

RSL NSW Coffs Harbour

Issue 229 Feb 2025

2024 Executive

President: John Lloyd 0438 325 205 Hon. Secretary: Vacant Asst Secretary: Joaly McBaron Hon. Treasurer: Garry Heskett QBE 0414 512 302 Asst Treasurer: Margaret Black Vice Presidents: Garry Heskett QBE Ian Johnston **Asst Secretary:**

Joaly McBaron

Visitation Team: Rev. Dr. Graham Whelan OAM Ray Squires

Indigenous Liaison Officer Vacant

Cenotaph Custodian: Paul Bamford Jnr.

Office Hours:

Mondays: 10.00 am-12.05 pm. Other times by appointment.

Thursdays: Office meetings by appointment.

The ChargeSheet

The Coffs Harbour RSL sub-Branch Inc. Newsletter



Email: coffs-harbourSB@rsInsw.org.au | Ph: 0423 418 651

Website: https://cex.com.au/community/rsl-sub-branch/



sub-Branch Newsletter Highlights

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Thu 6,13,20,27 Feb	Coffee@Cex 10.00AM for members, family & friends
Fri 14 th February	Bongil Bongil Park Walk via Balls Ridge Rd. Too easy
Sat 15 th February	AGM at 10.25am followed by Feb GM; then lunch.
Fri 28th February	Bowls at 10.00am on the Cex. Greens. Vets & friends



Quote: "The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." **G. K. Chesterson**



Sub-Branch Administration.

Coffs Coast Veteran and Family Wellbeing Centre

Founding member of the Veterans Wellbeing Network MNC, the Centre's advocates and wellbeing support officers are authorised to lodge your claims for DVA entitlements, link you with wellbeing service providers and advocate on your behalf. Getting support is simple, secure, and online through:

https://www.vcmnc.org.au/veteran-and-family-triage/

Location: 4 Scarba St, Coffs Harbour (Inside Legacy Op Shop) Phone: 02 6521 8108 | Email: <u>contact@vwnmnc.org.au</u>

Coffs RSL Sub-branch Inc. Meetings

Monthly General Meetings: held on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 10.25 am.

Location: C.ex Coffs Club Vista Lounge Function Room, followed by lunch in the Bistro. Partners always welcome.

2025: 15th Feb (includes AGM), 15th Mar, 19th April (ANZAC Day Fri 25/4), 17th May, 21st June, 19th July, 16th August (Long Tan Day Mon 18th).

Member's Admin Support Levy

In their Strategic Plan 2020-2026, RSL NSW waived Annual Membership Fees.

Our sub-Branch has introduced a Member's Voluntary Admin Support Levy for the coming years to assist with our operating costs.

The Members Voluntary Admin Support Levy of \$15 falls due on the 31st of December each year.

Members' Payments may be paid directly to our BCU Account as below:

A/C name: Coffs Harbour RSL sub-Branch Inc. | BCU BSB: 533 – 000

A/C number: 3285 6268 (Please include your name and description) Payments can also be made using our 'Tap-n-go' electronic swipe card facility.

Veteran's Assistance - Useful Contacts

stick on the fridge.

Organication	Ph. number	About
Organisation		
Open Arms	OpenArms.gov.au.	Is available to support members of the current and ex-service community and their families 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Short-term crisis accommodation is available for eligible people
Safe Zone		Is an anonymous counselling line that's available 24/7 to support members of the current and ex-service community and their families.
Lifeline		Lifeline provides confidential crisis support that is accessible 24 hours a day.
Defence All-hours Support Line	1800 628 036	Provides Support for ADF personnel
Defence Member & Family Helpline	1800 624 608	Provides support for Defence Families
1800 Respect		1800RESPECT is available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence.
Veterans.	https://rsllifecare.org.au	Link2home is the statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. PH: tel:1300 853 146

