

Executive Summary

Affiliates Workshop 17 Apr 2024

The following is a summary of the observations from participants who attended an online workshop of the Affiliates on the 17 Apr 24. 20 individual affiliate groups participated. The report is drafted in dot point for brevity and clarity.

The aim of this document is to summarise the observations provided by the affiliate attendees to assist in providing input into the drafting of the revised RNZRSA constitution and improvements that could be made to increase the relationship with the RNZRSA.

Methodology:

- Comments from the meeting were collated into detailed notes (Annex A - Notes from the Affiliate Meeting).
- Information was then organised into key themes for each question posed at the workshop.
- Key areas were identified and then grouped to provide weighting for observations (Annex B – Summary of Feedback).

Findings

Topic One: - What is the purpose of your organisation?

- Welfare/ support was stated by 15 of the 20 responses , this included commentary on how support is provided and who is supported.
- Comradery /fellowship /connection was the next most popular response (11 of 20 groups).
- Concerns were also raised during this topic highlighting the struggle to connect with veterans and in particular younger veterans.

Topic Two: How is the voice of your organisation currently heard by the RSA?

- Lack of communication from the RNZRSA was the most common observation.
- Communication has improved recently mainly due to the efforts of Keith Ingram.
- Communicating with local RSA and the need to be more purposeful in the official arrangements between the Affiliates and RNZRSA were raised.

Topic Three: Would you be interested in a closer connection with the RNZRSA?

- All groups responded positively.
- A common theme of connection and collective advocacy was highlighted.

Recommendations

The revised RNZRSA constitution needs to clearly state the important role the Affiliates undertake in supporting veterans and the connections they have with veterans nationally. It is recommended that the following be considered in the revised RNZRSA constitution:

- a. Consideration for the voice of the Affiliates to be increased at Governance and management levels; this could be in the form of an advisory group to the RNZRSA Board.

- b. Connection of the Affiliates into the support network be improved and more formal arrangements described for Affiliate membership with the RNZRSA .
- c. The current description of Affiliate Membership in the RNZRSA constitution doesn't adequately describe the role of the Affiliates and recognition of the wide reach and role of the Affiliates needs to be better described.

Other Recommendations

- d. The role of advocacy that the Affiliates have requires a more formal process to be established so all areas of advocacy are known. A separate workshop will be held to ensure all this information is obtained.
- e. Affiliates are included on all major communications released by the RNZRSA , an up to date contact list will be maintained.
- f. Discussions with Ranfurly Veterans Trust be undertaken to investigate if the WeServed digital platform could be used to enable better connection with the Affiliates.
- g. Increased online meetings are considered for the Affiliates (quarterly).
- h. The General Manager Support Services invite Affiliates to attend the regular support coordination meeting, and the annual training and clinic programme be made available.
- i. A MoU be developed in collaboration with the individual Affiliates to improve the formal connection to the RNZRSA.

Annex A Notes from the Affiliate Meeting

Annex B Summary of Feedback

Annex A Notes from Affiliates Meeting – 17/04/2024

Question 1: The RNZRSA core purpose is support for veterans and their whānau.

What is the purpose of your organisation? For example: Is your organisation focused on Support, Fellowship, and/or Connection with your own trade and branch?

