



Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association

Support Services Strategy 2017 – 2020

'The Race to Trieste'

'Support' is one of the core pillars of the RSA movement; reflected in the following RSA objective:

*"To promote the general welfare of service persons and former service persons, their families and dependents, and the former families and dependents of deceased service person or ex-service person."*¹

RSA Support Services has accomplished many great outcomes over the decades; yet it still faces major challenges as a function within the RSA². Some **11 years** on from 'Plan for the Future 2005 – 2010', the challenge of developing and maintaining modern, agile, fit for purpose and all-encompassing Support Services – locally and nationally – remain largely unaddressed³. This cannot be allowed to continue if the RSA is serious about being a credible and effective advocate and provider of relief to those affected by service. Accordingly, the underpinning factors driving this strategy remain virtually the same as stated originally in 2005 – *'that the RNZRSA now faces major problems, which, if not resolved quickly, will diminish the size and influence of the RSA movement'*.⁴

To overcome these challenges innovation must be introduced at an organisational level. Constructive, thoughtful and timely consideration and actioning of proposals for change will transform RSA Support Services, enhance its reputation and reverse its stagnation. Suffice to say that while innovation may not be readily accepted by some, it must be understood throughout the organisation that any lack of desire to institute changes will lead to failure of some aspect of preparation for the future, jeopardising the likelihood of the RSA's relevance and possibly its existence.

So, why do we need to change?

The return of large numbers of 'Citizen Soldiers' of the two World Wars generally set the agenda for the current construct of RSA Support Services, which has been largely delivered within the context of membership of local clubs and associations, as well as advocacy surrounding discrete issues at the national level. The 'Great Peace' of the 1970s – 1980s, and the low profile of NZDF Cold War activities, created a situation where only very small numbers of Returned Veterans were produced, resulting in little continuous engagement with and adaptation of support services relevant to future generations.

However, since the late 1980s, the NZDF's operational complexity and tempo increased substantially. During the late 1990s until 2013, NZ created more veterans than any time since WW2. Of the 41,000 Veterans in NZ today, 30,000 have served since the end of the Vietnam War – fully three quarters of our 'Returned' population. The RSA also extended membership to 'Service' members - with the inferred promise of support that came with membership.

However, these factors did not generate the institutional change required to reflect the needs of new generations of Returned and Service persons. These factors, combined with a lack of general public awareness and understanding of the nature and cost of contemporary service, and the low number of physical casualties, have created a widely and deeply held perception that the RSA is increasingly irrelevant to more contemporary Returned and Service persons⁵.

This strategy provides an opportunity for the RSA to accept that the need for substantial change exists, to boldly confront difficult choices and make timely, relevant and informed decisions to ensure the relevance of the RSA in its next 100 years.

Our Vision to 2020

¹ RNZRSA Manual

² RNZRSA 'Plan for the Future 2005 – 2010', 'Independent Review of Operations' dated 18 February 2004, 'The Neilsen Report – Membership and Perceptions', 2010, 'RNZRSA Support Services Review', 2015.

³ The major exception is the advocacy on the new Veterans Support Act 2014.

⁴ RNZRSA 'Plan for the Future 2005 – 2010', para 36, page 12.

⁵ E.g. 2016 membership statistics demonstrate that up to three quarters of the Returned and Service persons eligible for RSA Support are not members of the RSA, and numerous surveys, reviews, media commentary, growth of veteran-based NGOs and activities within the post-Vietnam cohort of Veterans – both in New Zealand and within our traditional Commonwealth partners and Allies – provide undeniable evidence of a growing lack of engagement with and understanding of RSA support, and an increasing pulling away from the traditional ex-services organisations.