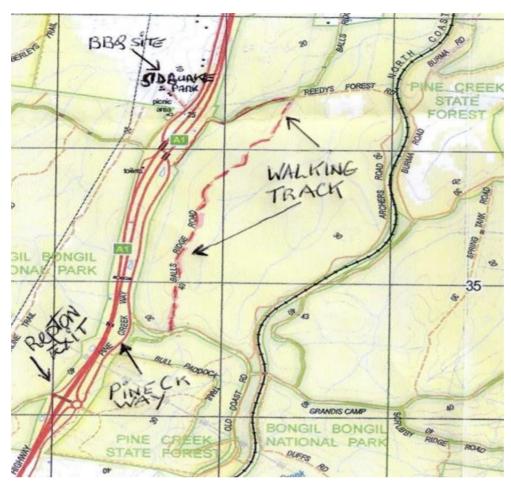
Regular sub-Branch Activities

Coffee@C.ex – Every Thursday at 10.00 AM.



Members gather for coffee and enjoy a chat, tell stories, embellished, exaggerated and educational. Join us for convivial, but rarely contentious, discussions and recollections. **Location:** Vista Lounge, C.ex Club. Partners, family & visiting Veterans are all welcome.

February Walk: Friday 14th Feb.



A family friendly walk through the Bongil Bongil National Park.

Meet up at the C.ex Car park at 8.15AM on the Friday and car pool via the M1 south to the Repton exit

Complete the walk through State Forest to the car park (approx 4.5km).

Gather at the Sid Burke Park for a friendly BBQ and liquid top up.

Top quality walk with great views.

Coffs Vets Motorcycle Riders Group

"Brrrmm Brrrmm Headin' down tha highway Tryin' ta 'void dementia Born to be mild"

Next Ride will be a day trip to the RAAF Museum at Evens Head on back roads via Grafton and Woodburn; planned for Friday 28th Feb, subject to confirmation with the Museum. Non bike riders, can car pool for the day visit. More later.

Interested riders are requested to advise Garry Heskett – M: 0414 512 302.

Lawn Bowls Group –Last Friday of the Month.

Friday 28th February. Join us at 10:00 AM for a few ends on the Cex Greens. Talent is admired; but not necessary. Complete the morning with some cool drinks or coffee in the Club. Cost \$5 per player. **Open to all Veterans and their family, friends, visiting Veterans et.al.**



Membership

Shara and Bob Simpson received their badges from V.P. Garry at our January General Meeting; while Sue Wilson congratulates Garry on his decision to dive into dance lessons.



Pat Parker from the Sawtell RSL Ladies Auxiliary attended our Sub-Branch (front centre)to explain to our Auxiliary members the process of making Hampers for raffles. The opportunities include: Easter, Christmas, Mother/Father Day Hampers etc.

SAS troops employed wrong Rules of Engagement

©The Saturday Paper

A little over a decade after Australian forces entered Afghanistan, soldiers on deployment there stopped using Australia's rules of engagement.

Interviews and documents have revealed that in 2012 – the year most of the alleged war crimes were committed by the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) – many Australian special forces soldiers began using international rules of engagement for which they were not trained and which they were not permitted to use. The use of these rules of engagement (ROE) may have contravened Australian law and may have resulted in the killing of a large number of unarmed Afghans who would not otherwise have been killed.

Australian ROE restricted the killing of "squirters" – that is, people trying to run away from compounds and areas of interest – and "spotters", a term given to Afghans who may have been observing Australian forces and may report back to insurgent positions.

Australian ROE also forbade targeted killings, with Australian forces obliged to attempt to capture targets when practicable.

There is now evidence SASR patrols used an interpretation of the International Security Assistance Force ROE in Afghanistan, which they believed allowed the killing of spotters and squirters and also allowed targeted killings.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was the multinational military taskforce established by the United Nations to support the new Afghan government.