1. Keith Ingram (Navy Club) – Core purpose to bring in young and old ex-sailors, (as well as Merchant Navy) for comradeship, fellowship and support. Welfare, support available too. Do not propret to be an RSA, but support on Poppy Day and Anzac Day. Approx. 85% of members are RSA members too. Women have equal rights, and partners of ex-sailors can apply for support they cannot get from the RSA.
2. (HMNZS Ngapona Association) – Support, welfare, and fellowship. A lot of members are also RSA members. Concern over Veterans’ Affairs removal of VIP Services. Not acknowledging or offering full veterans’ benefits to those who served between 1958 and 1964 in South East Asia.
3. Terry Gardiner (RNZAF Association) – Joining together those commemorating Airforce service. Core objectives are promote welfare of former personnel, and their dependents, those in need. This is the key link to the RSA.
4. Gavin Smith (Mururoa Nuclear Veterans’ Group) – Aim to support children, grandchildren, and descendants. DNA testing now supported by VA, but isn’t organised well. Advocated for (mainly naval) veterans that didn’t go to Mururoa but need assistance. The group has volunteers well versed in welfare.
5. John McNicol (Royal NZ Artillery Association) – Aim to be the principal association for gunners in NZ. Represent and get benefits for all gunners. Also fighting suspension of VIP Services. Aiming to communicate with wider gunner community, maintain RNZA conditions through observance, promotion and education, enhance comradeship, assist and support of any gunner or whānau in need whether or not they are a member, raised funds for charitable use by the association, and pay and honour and respect through commemoration of gunners. Struggling to communicate with post-1990 cohort too.
6. Gary Houghton (Royal New Zealand Navy Communicators’ Association) – Primarily a fellowship group established approx. 60 years ago. Ensure any ex-Navy in need of support get pointed toward local RSA Support Staff/Volunteer. Ensures there is follow up too. Problem with communication with Navy, as they do not see themselves as Communicators (there is no longer a Communicators’ branch). Two or three new members joining since 1997 when the branch was removed, so are having problems connecting with current Navy. Well spread out across NZ, and some in Australia too.
7. Stan Bossom (Sappers Association) – Aims to continue through-life comradeship and into retirement. Advocacy for what you get from the NZDF in terms of trade training and being useful in society after service in the Army.
8. Diane Wilson (RNZRSA National Women’s Association) – All members affiliated with own RSAs. Support and working as a team with RSAs for veterans and families. Support for ex-

service animals, and memorials for them. Currently working on recruitment with posters, and are succeeding with recruiting new members.

9. Barrie Law (Regular Force Cadet Association) – Purpose is to promote comradeship and welfare for those who served in Regular Force Cadet School. Providing comradeship, remembrance when required, and support the RSA. Connection through school and class Facebook pages and group networks.

10. Roger McElwain (Cadet Corp Association) – Over 1000 cadets and support staff. Provide support to veterans, and to the RSA through Poppy Day, Anzac Day, and Remembrance Day. He asks that RSA continues to support cadets.

11. Roger McElwain (Montecillo Veterans Home & Hospital, Dunedin) – Are a 44 bed hospital and rest-home institution for veterans. Providing support to veterans.

12. Dennis Mardle (Southeast Asian Veterans' Association) – A tri-service representing those who served in Southeast Asia between 1948 and 1989. Focus on advocacy, mainly around Burial and Cremation Act. Recognition of those serving between 1974 and 1989, and those serving at the Butterworth Airforce Base in Malaya support. Contribute 10% of monthly income to support. Fundraising targets for specific needs. Focus is fellowship. Make contact with 26,000 people through 22 Facebook groups. Many younger generation acknowledging group online.

13. Margaret Mitchell (Royal New Zealand Naval Women's Association) – Promoting and fostering relationships amongst servicewomen. 599 members on Facebook group, and 220 on financial list. Large contingent of serving and retired joined when name changed in 2007 – raised profile. An aging group with younger generation showing interest.

14. Bobby Ball (Veterans of Combined Services Surfing Association) – Established 2019, and three surfing events taking place for free so far. Offered to veterans, friends and family. Focused on support, fellowship, comradeship and connection.

15. Owen Smith (Sappers Association) – Dealing with passed Sappers and current soldiers. Gap between soldiers serving now, ones that have just left and have not joined the RSA. Trying to bridge this gap.

16. Chris Mullane (Vietnam Veterans Association) – Focus on the three pillars of the RSA; Remembrance, Support, Advocacy. Meet with VA at least twice a year. Veterans are dying off, but group actively supports surviving spouses, children and grandchildren. Some of these people are affected by Agent Orange. Trying to connect with younger veterans, as feel they can offer experience younger veterans, and have more time to do so. Advises that historically, veterans his age did not join the RSA until the 1990s because they were busy raising families. Want to help the RSA where they can, and interested in working on membership.

17. Gary Brandon (Onward Bar, Taupō) – Mancave attracting veterans. Facebook page with members ranging from those serving recently, to Korean veterans (4.5k members). Keeps everyone connected. Offers reunion venue.

18. Niall Shepherd (Dunedin RSA Welfare Trust) – Support for serving and ex-serving regardless of whether they are working within NZDF or an RSA member. All veterans deserving of support and advocacy.

19. Frank Lewis (Royal NZ Navel Communicators) – Assisting Gary Houghton who spoke earlier. Only observing proceedings.
20. Karen Rolleston (SAS Association) – Focus on connection, support and advocacy for anyone who served in the regiment and their whānau. Also work on preserving the history of the unit, and connecting with international SAS Associations.

