and medical records, obtain documentation and process claims.

Three different acts of parliament – the Veterans Entitlements Act, Defence Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act – govern pensions and compensation, and each has a multitude of layers within.

"People are unsure what they are entitled to and we can help them with almost anything from claiming for injury or illness that happened during their time in the defence force, to assisting partners of

deceased veterans to access pensions," Paul said.

"We offer support and advice and can refer them to welfare if they need financial assistance.

"We get a bit of a thrill from helping the veterans get something they are entitled to."

The centre is building relationships with a team of psychologists and medical professionals to support veterans, and can organise DVA doctors to liaise directly with veterans' local doctors to work through cumbersome paperwork.

Veterans within a 150 km radius of Shepparton – including those living in Mansfield, Tocumwal, Benalla, Yea and Rochester – access the services the centre offers.

"I would encourage vets to come in and get advice before attempting any online claims, once that information is submitted it can be very difficult to alter if it's incorrect," Paul said.

After 20 years in the military, including two tours of Vietnam, Paul worked in Australian Protective Services with stints at Melbourne Airport and Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre before moving into advocacy about 12 years ago.

He has been at the Shepparton centre for two-and-a-half years.

"Each service has its own dialect so to speak, so we're fortunate here that our team of advocates have combined years of experience – 70 in the military, 34 in the Navy and 22 in the Air Force," Paul said.

"Someone will always understand the terminology."

The centre has recently received an \$8000 Best Funding Building Excellence in Support and Training grant to cover some maintenance costs and reimburse the volunteer advocates for travel expenses.

Team members are: Paul Blackwell (advocate level two), Shane O'Keefe (advocate level one in training for advocate level two), Marcia Glenwright (advocate/investigator), Craig Bolwell (in training for advocate level one), Karen Holmes (in training for advocate level one), Chrisdeon Roberts (in training for advocate level one), Veronica Blackwell (front desk administration), Ted Ball (front desk administration) and Kevin Gray (administration).

Goulburn Valley Veterans Centre operates Monday to Thursday from 10 am to 4 pm. Phone 5831 7220.

Services provided


- Assistance with all Department of Veterans Affairs pensions.
- Proof of service – discharge papers.
- Proof of defence or war-caused injury.
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RSL's doors are open for everyone

Shepparton RSL sub-branch president Bob Wilkie is driven by ensuring the welcome mat is always rolled out, to not only veterans but also to the wider community.

The Vietnam veteran is now in his fifth year as president and continues to work towards making sure everyone who visits the RSL finds it a positive place to be.

Conscripted into national service in 1970, the then 20-year-old left his bank job for 10 weeks' training at Puckapunyal, before joining a battalion in Townsville for infantry training.

In April 1971, Bob was deployed to Vietnam, arriving home around Christmas of the same year and returning to work in the bank, where he remained for the rest of his career.

"I had a pretty negative feeling about the RSL in the earlier years; we (Vietnam veterans) weren't made to feel very welcome," Bob said.

Having never marched on Anzac Day, he was encouraged by his wife to march in Shepparton in 2003, became an RSL member the following year and joined the board the year after that.

"When I did march that year, I met so many of my fellow veterans and enjoyed the mateship and camaraderie," Bob said.

"But the RSL is not only a meeting place for veterans, we treat everyone the same."

Shepparton RSL president Bob Wilkie says the club's doors are open to all. Picture: Holly Daniel



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Mateship lives on

A relatively new group, with the aim of offering support and mateship to younger veterans, was formed two years ago and meets regularly at the Shepparton RSL.

The Goulburn Valley Young Veterans is open to serving and non-serving defence personnel who served post-1975.

Karen Holmes heads the informal committee that operates the group, with the support of the Shepparton RSL sub-branch, and said membership was currently sitting at about 60.

"The age range of our group is from mid-20s to mid-50s," Karen said.

A military veteran of 13 years, Karen, now 50, became involved in the group earlier this year to continue to help build a safe place for veterans to expand their support networks.

She said through her involvement with the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association she was becoming more aware of the high rates of suicide among young veterans and the struggles they were enduring.

"There are too many stories of suicide and veterans locking themselves away from society," Karen said.

"Some are not looking after their mental health and they end up slipping through the cracks and sometimes find themselves in custody.

