

**THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
A.B.N. 63 008 488 097**

STANDING POLICY

1. VETERANS AFFAIRS MATTERS

1.1 RSL EXPECTATIONS

a. Provision of Benefits

The RSL expects that the Australian Government will provide compensation, income support (when necessary), medical treatment and rehabilitation to all members and ex-members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) whose service has been the cause of disablement. In addition, income support should be provided on the basis of age to qualified veterans regardless of disablement.

b. Quality of Benefits

Bearing in mind the nature of military service, the Government should maintain the present policy of ensuring that veterans' benefits are more generous than those granted to civilian employees.

c. Recognition of Warlike and Non-Warlike Service

The RSL firmly believes that all veterans should receive like benefits for like disabilities. However, it also believes that warlike and non-warlike service should attract additional benefits as follows:

- i. Warlike service should be rewarded by eligibility for the Service Pension; by the right to have determination of causation of disabilities based on the reasonable hypothesis degree of proof; and the provision of a gold health card on reaching the age of 70 years.
- ii. Non-warlike service should attract the balance of probabilities degree of proof.

d. Compensation

It is the RSL view that compensation should be a combination of two elements. The first is to compensate for the loss of lifestyle caused by medical impairment which does not necessarily lead to an inability to work. This is sometimes referred to as compensation for pain and suffering. The other is compensation for partial or complete inability to work. In modern compensation schemes, the first element is usually paid as a lump sum and the RSL is of the view that recipients should have the option of a lump sum or fortnightly payments. At least the first element of compensation should not incur income tax, no matter how it is paid.

e. **Appeals**

An appeal system must exist whereby all decisions made under legislation can be appealed. The RSL holds the strong view that the Veterans Review Board (VRB) should be retained at least to hear cases where warlike and non-warlike service is involved. In addition, all appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) should be supported by Legal Aid.

f. **Counting Disability Pensions As Income**

The RSL agrees that income support pensions, paid either by DVA or Centrelink, should be means tested. Under the present system only those with warlike service have the privilege of not having their disability pensions counted as income when the means test is applied. The RSL is strongly of the view that no disability pensions should be counted as income when the means test is applied.

g. **Veterans with Special Needs**

i. **World War II Veterans**

World War II Veterans are now well into old age and have special needs associated with the aged. The existing Home Care programme is most helpful and needs to be managed generously. Other programmes for aged veterans would have full RSL support.

ii. **Vietnam Veterans**

Vietnam Veterans have special needs because of the unique nature of the Vietnam War. There are a number of existing programmes designed largely to assist Vietnam veterans. These should be maintained and others devised as special needs arise. Particular recognition is required of the children and other descendants of these veterans.

iii. **Other Conflicts/Peacekeeping and Peacemaking Veterans**

The Special needs of these veterans should be maintained and others devised as further needs arise. Particular recognition is required of the children and other descendants of these veterans.

h. **Peacetime Service**

Serving Personnel who incur injury or disability as a consequence of their service need to have their special needs recognised and addressed. In some cases these special needs will not emerge until later in the veteran's life.

1.2 COPING WITH FAULTS IN THE SYSTEM

a. **Detecting Faults**

In a system as complicated as the present veterans affairs process, faults and inequities are bound to occur from time to time and it is important that the RSL identifies these as quickly as possible and seeks their correction. With the introduction of the MRCA, despite all the care that has been taken to achieve an acceptable result, teething problems will appear and these must be addressed as early as possible.

b. **Correcting the Faults**

DVA has established a joint ESO/DVA Working Party (called the Operational Working Party). The sole task of this working party is to investigate faults in the system and recommend corrections. The RSL is strongly represented on this body. In the first instance detected faults should be referred to the Working Party for correction. However, National Congress has the ultimate duty to seek corrective changes to the system, including amendments to the legislation if necessary. To this end National Congress must, on an annual basis, identify existing faults to be taken up with the Government in the ensuing year. In the process, National Congress should list the faults it has identified and promulgate the list widely to RSL members.

2. SOCIAL SECURITY AND TAX

2.1 As to the Means Test

a. Service Pension

The League accepts that the Service Pension is income support and will continue to be means tested. However, we believe that it should continue to be available at Aged 60 for those with Qualifying Service.

b. Indexation of Basic Income Limits

That the amount of allowed income permitted for the purpose of determining eligibility for Service Pension purposes be indexed in the same way and to the same extent proportionally as the pension rate itself.

c. Benefits

That when military pensions and war widows pensions are increased and result in income tested pensions being reduced, that fringe benefits including medical and hospital care continue to persons who had previously received them.

2.2 The Aged Persons Homes Act

a. Investigate Financial Assistance

That financial assistance from the Commonwealth and State Governments be provided to those RSL organisations developing housing schemes for aged ex-servicemen and women.

b. Priority for Funding

That veterans continue to be recognised as a special needs group, and that one factor in assessing the accreditation of aged care facilities be based on their demonstrated response to meeting the special needs of veterans.

2.3 Income Tax

a. That dependants' allowances be exempt in determining concessional allowances.

b. That a pension allowance paid to a dependant of a Service Pensioner not be taken into account as separate net income in determining the allowable concessional allowances for that dependant for income tax purposes.

2.4 General

a. Reduced Rate Telephone Connection - Means Tested Pensioners

That telephone connections, joining, installation or transfer fees, be made available to means tested pensioners at a reduced rate.