Question 2: In the new constitution we would like the voice of the affiliates/veterans to be given greater weight.

How is the voice of your organisation currently heard by RNZRSA?

1. Keith Ingram (Affiliates Chair) – Historically Affiliates have remained silent. Has heard complaints about lack of communication from RNZRSA. Has set about improving this, which has been appreciated. Wants to see this improved further, and Affiliates feeling comfortable enough to respond to RNZRSA.
2. Bobby Ball – RNZRSA has been fantastic and has been behind his group from the start. Great communication so far.
3. Vail Hubner (Sappers Association) – Organising social events for his age group and trying to get young Sappers at Linton Military Camp to do the same. Sometimes RSA venues collapses and then merges with another club (e.g. Cosmopolitan Clubs), corporate fees need to be paid for entry. Has noticed that some RSAs do not follow these rules. Can the RNZRSA find out what the overall policy is on this? Would like to push social events for younger veterans to be held at RSA venues going forward, but needs to understand policy to execute.
4. Roger McElwain – The three Cadet Associations all had MOUs with RNZRSA. Needs to be updated, as they were last signed in 2017. These formalise arrangements, and can be useful. Echoed Keith’s point on communication.
5. Dennis Mardle – The only way Affiliates get communication from RNZRSA is by “making a lot of noise”. No formal structure other than Affiliates AGM. Sees Affiliates as the very core of the RSA – the only reason they exist is to serve their members. No distractions as no Bars, etc. Greater reach in community than some RSAs. RNZRSA and Affiliates need to communicate better.
6. John McNicol – Gunner community recognises RSA as primary giver of support and welfare to veteran community. Struck up formal relationship with John Hannan from Porirua RSA – a gateway into understanding RSA processes. Tricia Hague, Waikato DSM, has also spoken with their Committee and led several Committee members through Support Advisor course. Don’t reinvent the wheel – suggests getting involved in current RSA processes.
7. Ross Miller (The Vietnam Veterans (Neville Wallace Memorial) Children's and Grandchildren's Trust) – Trust is 30 years old. Formed on the basis that government can never address all issues of concern for Vietnam Veterans and wider veteran community. Built up trust fund, now have approx. \$1 million worth of assets. Focus on education, sporting, and cultural endeavours. Has seen demise of RSAs North of Whangarei in last 10 years. What can be learned from this? The three RSAs that have survived reach out into veteran community, and are seen as hubs for progress.

Connection between RSA and RNZRSA can be improved – believes removal of “middle tier” will have merits (District Presidents, etc.)

8. Terry Gardiner – National Office works well with Affiliates. Acknowledges Keith’s work as Chair. Publishes RSA’s DSM contacts in their magazines for support. Asks how we can establish links with younger veterans? Been considering the effectiveness of an app for younger veterans

9. Stan Bossom (from Zoom chat) – “The real problems with attendance at RSAs was the lack of transport that is affordable. This became necessary with the lowered alcohol limits for driving that came in at the same time as the decline in membership. When it costs \$40.00 for a two way trip to and from the local RSA, it's a bit hard if on a limited income.”

10. Vail Hubner (from Zoom chat) – “Most RSAs are located in the middle of towns or cities and have good public transport connections, just need to use it.”

11. Owen Smith – Problem identified with the RSA is that current young soldiers might not have incentive to join as members. Only incentive is the RSA App for discounts. They can use Service ID cards to enter RSAs without signing up for membership, so perhaps free membership could be offered to them? They would then pay fees after service.

Question 3: The RNZRSA has three core pillars of Remembrance, Support & Advocacy

Would you be interested in a closer connection with the RNZRSA?

1. Terry Gardiner – Yes

2. Val Hubner – The frustration is that there’s no connection. Must hunt down leads for support. Closer relationships needed.

3. Roger – Yes. Advocacy - the RSA voice advocated for retention of Cadets across NZ in the 1970s, and ensured the government didn’t do away with them completely. This created the current model. Great to have RSA support for cadets, both local and national. Need closer connection to access greater support.

4. Barrie Law – Yes. Power in numbers. Keith’s flow of information has been fantastic, but communication is a two-way street. Affiliates need to put ideas forward.

5. Keith Ingram – Mentioned that although Jocelyn noted the need to focus on Affiliates, the conversation is moving towards RSAs. All Affiliates support their RSAs, and do not need to replace them. Many groups have good communication with local RSAs. Need to see where RSAs will sit in realignment of organisation, then Affiliates can see where they fit in. Affiliates need to be looking after their own members, but try to be in support of RSA movement. RSAs and Affiliates need to go hand in hand.