"Some people have real problems when they leave defence; the civilian world is very different to the military and some find it very tough to adjust.

"It's the mateship that people miss, something I've experienced on a personal level."

Karen's military service included a stint in Cambodia in 1993 for a peacekeeping mission and time spent based in Albury, Toowoomba and Townsville.

"When people first join the group I see that it's a really positive experience for them, it's similar to what they experienced in the defence," she said.

"Our aim is to create a network to keep an eye on people, and direct them to welfare and advocacy if it's needed.

"The group is open to anyone that has served, even if they've served for another country."

Regular get-togethers are planned; some are for veterans only and others for veterans and their families.

For further information about Goulburn Valley Young Veterans, phone the Shepparton RSL on 5820 4100.



Karen Holmes supports young veterans by organising activities for the Goulburn Valley Young Veterans group. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite

Congratulations to the Shepparton RSL for 100 years of service

Greater Shepparton City Council acknowledges the vital role of the RSL in supporting the returned members of the defence forces.

Well done to the past and present members for an outstanding 100 years of service for their community.

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Top: Kevin Kenna in uniform, aged 18.

Bottom right: Kevin Kenna looks at records of his RAAF service days. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite

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Kevin's been there since the beginning

At 95, Kevin Kenna doesn't get into the RSL very often these days. But he has been a member of the sub-branch since moving to Shepparton in the early 1950s and was a foundation member of the Shepparton RSL Club when it began in 1963.

Kevin joined the RAAF at the start of 1943, aged 17-and-a-half.

His four older brothers had all joined the Army and one of them had been killed at Tobruk, so his mother was pleased when Kevin opted for the RAAF, as she hoped it would be safer than the Army.

After completing his rookie training in Shepparton, he was sent to the RAAF station at Tocumwal which he remembers as a terrible place.

"It was all sandhills in those days," he said.

"There'd be sand in your tucker and sand in your eyes."

He was posted overseas with his unit, 47 OBU, arriving at Nadzab, New Guinea in February 1944.

As part of the ground crew, Kevin's job was to guard the planes and supplies such as fuel dumps.

From Nadzab the unit was transferred to Cape Gloucester in New Britain, where Bob Hope and Frances Langford came to entertain the troops.

"Bobby got a good reception from us," Kevin said.

The unit transferred to Numfour, then Morotai, then on to Labuan in Borneo.

Two weeks after getting to Labuan, Kevin's 18-month tour of duty was over, and he was sent back to Australia on leave.

"The first day I was home it was over ... the war."

He wasn't sent overseas again and was discharged on February 22, 1946.

After the war, Kevin applied for retraining by the Air Force and did six months of carpentry training in Echuca.

He moved to Shepparton from Echuca in 1953 and joined the RSL sub-branch, which he remembers at premises in High St with

a bar and a couple of billiard tables.

Kevin is the only remaining foundation member of the Shepparton RSL Club.

When the club was formed in 1963 it could only serve soft drink, as it had no liquor licence.

"It had to be active as a club," Kevin said.

"To prove that we could do that we all took a roster, a bit of a turn on that, after work we'd go there for an hour or something like that."

Kevin's involvement with his family and many years' involvement with Shepparton United Football Club, meant that his involvement with the RSL was limited to selling books of raffle tickets when needed and enjoying a drink on Friday nights.



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Making sure customers keep coming back

The man that keeps things ticking along at Shepparton RSL is Grant Tarrant.

As general manager, Grant's role revolves around analysing and monitoring the strategic direction of the business while ensuring his staff are content in their own daily duties.

Grant joined the Shepparton RSL in April 2016 after relocating to Barooga from Melbourne and, coming from a hospitality background, can't help but roll up his sleeves and get stuck in.

"I am a hands-on manager, so I tend to work in the bar as well as servicing customers out on the floor in the restaurant," he said.

Since joining the business Grant has enjoyed spearheading an efficient and accommodating workforce, making note of the strong staff-to-customer bonds he has

witnessed during his tenure at the company.

"The staff are just amazing and the board are really easy to work with, but over and above, the staff and customers are great.

"There are a lot of long-term staff members here which is testament to the club and the way it has been run in the past but also how it is run now."