ISAF had rules of engagement that were often more restrictive than Australian ROE overall when being strictly applied, but it seems the SASR may have used ISAF ROE selectively or incorrectly as a way to skirt some aspects of the Australian ROE.

Documents and interviews have also revealed that many officers working within Special Operations Command knew the SASR were not primarily using Australian ROE, despite orders to the contrary.

A starred officer investigating SASR killings in 2013 described the use of these ROE as a "systemic failure" in a document seen by *The Saturday Paper*, yet it seems that this incorrect use of ROE was not investigated by the office of the Inspector-General of the Defence Force or the assistant inspector-general, Paul Brereton.

The rules of engagement (ROE) that the SASR were obliged to primarily use was *Operation Slipper Rules of Engagement Serial Seven 2009*. These rules were a directive issued by then chief of the Defence Force Angus Houston and approved by the National Security Committee of Cabinet helmed by then prime minister Kevin Rudd.

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Before going to Afghanistan in 2012, and when they arrived at their base in Tarin Kowt, the SASR were briefed exclusively on Operation Slipper Rules of Engagement Serial Seven 2009. The SASR were also issued orders for opening fire (OFOF) cards explaining when they could and couldn't fire according to the ROE.

Throughout their time in country, the SASR were supported by legal officers who had themselves been briefed on Australian ROE. In the field, however, it seems some SASR patrols used ISAF ROE that, according to orders, were only allowed to be used when patrols were seconded to other international force elements and in other limited circumstances.

In 2012 the SASR used ISAF ROE 421, which dictated the use of lethal force against civilians, including unarmed civilians, who demonstrated hostile intent. Some SASR patrols defined hostile intent through their own understanding of insurgent techniques, tactics and procedures, not through an established or codified doctrine.

This effectively empowered soldiers to kill any unarmed Afghans who they thought showed hostile intent.

Evidence uncovered by *The Saturday Paper* has found some SASR patrols filed reports that admitted to killing Afghan locals who were simply witnessed fleeing when Australians approached.

These reports, which were to be sent back to Canberra, were returned to the soldiers by their officers, who asked that more descriptors be added to reflect Australian rules of engagement.

In the wake of some 2012 SASR killings, including those now being investigated as war crimes, "higher headquarters were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the opaque language in operational reporting", according to the "Inspector-General Australian Defence Force Afghanistan Inquiry Report", also known as the Brereton report.

As revealed by *The Saturday Paper* in August last year, Defence sought advice from the Attorney-General's Office on the legality of Australian rules of engagement after this opaque SASR reporting.

The advice only related to Australian ROE, however, with no investigation of the ISAF rules of engagement that the SASR had been using, or of the application of these rules.

There are many ways of reading the decision to only investigate Australian rules of engagement. A cynical reading could see the decision as an attempt to ensure that SASR operational reporting – which was often the only evidence left after missions – appeared legal regardless of what may have happened on the ground.

Killings by Australians soldiers who mistakenly used ISAF ROE are not believed to have been in the scope of the Brereton report. In fact, the report says it "does not consider it likely" that "there was any ambiguity in the minds of SOTG [Special Operations Task Groups] personnel about the primacy of Australian ROE".

Yet Major General Paul Brereton and his team should have known about the SASR's use of ISAF ROE and would also have had access to the report in which a starred officer complained about the widespread use of ISAF ROE by the SASR.

On April 29, 2013, then chief of the Defence Force David Hurley issued a 'Rules of Engagement (ROE) amplification order, further restricting those using Australian rules of engagement.

In the wake of killings that may have been authorised under ISAF ROE 421, which approved lethal engagement of civilians participating in hostilities, the ROE amplification issued a "Directive on the Lethal Engagement of Civilians Directly Participating in Hostilities Under OP SLIPPER Rules of Engagement". This amplification order further restricted the circumstances in which spotters and squirters could be killed. This amplification order would not have affected those using ISAF ROE.