Jocelyn responds – Making clear that this review is coming from the perspective that RSAs are valued, and we want to improve the links directly with them to continue a strong relationship and work as a family.

6. Gavin Smith – If RNZRSA is going to do away with the President’s Forum and people don’t get a voice on where the RSA is going, then their group won’t be interested.

Jocelyn responds – Not “doing away with” the Forum. Making them more relevant in modern day. A repurposing.

7. John McNicol – Yes. But there is a patchy nature of local RSAs - some are running with RNZRSA ideas, but some are not. Local RSAs are leading the Affiliates’ way.

8. Kelly Blyth (Ranfurly Veterans) – The more people working towards veteran support, the better. Closer connection between all involved needed. Information is power. ‘We Served’ established on how to help your veterans with problems that your organisation might not be able to help with.

Annex B Summary of Feedback

Summary of Feedback - Workshop Topic 1

Topic 1: The RNZRSA core purpose is support for veterans and their whānau.

What is the purpose of your organisation? For example: Is your organisation focused on Support, Fellowship, and/or Connection with your own trade and branch?

Matters Raised	Consistent Comments
Comradery/Fellowship/Connection	<p><i>Identified by 11 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that they aim “to continue through-life comradery” • “...purpose is to promote comradeship and welfare” • “...primarily is a fellowship group” • “...promoting and fostering relationships amongst servicewomen”
Welfare/Support	<p><i>Identified by 15 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...core objectives are to promote the welfare of former personnel” • “...have volunteers well-versed in welfare” • “...assist and support of any gunner or whānau in need, whether or not they are a member” • “...Contribute 10% of monthly income to support” • “...actively supports surviving spouses, children, and grandchildren. Some of these people are affected by Agent Orange”
Remembrance	<p><i>Identified by 6 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...joining together those commemorating Airforce service” • “...pay and honour and respect through commemoration of gunners” • A group mentioned that they provide remembrance support when required • “...focusing on the three pillars of the RSA; Remembrance, Support, Advocacy” • A group mentioned that they provide “...memorials for service animals”

Matters Raised	Consistent Comments
<p>Advocacy</p>	<p><i>Identified by 8 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...advocated for (mainly naval) veterans that didn’t go to Mururoa but need assistance” • A group mentioned they “...represent and get benefits for all gunners” and fight the suspension of VIP Services • A group said they advocate with the NZDF for “...trade training and being useful in society after service in the Army” • A group mentioned their focus on advocacy surrounding the Burial and Cremation Act • “...advocacy for anyone who served in the regiment and their whānau”
<p>Working with the RSA</p>	<p><i>Identified by 8 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[We] do not propret to be an RSA, but support on Poppy Day and Anzac Day. Approximately 85% of our members are RSA members too” • “A lot of members are also RSA members” • “...ensure any ex-Navy in need of support get pointed toward local RSA Support Staff/Volunteer” • “...working as a team with RSAs for veterans and families” • “...focusing on the three pillars of the RSA; Remembrance, Support, Advocacy” • A group mentioned that they “want to help the RSA where they can” and are interested in working on RSA membership <p>Points mentioned outside of Topic 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...no connection with the RSA other than through [their] local Club”
<p>Concerns raised</p>	<p>Struggle to connect with younger veteran cohort</p> <p><i>Identified by 4 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...struggling to communicate with post-1990 cohort” • A group mentioned that they have problems communicating with those currently serving • “...gap between soldiers serving now” and ones that have just left but have not joined the RSA

Matters Raised	Consistent Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned they are “...trying to connect with younger veterans” as they feel they can offer experience to them and have more time to do so <p>Success stories mentioned on this Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...currently working on recruitment with posters, and are succeeding with recruiting new members” • (Regarding Cadets) “...connection through school and class Facebook pages and group networks” • A group representative mentioned having “over 1000 cadets and support staff” and asked that RSAs continue to support Cadets • A group mentioned that they “make contact with 26,000 people through 22 Facebook groups” and many members of the younger generation acknowledge the group online • A group mentioned that they are “...an aging group with younger generation showing interest” <p>Some points made outside of Topic 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that the “want post-1990 veterans on Committees” but are conscious of the older age of veterans on Committees currently. They asked: how do we connect with contemporary veterans? • A group asked mentioned that they have been “considering the effectiveness of an app for younger veterans” <p>Veterans’ Affairs <i>Identified by 4 of the 20 contributing groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns surrounding the removal of VIP services • Concerns surrounding no acknowledgement from VA for some veterans <p>Points mentioned outside of Topic 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that VSA14 is “broken and needs to be fixed”, and that ACC was not designed for through-life support • A group asked why Veterans’ Affairs don’t fall under the RSA so that they can work together?