Thankful for the people working beneath him, Grant is a firm believer that the service provided by his staff is crucial to the success of the business as a whole.

"Everyone has the same products – beer, food, and entertainment – but it is the service which keeps the customers coming back."

Grant Tarrant is a hands-on manager at Shepparton RSL. Picture: Megan Fisher



Wendy Lovell MP
Member for Northern Victoria Region

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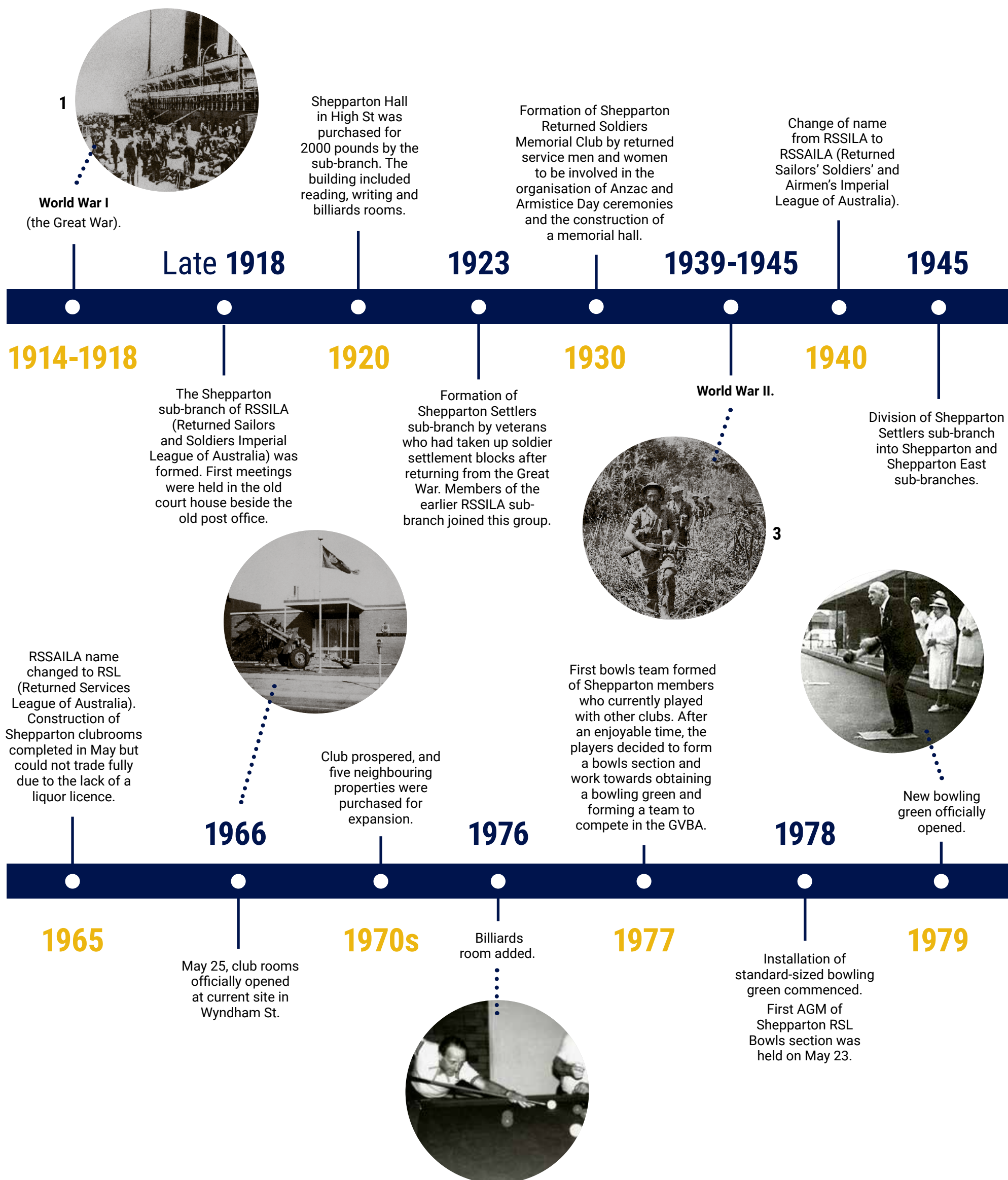
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Shepparton RSL through



the years

Many men and women of the Shepparton area have served their country since the days of the Great War and the RSL, in its various guises, has been there to support them when they return to the local community.