It's believed that the SASR also used another ISAF ROE serial to facilitate targeted killings of Afghans on the Joint Prioritised Effects Lists (JPEL).

The JPELs were lists of the names of Afghans believed to be helping the insurgency or hindering the Afghan government. Every Afghan on those lists became an "objective" and was given their own codename.

One of the primary roles of the SASR was to hunt people on these lists in "kill/capture" missions.

The nature and nomenclature of these missions was denied by Defence while the war was being conducted, but it's now generally accepted that these missions were conducted and were a primary role of the SASR under a line of operation called Operation Tevara Sin.

These ISAF ROE believed to be used in JPEL killings were 429A, which allowed the targeting of "individuals ... resisting ISAF in its mission to facilitate the lawful extension of Afghan government", and 429B, which allowed the targeting of "Individuals ... challenging ISAF's complete and unimpeded freedom of movement".

ISAF ROE 429A and 429B may have allowed such targeted killings but their legality under Australian law has never been tested.

It seems likely some SASR patrols used these ISAF rules of engagement on kill-capture missions, with the use of these ROE not being reflected in reports written later.

This would be consistent with confused reporting about the killing of Tarin Kowt businessman Hayat Ustad, who was shot by the SASR in 2011.

Ustad was elevated to the JPEL in 2011 after it was discovered the shipping company he and his brothers ran had been bringing bomb-making components into Uruzgan from Kandahar.

He was killed close to the Australian base in Tarin Kowt on April 29, 2011. Locals interviewed by the ABC and sources within the military have said Ustad was unarmed when he was killed. This is at odds with a press release issued by the Department of Defence on April 30, 2011.

The release headline read: *"Insurgent commander killed attempting to shoot Australian troops"*. The release described the killing as an "Afghan National Police-led operation in Tarin Kot" against a "known insurgent leader" and declared that "the operation was conducted with strict adherence to Australian rules of engagement".

The operation was Australian led with the intelligence, approvals and action undertaken by Australia's Special Operations Task Group.

The mission was against someone who was not an insurgent leader, but a close business ally to Matiullah Khan, the warlord with whom the Australian special forces had chosen to partner.

Ustad did facilitate the logistics of bomb-making, however, and had been marked on the JPEL list as "Objective Heggitt".

If Ustad was attempting to fight a heavily armed special forces patrol – which was supported by armoured fighting vehicles, according to local sources – then Australian rules of engagement regarding self-defence would have allowed the killing. If he was not armed, and the Australian patrol had used a "throwdown" or weapon or radio used

to justify the legality of killing, then the killing would have been in contravention of Australian rules of engagement, though an interpretation of ISAF 429 may have allowed the killing.

If Ustad was unarmed and his killing had been authorised under ISAF 429, it's a particularly galling incident, as Ustad had been a test subject for a new ADF initiative

called the Rule of Law Cell. The cell had been created to instil faith in the Afghan justice

system, gain convictions against insurgents and curb the number of Afghans being killed by Australians.

The Department of Defence was approached and said all ADF members were trained on the application of ROE. It also noted the IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry Report made clear that during the Afghanistan campaign there were several sets of ROE that applied to different tasks and geospatial sub-areas. Defence did not respond to some questions.

© This article was first published in the print edition of The Saturday Paper on February 1, 2025 as "Kill switch".

Independent Senator Jacqui Lambie has issued a withering take-down of exdefence force chief Angus Campbell after he received a plum diplomatic posting despite overseeing one of the most scandal-plagued eras in ADF history.

Ms Lambie lampooned the appointment of Mr Campbell as Australia's ambassador to Belgium, based in Luxembourg.

The appointment follows Mr Campbell stepping down as the boss of the Australian Defence Force in November after a six-year stint mired in controversy and derided by veteran groups.

Writing in a newspaper column, Ms Lambie, a former army corporal, said Mr Campbell was on the "longest winning streak in history".