Summary of Feedback – Workshop Topic 2

Topic 2: In the new constitution we would like the voice of the Affiliates/veterans to be given greater weight.

How is the voice of your organisation currently heard by RNZRSA?

Matters Raised	Consistent Comments
<p>Lack of communication from RNZRSA</p>	<p><i>Identified by 4 of the 11 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that “historically. Affiliates have remained silent” and they have heard complaints about Affiliates not feeling comfortable enough communicating with the RNZRSA • A group mentioned that “...the only way Affiliates get communication from RNZRSA is by ‘making a lot of noise’” and that there is no formal communication structure “...other than the Affiliates AGM” • A group says that the communication can be improved with “...connection between RSA and RNZRSA can be improved” and believes the “removal of the middle tier” will have merit <p>Counter points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that RNZRSA has had “great communication so far”
<p>Communicating with local RSA</p>	<p><i>Identified by 2 of the 11 contributing groups</i></p> <p>Points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that they have formed a relationship with their local RSA, viewing them as the primary giver of veteran support • A group mentioned that they publish their RSA’s District Support Manager’s contact information in the magazine for their membership
<p>RNZRSA and Affiliate Groups’ MOUs to be updated</p>	<p><i>Identified by 1 of the 11 contributing groups</i></p> <p>Points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that “the three Cadet Associations all had MOUs with RNZRSA” and that these needs to be updated, as they were last signed in 2017 • The group went on to say that formal arrangements can be useful for communication

Matters Raised	Consistent Comments
<p>Concerns raised</p>	<p>Low RSA Membership numbers <i>Identified by 3 of the 11 contributing groups</i></p> <p>Points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that “the real problems with attendance at RSAs was the lack of transport that is affordable”, going on to say that lowered alcohol limits have impacted this too • A group mentioned that young people currently serving “...might not have incentive to join as members” and suggested free membership for them <p>Counter points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Most RSAs are located in the middle of towns or cities and have good public transport connections, just need to use it” <p>RSA entry fees <i>Identified by 1 of the 11 contributing groups</i></p> <p>Point made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that “corporate fees need to be paid for entry” for only some of the RSAs that collapse and amalgamate with other Clubs. The group asked what the policy might be from an RNZRSA perspective • The group would like to “push social events” for younger veterans at these venues once they understand this policy <p>Affiliates to use RSA Processes <i>Identified by 1 of the 11 contributing groups</i></p> <p>Point made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group suggested no to “reinvent the wheel” when it comes to veteran support, and suggests Affiliates get involved in current RSA processes. E.g. Support training

Summary of Feedback - Workshop Topic 3

Topic 3: The RNZRSA has three core pillars of Remembrance, Support & Advocacy

Would you be interested in a closer connection with the RNZRSA?

Matters Raised	Consistent Comments
<p>Positive (yes)</p>	<p><i>Identified by 5 of the 5 contributing groups</i></p> <p>A sample of points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group expressed frustration at the current lack of connection, and advises that “closer relationships are needed” • A group mentioned the positive impact that Affiliates and the RSA have had together in the past, citing the RSA’s advocacy work for New Zealand Cadets in 1970 that resulted in today’s model • A group mentioned that communication is a two-way street, Affiliates need to put ideas forward, and that there is “power in numbers”
<p>Concerns raised</p>	<p><i>Identified by 1 of the 5 contributing groups</i></p> <p>Local RSAs’ place within the new organisational structure</p> <p>Point made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group mentioned that Affiliates need support their RSAs, and “...not need to replace them”. Many groups have good communication with local RSAs, and Affiliates need to know what will change for RSAs in the new structure so that Affiliates can see where they fit in • The group said that Affiliates need to be “...looking after their own members, but try to be in support of RSA movement” <p>Jocelyn responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned that the review is “comes from the perspective that RSAs are valued, and we want to improve the links directly with them to continue a strong relationship and work as a family”