Formation and registration of Shepparton RSL with the Victorian state branch of RSSAILA (Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia).

Courtesy of the Shepparton Agricultural Society, meetings were held in an army hut at the Shepparton Showgrounds, which was where recruits had been stationed during World War II.



2

Shepparton sub-branch of RSSAILA moved to the Legion Hall in High St.

1950-1953

1960s



Vietnam War

1963

1947

Korean War

1955

Vacant block at 88 Wyndham St, present site of the club, purchased from Perry Werner. The sale was provisional on the property remaining as the RSSAILA sub-branch. Funds had been raised by running the local carnival. T & G Insurance also contributed funding dependent on life insurance being taken out on 10 of the younger members.

1962-1975

September 20, Shepparton RSSAILA Club was formed as a separate entity to the sub-branch as under the liquor licensing laws of the time, a sub-branch could not be granted a liquor licence.

4



Permit to operate gaming machines obtained. First gaming lounge opened on April 1 and held 30 machines. Introduction of the machines dramatically improved the club's financial situation.

1990

2000

Club extended and refurbished.

2009

Bowlers relocated to Shepparton Park.

2018

Centenary celebrations.

Fundraising campaign to relocate the war memorial from Fryers St/Welsford St intersection and rebuild Shepparton Memorial Park at current site in Welsford St.

1993

Shepparton Memorial Park unveiled at its present site. *Mateship* statue dedicated on April 24.

Major General W.B. 'Digger' James took the salute.

2002

Old members' bar demolished and current one opened.

2017

Bowling green area redeveloped for extra parking.

2019

5



Pictures:

1 AAP, 2 AAP/Australian War Memorial, 3 Australian War Memorial,

4 Jacqui Matthews, 5 Taylah Burrows.



Joe Clarke with his service medals. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite



Joe Clarke (third from left) with Army mates in New Guinea in 1943.

Still serving his country and looking out for mates

Joe Clarke joined up in 1942 when he was just 17, but at 94 he is still doing his bit to help his fellow servicemen.

When WWII finished in 1945, Joe's mum looked forward to him coming home but it was to be two years before he returned.

Joe served in the 9th Division as an anti-aircraft searchlight operator.

After initial training at Caulfield Racecourse, then Maribyrnong, his unit was posted to New Guinea for about 18 months.

After leave and more training the next posting was to Borneo.

It was in Borneo that Joe captured an enemy soldier single-handed.

"I went up to visit a mate from Euroa and I walked all the way up," he said.

"You had to go armed everywhere you went.

"This figure came out of the jungle. It was a Jap.

"So he didn't argue or do anything he just came with me and I just took him up to the infantry, where they were and they took him over."

The unit was in Borneo until the end of the war when it was sent to Japan.

Joe received a letter from his mother saying how good that the war was over so he could be home soon.

"When I got that letter, I was already in Japan," he said.

"She wasn't very happy about that."

On his discharge in 1947, Joe returned home to Euroa and got a job with the Postmaster General's Department as a linesman and in 1949 transferred to Shepparton on a permanent basis.

He joined the RSL in Euroa and transferred to the Shepparton sub-branch when he moved to Shepparton.

Joe has been a tireless worker for the RSL over many years — in welfare assistance, selling poppies and Anzac Day badges, and running raffles.

For about 10 years he has been visiting Shepparton Private Hospital each Sunday to catch up with any veterans there.

"They're often from out of town," he said.

"They're quite happy to see somebody."

Now 94, Joe has cut back a bit on his activities — giving up bowls and only running one weekly raffle instead of three — but he will still be on the roster for selling poppies or Anzac badges.

"The RSL has given me the opportunity to do things for other people, which I love," Joe said.

In 2015 Joe's tireless efforts were recognised when he was made a life member of the Shepparton sub-branch.

"The RSL has given me the opportunity to do things for other people, which I love."

- Joe Clarke

Congratulations!