"This is a man who was in positions of very senior command, including the highest position of chief of the defence force, when much of the worst defence abuse and systemic weaponisation of administrative processes took place," she wrote.

(Hmmm ... ed.)

To all our RSL friends and supporters

The Lithgow Small Arms Factory supplied our diggers through two world wars and other campaigns, and now we need your help to save our iconic volunteer-run museum. Right now, we need as many signatures as possible on two petitions to ensure action from politicians and French multinational Thales Group. Please access the NSW

Parliamentary Petition (NSW residents only)

Asks politicians to facilitate site ownership for the Museum.

You can access this petition via: 'Facilitate Site Ownership for the Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum.'

- ✓ You can access the petition: Secure the Future of Lithgow Small Arms Factory museum
- ✓ Please take a moment to sign and share the petitions. Together, we can save this vital piece of our defence heritage.

✓ Visit: *https://sites.google.com/view/savelithgowsafm/home* for more info.

'This is a precious piece of Australian history; it must be saved permanently!'

Lithgow Small Arms Factory Museum. www.lithgowsafmuseum.org.au (28 Jan 2025) **DEFENCE AND VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY OPEN FOR FEEDBACK**

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide made it abundantly clear that more needs to be done to support the mental health and wellbeing of Defence personnel, veterans and families.

Improving the supports available and making them more effective is a key priority for the Albanese Government, and that's why we want to hear from you.

A draft of the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been released

for public feedback.

This draft Strategy has been shaped by consultation with permanent and reserve Australian Defence Force members, mental health experts, veterans and families, to understand some of the unique issues faced in the Defence and veteran community.

Now we want to hear from you.

We know we cannot afford inaction or delay, and want to be sure that we, as a nation, are best supporting those who put their lives on the line for us every day.

The goal is to foster a culture of proactive wellbeing and mental health care in the Defence and veteran community and improve access to recovery support for those who need it. To

find out more and to have your say, visit the **Defence and Veteran Mental Health and** Wellbeing Strategy webpage. Consultation closes at 5:00 pm Friday 7 March 2025.

CORN CORNER

Paddy, the Irishman texts his wife....

"Mary, I'm just having one more pint with da lads, so I am. If I'm not home in 20 minutes, den read dis message again."

Finnigan says "My wife has a terrible habit of staying up 'til two o'clock in the morning. I can't break her out of it." Says his mate, Keenan "What da hell is she doin' up at dat toime of da mornin'?" "Waitin' for me to come home!", replies Finnigan.

- Why do melons have weddings? Because they cantaloupe!
- How many tickles does it take to get an octopus to laugh? Ten tickles.
- Why was the fraction worried about marrying the decimal? Because he had to convert.
- Why is the obtuse triangle always frustrated? Do whatever; it is never right.
- Why should you never trust a person writing on graph paper? He is plotting something.
- What do dentists call their Xrays? Tooth pics!

Felt uncomfortable driving into the cemetery. The gps blurted out you have reached your final destination.

Men don't have babies because God saw the way they handle a cold and knew the species would never survive.

During training exercises, the Lieutenant who was driving down a muddy back road encountered another car stuck in the mud with a red-faced Colonel at the wheel.

"Your car stuck, sir?" asked the Lieutenant as he pulled alongside. "Nope," replied the Colonel, coming over and handing him the keys. "Yours is."



sub-Branch News & Updates

Vale: John Edwin Cross, Army. DOD: 21st Jan 2025 Funeral: 1.00 PM Thu 30th Jan at Coffs Crematorioum. Coramba Road, Karangi. We will Remember them. Lest We Forget.

Next BBQ

Our next BBQ's are: Fri 15th August 2025 at Bunnings. Fri 7thNovember 2025 at Bunnings.

Volunteers required; please advise John Lloyd (0438 325 205) if vou're available.

Save The Date

WWII 80th Anniversary Charity Concert

by The Clarence Valley Orchestra Chorus.