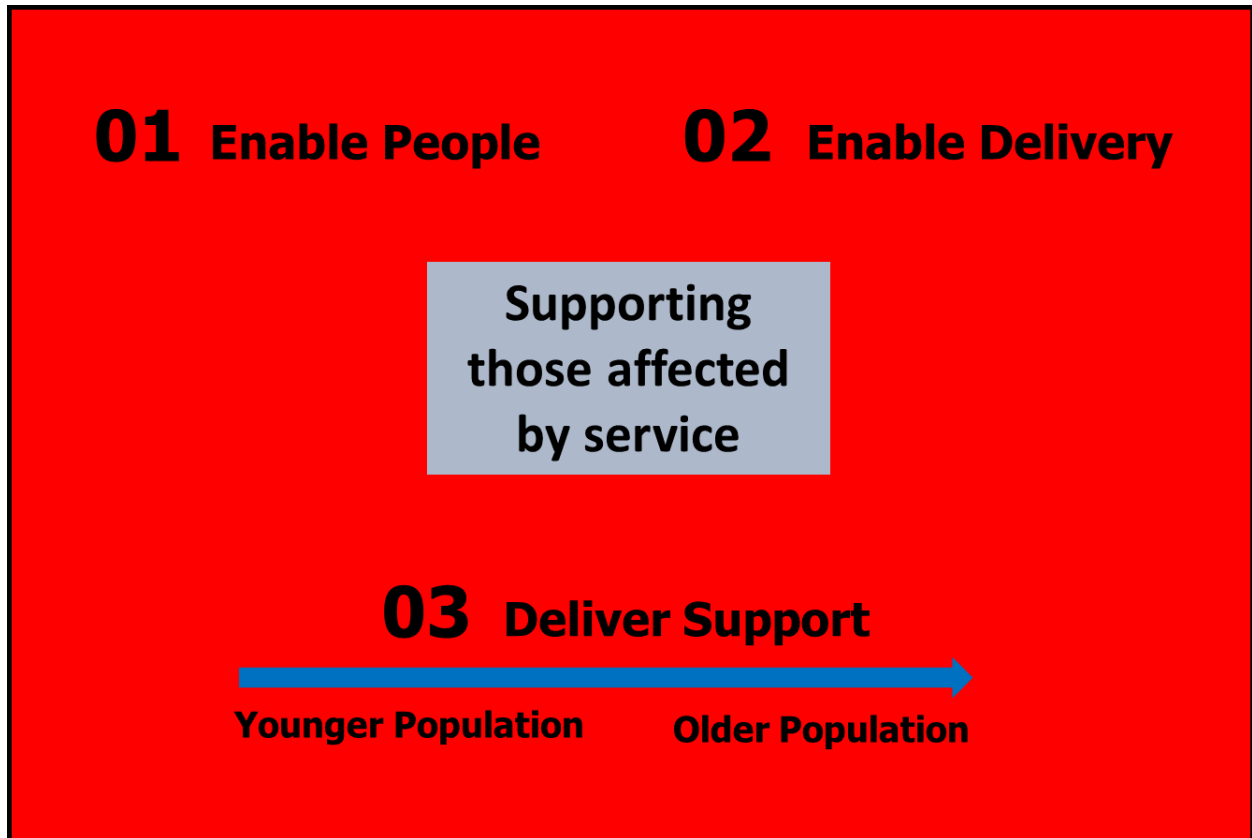
In 2020, people who are affected by their service will promptly seek RSA assistance, confident that they will receive world class, timely, relevant and professionally delivered support services according to their need that will contribute to the best possible health and wellbeing outcome for themselves and/or their families and their dependents.

RSA Support Services Principles

These are the enduring principles that guide our plans and underpin the way in which we get things done :

People at the centre	We put all eligible people at the heart of everything we do - providing both material and moral support with a benevolent approach that treats all concerned fairly and equitably.
Trusted providers	We protect the integrity of the RSA and the support services we provide by conducting ourselves in a professional manner at all times. We will provide timely, relevant and accurate advice and support.
Focus on core business	We focus on providing the best possible support to our people's health and wellbeing. We will support whatever is best for our people.
Teamwork	We work together as a connected support services network of like-minded people across the nation. We team up with each other and other non-RSA stakeholders to provide efficient and effective support services. We are not afraid to accept advice from others.
Support our Volunteers	We acknowledge the sacrifice made by our Volunteers and their families. We look after their welfare and needs also.
Financially trustworthy	We manage publically donated monies and grants prudently and responsibly to achieve the best support outcome.
Future focused	We understand the nature of our business and adapt rapidly to changing needs, never assuming that one solution helps everyone. We actively seek new knowledge and skills.

Three areas of strategic focus:



RNZRSA Strategic Work programme 2017 - 2020

01: Enable People

We will:	How we will do it:	Success looks like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a network of volunteers who work together as a national team to deliver best practice support services. • Enable our volunteers to deliver timely and relevant support services. • Provide world class leadership and management of our volunteers. • Provide leadership and support to the Support Services network across NZ. • Communicate in a timely and effective manner. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide the District Support Advisers with the right skills, knowledge, tools, structures and processes to develop local RSA Support Services. 2. Train and develop our volunteers through a relevant, flexible and timely training & development framework. 3. Produce a Manual of Practice that provides clear direction on the mission roles and responsibilities of RSA Support Services which reflects best practice and standardises service. 4. Produce a Volunteer Management Strategy, with a particular focus on increasing the value proposition of being an RSA Support Services volunteer. 5. Conduct recruitment and selection to identify and appoint the most suitable people to the role. 6. Recognise service by volunteers and develop retention initiatives. 7. Develop and implement succession planning to ensure continuity of the standard and level of support. 8. Communicate with our volunteers and stakeholders in ways that suit them to ensure the timely and passage of information. 9. Encourage sharing of local knowledge, skills and other resources between local RSAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national network of volunteers that meets demand. • District Support Advisers who are recognised as key RSA Support Services thought leaders and skilled practitioners. Competition for the role is high. • The 'Support Services Management Group' effectively and efficiently managing RSA Support Services in line with its role and responsibilities. • Volunteers who are well trained, highly motivated and confident about their role, who are able to make informed decisions and deliver effective support with the minimum direct supervision. • Volunteers with high job satisfaction and minimal retention issues. • Volunteers who willingly work with their peers in other RSAs and other stakeholders. • Volunteers have ready access to all the information they require in relation to their role and responsibilities. • Volunteers who keep abreast of new developments, communicate noted developments upwards, and adapt as support needs change. • Succession plans are in place for critical roles.

02: Enable Delivery

We will:	How we will do it:	Success looks like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to a single strategy. • Emphasise the provision of support as the core responsibility of the RSA. • Raise understanding of the role and responsibilities of RSA Support Services with external stakeholders. • Develop and maintain relationships with key internal and external stakeholders at the local, district and national levels. • Advocate for Remembrance activities that validates service and closes the gap between our service people and NZ society by raising the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ understanding of the nature and cost of contemporary military service within the NZ government and public, and ○ Serviceperson's own view of their service. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop services that deliver on the core role of the RSA to support the welfare needs of our people. 2. Develop organisational structures and processes to improve the way in which RSA Support Services are managed, delivered and evaluated. 3. Plan engagement to advance advocacy objectives and to facilitate information sharing with stakeholders. 4. Support Remembrance activities that will increase our people's understanding of their eligibility for RSA support and other organisations like VA and NO DUFF. 5. Align the Support Services Strategy and Annual Plans to internal strategies and plans, and, where appropriate, to partner strategies (e.g. NZDF, Ministry of Health). 6. Ensure policies and practices reflect broader RNZRSA policy and general best practice. 7. Conduct environmental scanning to maintain situational awareness and understanding of relevant support services issues and needs affecting our people. 8. Manage operational funding and welfare trust and funds responsibly. 9. Make best use of new information technology to improve communications and service delivery. 10. Record critical information that identifies the value of RSA Support Services. 11. Manage Risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategy that is widely supported within the RSA. • Service delivery is designed and planned according to relevant strategies, policies and best practice. • Internal structures and processes are contemporary and fit for purpose. • A network that is connected and has access to the right information at the right time. • Technology solutions that improve the management and delivery of services. • Stakeholders view the RSA as a trusted and credible advocate and service provider. • Eligibility to RSA support is widely understood by currently dis-engaged demographics.

03: Deliver Support

We will:	How we will do it:	Success looks like:
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver modern, world class support services to our people in a timely and efficient manner, and in accordance with the RNZRSA objectives. • Provide timely, relevant and accurate advocacy and advice on health and wellbeing issues affecting our people. • Make it easy and safe for our people to access RSA support services. • Treat our people fairly and equitably. • Practice an empathetic and holistic approach to providing support. • Strive for continuous improvement. • Partner for greater effect. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect our people to the appropriate support in a professional and confidential manner. 2. Support Remembrance initiatives that validate service and encourages our people to seek support. 3. Advocate at the national and local levels. 4. Ensure Government entitlements and services are delivered through the VSA 14, ACC, MSD and other relevant legislation in a timely and equitable manner. 5. Use welfare funds in a timely and responsible manner according to relevant RSA rules and policies. 6. Support timely and relevant research into health and wellbeing issues. 7. Participate in international forums in order to maintain situational awareness of best practice in the veteran welfare sector. 8. Develop supporting IT platforms. 9. Seek continuous improvement by continual review, enhancing current services and developing new services as necessary. 10. Engage with stakeholders to achieve maximum efficiencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are focused on core business – supporting our people. • The RSA is a respected organisation among stakeholders and among international peers. • A nationally connected, agile and well –informed network of providers. • Our people feel they have improved access to RSA Support Services, particularly among the contemporary Returned and Service cohorts. • Relevant advocacy objectives achieved in a timely and credible manner. • Service delivery provides best practice in all areas of need. • RSA leads or is thoroughly consulted on policy developments that affect our people. • New Remembrance initiatives are well received by Veterans. • IT platforms best facilitate delivery of relevant and accurate data to inform decision making.
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