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Skill behind the wheel drove Norm's war service

Norm Peace was 18 when he left Sydney Harbour on the converted troop ship *Queen Elizabeth* in April 1942 – bound for God knows where.



Norm Peace, 96, who served as a driver and dispatch rider in Australia and on the island of Morotai during World War II. Picture: Ray Sizer



Norm Peace (kneeling, far right) with AIF mates during training at Balcombe near Frankston about 1943.

It was two months after Singapore fell to the Japanese and Darwin was bombed for the first time, killing more than 240 people. "We didn't know where we were going," Norm said.

At 96 years old, the details of Norm's war service are a bit sketchy, but he remembers sailing through the heads at Sydney Harbour to the stirring sound of a lone bagpiper.

"I can still remember leaving Sydney as we went out to the tune of *Mary's Farewell*. Geez – it sounded good."

Norm was born at Cohuna and grew up on a dairy farm at Horfield near Leitchville, with his parents and older brother Desmond.

He left school at 14, but by then he could already drive a car.

"I learned to drive at 12, so I could drive my dad to the pub and back."

Norm said his father became an alcoholic after his World War I service.

Desmond enlisted in 1941 and was sent to Palestine and Syria before returning to Australia for jungle training and on to Papua New Guinea to halt the Japanese advance.

A year later, Norm found himself heading from Sydney to Townsville for training.

His driving skills then earned him a place in an army convoy, driving a German-made Opel-Blitz four-wheel drive truck from Townsville to Cape York Peninsula to prepare for Japanese attack.

"There was no road – just a track."

He also spent time in Western Australia as a driver for staff officers.

In 1944, Norm found himself in the cargo hold of a ship headed for the small island of Morotai, then part of the Dutch East Indies.

The Allies planned to build airfields and supply depots for the planned invasion of the Philippines later that year.

"The Americans blew the hell out of the island from their ships before we landed. There were still a lot of Japs left, but we were well protected," Norm said.

By then, he had been promoted to Lance Corporal and was earning his stripes riding Harley Davidson and Indian motorcycles as a dispatch rider for Allied military

headquarters on Morotai.

"They gave me a Thompson machine gun – but I never used it."

Because he was a teetotaler, Norm discovered a nice little earner during his year on the island.

"We used to get a beer ration and I sold mine to the Yanks."

After his discharge in October 1946, he had nearly 600 pounds in the bank.

"That paid for the furniture – and we're still sleeping in the same bed."

He married his sweetheart Mavis 15 months after leaving the Army, and they're still together 71 years later.

After dairy farming around the Strathmerton area for 30 years, caravanning around Australia and driving a school bus around the Shepparton district for many years afterwards, Norm retired at 82.

Now 96, he reckons his war years taught him not to worry about tomorrow.

"We don't know what's going to happen," he said.

"There's no need to worry about things you can't change."

"It was a bit sad sometimes – but life goes on and I'm still here."



Norm Peace was 18 years old when he joined the AIF in 1942.

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Annika Green is always ready to pour a beer and listen to a story. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite

A friendly face behind the bar

In any establishment, bartending staff are crucial to keeping customers coming in through the door; and at Shepparton RSL it is no different.

Having been a valued member of staff for 18 months, Annika Green is just one of the friendly faces seen behind the taps – but her job goes far beyond pouring pints and handling cash.

“As well as serving beers, I talk to the customers and help them have a good time,” she said.

“I enjoy getting to know everyone and seeing what their stories are, hearing about their life.

“It is interesting learning about their struggles, what they went through in

the war and receiving life lessons they teach you.”

As a patron of the RSL herself before starting as an employee, Annika gauged the inclusive working environment of the business and wanted to be included in the culture.

Now a recognised part of the Shepparton RSL body, she has well and truly settled into the role and is thriving amidst an encouraging team.

“The boss is great, everybody else is great and overall it is a great place to work.”

“It is interesting learning about their struggles, what they went through in the war and receiving life lessons they teach you. - Annika Green”

Congratulations to the Shepparton RSL on their 100 year anniversary.

The Shepparton RSL and their members provide an invaluable service both to current and returned members of our Defence Force, as well as to our wider community.



At Shepparton RSL on March 27th this year with Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel the Hon. Darren Chester MP, announcing Federal funding for a statue of Goulburn Valley war hero Sir Murray Bouchier.