Sat. 26th Apr 2025 at 2:00pm at Woolgoolga Sports Complex –

Solitary Islands Way.

More info as the date approaches.







RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

PADRE'S POST



WE REMEMBER OUR CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION AND TRADITION

When we think about help, it is wonderful to know that God cares and that He is always there to help. How important it is to ask Him for help. He has watched over us and kept us from harm and has given us the courage and strength to prevail even though some of us are feeling tired and others are worn out. I am reminded again of that word 'courage'. It comes from the French, through the Latin, meaning 'heart' – and it means strength of heart to face trouble and danger and to have that feeling of freedom as you bring help and comfort to others who are very distressed.

Recently I attended the meeting focusing on the medical, emotional and mental health conditions of those leaving military service. The role of psychology and psychiatry was highlighted overviewing differing conditions. Again, Ministry of Chaplin Padre was not mentioned even though mentioned at the previous meeting. From my Ministry I am convinced that many emotional problems are fundamentally spiritual where only the Lord can help and heal.

Consider:

 Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

- Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
- Apostle Paul said, ...Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,

present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I am mindful of the help and comfort members brought to others when they were in danger. In the same way I pray God's strength for those who feel weary – strength which God gives to enable each one to continue to endure....

Blessings – Padre Rev. Dr. Graham Whelan OAM



Member Clothing

The sub-Branch Committee has organised several items as part of our sub-Branch 'identity' and as part of the RSL NSW Branch.

The Committee has arranged for a local supplier to maintain and enhance the sub-Branch's connection with the Coffs Coast community.

Supplier: 'Wear It!' (Speak to Tanya)

Address: 1/21 Isles Drive, Coffs Harbour

Contact: Ph. 6652 8211

If you would like to obtain any items:

(to ensure correct sizing make your way to 'Wear It!' and try on some items.

order what you want with Tanya.

 $\boldsymbol{\varpi}$ let the office know that you have made an order.

o when it arrives, you can pay for it via the Secretary or Treasurer

We are now resourcing women's versions of these items.





L/S Shirt - Est. \$55.00



S/S Shirt - Est. \$53.00



L/S Rugby – Est. \$44.00



Jacket - \$133.00

s/s Polo - \$22.00

Lawn Care & Maintenance Services **Buying, Selling, Looking to Rent?** for Real Estate Needs. Contact Contact Chris Dooley at **Empire Lawn Care & Maintenance** M: 0429 073 192 Greg Renet (f) (in) (**O**) Licensed Real Estate Agent EMPIRE LAWN CARE 📥 & MAINTENANCE ℃ 0411 121 579 🔀 greg.renet@atrealty.com.au www.atrealty.com.au **Vehicle Body Repairs Health and Fitness HOYS ALLIED HEALTH + Wellness** MINOR DENTS AND SCRATCHES? Physiotherapy • Exercise Physiology • Give Lyle DENSTEN a ring on Dietetics & Nutrition Remedial Massage 0411 506 514. Occupational Therapy Core & Exercise Lyle is a Vietnam Veteran with a small motor Classes • Hydrotherapy • Radial Shock Wave vehicle repair hobby shop for his Veteran & Therapy Women's Health Vintage car maintenance activity that keeps him Visit: Coffs Harbour Jettv sane & happy. Lyle is more than happy to assist Shop 9, Jetty Village Shopping Centre with small scratches, dents & scrapes repairs for Coffs Harbour NSW 2450 our members. Call: 02 6652 7355 Online: hoyshealth.com.au **Motor Vehicles** A locally owned and operated company, committed to the Coffs Coast Community 🗩 НҮППАІ TPI/Korean War Veterans can receive a National Fleet Discount on all New Hyundai vehicles. Coffs Harbour Hyundai call us on: 02 6652 1933 192-196 Orlando Street, Coffs Harbour Coffsharbourhyundai.com.au myclub



Canto