Damian DRUM MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NICHOLLS

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Rebecca Dickens says work colleagues are like family at the Shepparton RSL.
Picture: Megan Fisher

Colleagues are like family

Full stomachs often mean satisfied customers coming back for more, and one employee at Shepparton RSL who is tasked with such a responsibility is bistro team member Rebecca Dickens.

In the 12 months Rebecca has worked at the club, she has been exposed to a well-rounded range of duties while stationed beyond the counter.

From serving meals and clearing settings to general bistro errands, the multi-tasking nature of the role — as well as the people who surround her — is what keeps a smile on Rebecca's face each day.

"One of the best things about the job has to be the people that I work with," she said.

"Seeing as a lot of us work split shifts and holidays, we don't get to see our friends and family much, so the people we work with become our family."

While being immersed in the all-embracing working culture at the Shepparton RSL makes life easy for Rebecca, it is the contribution from the top which has impressed her the most.

"I have been in the hospitality industry for about 25 years, and Grant (Tarrant) is the best manager I have ever worked for," she said.

"Grant is kind, understanding, he goes out of his way for others and isn't afraid to get his hands dirty."

“One of the best things about the job has to be the people that I work with.”

- Rebecca Dickens

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This famous photograph of 5 Platoon waiting to be helicoptered out of a mission is now etched into the Vietnam War memorial in Canberra. Stan is the infantryman at the centre of the group with his head turned away from the camera.



Stan Whitford (far left) with his 7th Battalion mates during a break in operations in Vietnam in 1967.

Stan remembers his war service with pride

Shepparton's Stan Whitford comes from three generations of Australians who have answered the call to serve their country in times of war.

His grandfather Patrick Joseph Maloney lost an eye and a lung serving in France in World War I and returned home to a soldier settlement property at Tongala.

His father George Stanley Whitford fought in New Guinea in World II, returning home to run a soldier settlement farm at Strathmerton.

Stan's turn came in 1966 when he was 20 years old.

He was in Wonthaggi working as a steel fabricator when his number came up in the national conscription method known as the "birthday lottery". Stan's lottery prize was a trip to Puckapunyal near Seymour where he began training for service in Vietnam.

"I was among 30 boys in Wonthaggi who got selected, but by the time we went through the medicals there were only three of us who were actually called up," Stan said.

From Puckapunyal he was sent to Canungra in Queensland for jungle training. Stan said the training was necessarily tough.

"It had to be, to weed out the ones that won't make it. It was very rigorous but at 20, you're pretty fit."

Stan said as a young man just starting out on his own, he had no idea what the war was about. Its politics or its significance was lost on him — he was just doing his duty.

"It meant nothing to me. I left the farm at 18 and moved to Wonthaggi to get a job," he said.

In mid-1967, he found himself on board the aircraft carrier *HMAS Sydney* leaving the harbour city with hundreds of other young Australian recruits for the 10-day trip to Vietnam.

Stan went on to serve 11-and-a-half months as an infantryman with 5 Platoon, B Company in the 7th Battalion Royal Australian Army.

His job, along with his platoon mates, was to search villages for enemy ammunition

caches and destroy them.

Stan appears in an iconic image of Australian troops in Vietnam when his platoon was photographed in August 1967 waiting by the roadside to be picked up by a US Iroquois helicopter after searching the village of Phoc Hai.

The photograph shows Stan and his mates waiting in the dust from the chopper's downdraft to board the aircraft to return to base at Nui Dat.

The powerful image is now etched into the Vietnam memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra.

Stan said the American choppers were loud and draughty, but they did the job.

"They could fit about 14 or 15 blokes in them, with their legs hanging out the side. They were pretty safe."

In December 1967, Stan's luck ran out when he was hit by a Claymore-type mine detonated by a hand-operated wire.

Stan and his mates were taking part in the two-month-long Operation Santa Fe with US troops to re-open and secure a 60 km stretch of highway in South Vietnam that had been closed by Viet Cong activity for nearly five years.

"We came across them unexpectedly. It was jungle type terrain that had been defoliated with Agent Orange, but it still had brambles. It was bloody tough going," he said.

Shrapnel hit Stan in the face, arms, leg and chest — but he described his wounds as "superficial".

He was helicoptered out for treatment at the Vung Tau Australian field hospital where he spent five weeks recovering, followed by a week-long home visit to Wonthaggi.

Stan eventually returned home for good in March 1968, flying into Essendon airport to a low-key welcome from family.

"There were just 15 of us, and only our parents there," he said.



Stan Whitford at the Shepparton sub-branch of the RSL. He remembers his service with pride and says the RSL has been great for companionship. Picture: Ray Sizer

He was discharged in April and by June he was married to his sweetheart Robyn from Cobram.

"We decided not to get engaged before we left — I didn't know what was going to happen," he said.

Stan went on to join the Commodore hotel group as a motel manager and eventually bought his own business in Wallaroo, South Australia.

Today, he is a retired father of two sons and has four grandchildren.

He looks back on his service years with pride.

"It was a positive event in my life — for my outlook on things. I'd never been anywhere, these were new experiences."

Stan said when he returned home, he just wanted to get on with things.

"I wanted to forget about it — I came home with the intention of wiping it all. The only things that bothered me was the occasional car backfiring."

He has returned to Vietnam several times after being convinced by a mate to travel with him and his son.

"He took us from one end to the other — and that helped get rid of the demons," Stan said.

He said joining the RSL had been terrific for companionship.

"Nobody wants to go on about things, but when you do want to talk about your experience you're sharing with people who've been through the same thing."



Always a smile on her face

Known as the face of Shepparton RSL, Kellie Jury's involvement stretches far beyond the smile seen on television.

One of three duty managers, Kellie has spent four years ensuring day-to-day operations of the busy Shepparton RSL run smoothly.

From opening and overseeing the bar and bistro to administering the daily back-of-house duties, Kellie's 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry has seen her wear many hats at the RSL – and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I couldn't do a nine-to-five office job," she said.

"Walking in the door with a smile on my face and leaving with a smile still there – I love every minute of my job."

Thriving in the role ever since she walked in the door, Kellie's approachable nature and vibrancy means there is no problem too large for her to deal with, and her ability to form lasting relationships with customers

and fellow staff has been a highlight for her to date.

"I get to deal with so many different styles of people that come in, even the people I work with, from 18 years old all the way to people in their 60s," she said.

"The RSL just suits me down to the ground."

“Walking in the door with a smile on my face and leaving with a smile still there – I love every minute of my job. - Kellie Jury”

Kellie Jury has loved forming lasting relationships with customers and colleagues at Shepparton RSL. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite

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Congratulations

Shepparton News congratulates Shepparton RSL on its 100 year anniversary and appreciates its ongoing and valued contribution to the Greater Shepparton community.

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Australian involvement in conflicts since 1899

Since before Federation, Australian men and women have served their country in conflicts throughout the world. Many have served, many have been wounded and many have given their lives.

- **Boer War, 1899–1902:** About 16 000 served, 606 lives were lost and an unknown number of men were wounded.
- **Boxer Rebellion, 1900–1901:** An unknown number of men served and the number of wounded is unknown. Six men were lost but none in action.
- **World War I, 1914–1918:** There were 416 809 men enlisted to serve, almost 62 000 were killed and 156 000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. More than 2300 women served in the Australian Army Nursing Service and 23 of them lost their lives. Shepparton RSL records reveal 104 locals paid the ultimate sacrifice during WWI.
- **World War II, 1939–1945:** More than 993 000 Australians served in the armed forces, 27 073 lives were lost and 23 477 were wounded. An Australian Government WWII nominal roll states 1374 personnel listed Shepparton and surrounds as their locality at the time of their enlistment.
- **Korean War, 1950–1953:** More than 17 000 service personnel were involved in the conflict, 340 were killed and 1216 wounded.
- **Malayan Emergency, 1950–1960:** Of the 7000 Australians who served in Malaya, 39 were killed and 27 injured.
- **Indonesian Confrontation, 1963–1966:** About 3500 Australians served in the confrontation, there were 23 deaths (seven in action) and eight wounded.
- **Vietnam War, 1965–1973:** Almost 60 000 Australians were involved in the Vietnam War, 521 lost their lives and more than 3000 were wounded.
- **Gulf War, 1990–1991:** There was no loss of lives and no injuries among the 1872 Australians who served in the Gulf War.
- **Afghanistan, 2001 to the present:** More than 26 000 Australians have served in Afghanistan and operations there are ongoing. By the end of 2014, 41 soldiers had died and many more had been wounded.
- **Iraq, 2003–2009:** More than 1400 personnel served in the second Gulf War, two were killed and an unknown number injured.
- **East Timor (Operation Astute), 2006–2013:** Of the 13 536 troops plus 372 police who served in the operation in East Timor, two lost their lives.
- **War on ISIL, 2014 to the present:** Australia joined the US-led coalition military operations against ISIS in August 2014. By August 2017 about 780 Australian personnel were deployed in Syria, Iraq and across the Middle East. No record of casualties.

WWI



Known as The Great War, WWI battles were fought between 1914 – 1918 and resulted in almost 62000 Australians making the ultimate sacrifice.

WWII



Milne Bay, Papua, September 1942: A Bofors gun position manned by the 2/9th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, at Gili-Gili airfield. In the background a Kittyhawk is about to land.

KOREA



Korea, October 1951: Unidentified Australian medium machine gunners stand by ready to give supporting fire to mates of C Company, the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), as they move up to attack a hill in the smoke of an earlier New Zealand artillery barrage.

Above Pictures: Australian War Memorial

Australian service personnel have been involved with United Nations peacekeeping operations throughout the world since 1947

- Indonesia (1947–1951)
- Kashmir (1950–1985)
- Korea (1953-present)
- Israel (1956-present)
- Congo (1960–1961)
- West New Guinea (1962–1963)
- Yemen (1963)
- Cyprus (1964-present)
- India/Pakistan border (1965–1966)
- Sinai (1976–1979) (1982–1986) (1993-present)
- Israel/Syria border (1974)
- Lebanon (1978)
- Zimbabwe (1979–1980)
- Uganda (1982–1984)
- Iran (1988–1990)
- Thailand/Cambodia border (1989–1993)
- Namibia (1989–1990)
- Afghanistan (1989–1993)
- Iraqi Kurdistan (1991)
- Iraq (1991–1999)
- Western Sahara (1991–1994)
- Cambodia (1991–1993)
- Somalia (1992–1995)
- Yugoslavia (1992)
- Rwanda (1994–1995)
- Mozambique (1994–2002)
- Bougainville (1994) (1997–2003)
- Haiti (1994–1995)
- Guatemala (1997)
- Yugoslavia (1997-present)
- Kosovo (1999-present)
- East Timor (1993–2013)
- Solomon Islands (2000–2013)
- Ethiopia/Eritrea (2000-present)
- Sierra Leone (2000–03)
- Sudan (2005-present)
- Darfur (2007-present)

VIETNAM



Private Bob Wilkie, now Shepparton RSL president, (centre) watching entertainment at the Australian Army base at Nui Dat in 1971.



Sally Potts meets friends at the RSL and is happy to support the good work it does.

A great place to meet

The Shepparton RSL Club has become the regular go-to meeting place for a group of local women.

Sally Potts, 46, has been a club member for more than five years and every Thursday night joins her friends for a weekly catch-up where they relax and chat about family, work and life in general.

"It's a great atmosphere in here, everyone is very friendly and makes you feel really comfortable," Sally said.

"I think it's important to support the local club and know that all the money they generate goes towards a good cause."

As well as providing a space to meet with friends, the RSL is also one of the Potts family's favourite places to enjoy dinner on a night out.



Dickie Harry is a long-time member of the Shepparton RSL Club. Pictures: Rodney Braithwaite

Part of the RSL family

For long-time Shepparton RSL Club member Dickie Harry, the staff and regular patrons are like family.

"I know everyone here, the staff are fantastic and my mates are all here," the 73-year-old said.

"It's a real family community."

Dickie has become a loved character around the club, having played bowls there in the past and can often be found maintaining the gardens, which is his way of

contributing to a place that has welcomed him with open arms.

"My dad was a returned soldier; he served during World War II from 1941 to 1945," Dickie said.

"I've been a member here for about 25 years.

"I come in nearly every day for a couple of bets and a few beers; I love being here."

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