3. **DEFENCE SERVICE HOMES**

3.1 **General**

a. **Loans**

That serving personnel have access to a Defence Service Homes (DSH) housing loan of not less than \$150,000 after two years continuous service.

b. **Transfer of Loan**

That when a DSH loan borrower is transferred in the course of his employment or for health reasons, he or she have the right to transfer the balance of the mortgage to a new residence.

c. **Mortgages**

That eligible persons have the right to obtain a DSH loan for the purpose of discharging an existing mortgage.

4. **PREFERENCE IN EMPLOYMENT**

4.1 **Disabled in Public Service**

That where a member of the permanent or reserve forces suffers a disability or illness incurred during or by virtue of his service and such disability or illness adversely affects his rehabilitation, the Commonwealth Government accept the responsibility of his rehabilitation and further, if such a member can be employed and seeks employment as a permanent officer of the Commonwealth Public Service, his appointment be in accordance with the same conditions as an employee under the Public Service Act.

5. **THE LEAGUE**

5.1 **World Peace**

That the League take all practical measures to promote World Peace.

Explanatory Statement -

Whilst the absence of armed conflict is an essential pre-requisite for a state of peace to exist, in the League's view it is the right of the people of each sovereign power to determine and conduct their internal and external affairs free from domination by another power. This embraces the right of those people to defend that freedom.

5.2 **Australian Youth**

That the League develop and maintain programs directed at Australian youth, designed on the principles and practices of good citizenship. Standing Policy Section 12 provides the League's detailed policy on youth.

5.3 **International Veterans' Conferences**

That the League supports and attends veterans' conferences of other nations, particularly those of fellow members of the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League.

5.4 **Use of Australian Flag by the League**

That the Australian National Flag depicted in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Flags Act 1953 be used throughout the League as widely as possible.

5.5 **Approach To Government Departments**

That at the discretion of the National President or the National Secretary, copies of letters from National Headquarters to Federal Ministers on League matters be forwarded to the Shadow Minister and members of Federal Parliament as considered appropriate.

5.6 **Membership**

That determined membership drives among younger ex-service and serving personnel be undertaken.

5.7 **Overseas Veterans**

That the League supports the establishment of ex-service organisations and RSL Sub-Branches in countries in our region for the purpose of mutual benefits.

5.8 **Standing Committees**

- a. **National Congress Agenda Committee.** There will be a National Congress Agenda Committee comprising the Deputy National President and National Secretary. The Agenda Committee may also recommend any rewording or consolidation of motions submitted in order to improve clarity and reduce ambiguity, while ensuring that the intent of the motion is not altered.
- b. **Standing Policy Review Committee.** The National Secretary will convene a National Standing Policy Review Committee from time to time, comprising two State Branch Presidents and a State Branch Secretary for the purpose of reviewing the appropriateness of Standing Policy. Recommendations from this Committee will be referred to the next National Congress.
- c. **Membership Forum.** There will be a National Membership Forum to consider all issues related to recruitment, retention, and the provision of member benefits.

5.9 **League Ceremonial**

That when marching, the salute may be given by placing the hat or hand over the left breast. At RSL meetings or gatherings the salute to the fallen shall be given standing at attention with head bowed.

6. ANZAC, COMMEMORATION, CEREMONIAL AND MEMORIALS

6.1 National Day of Commemoration

The League holds that ANZAC Day is Australia's National Day of Commemoration for those who have paid the supreme sacrifice and should always be commemorated on 25 April each year and on no other day.

On ANZAC Day the League salutes not only the spirit of the ANZAC but in paying tribute to them and all others involved in armed conflict for our nation, upholds their finest qualities of courage, endurance and mateship.

Due to the special significance of ANZAC Day to many Australians, members of the workforce, other than essential services, should be free to exercise their right to attend commemoration ceremonies and not be compelled to work.

6.2 Wreath Laying – Former Enemy Nationals

The League believes that there should be no objection to wreath laying by representatives of former enemy nations.

6.3 Use of the word 'ANZAC'

All applications by any of the organisations or bodies of the League to use the word 'ANZAC' should be addressed to the responsible Federal Minister who may, subject to the Protection of the word 'ANZAC' Regulations, give approval. Use of this word in the absence of such approval is prohibited.

6.4 Other National Days

The League encourages the Australian State, Territory and Local Governments to declare that two minutes silence be observed at 11.00am on 11 November each year in promoting a better understanding of the significance of Remembrance Day.

The League believes that Australia Day should be celebrated on 26 January each year.

6.5 The National Flag

The flag is part of our history and National Heritage and the League can see no compelling reason to alter the Australian National Flag as depicted in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Flags Act 1953 as in force on September 12, 1983.

The Australian National Flag should be flown each working day, on all buildings owned or occupied by Federal, State or Local Governments and their instrumentalities in Australia, and that private schools be encouraged to follow suit. All RSL buildings shall fly the Australian National Flag.

6.6 **National Flags Generally**

The League continues to seek to have the Australian Government amend the Flags Act 1953 to provide that the wilful desecration of any flags or ensigns referred to in the Act and the flags or ensigns of any other nation, be a criminal offence.

6.7 **Australian War Memorial**

The League believes that the Australian Government has a responsibility to ensure that the Australian War Memorial is funded so that at all times the buildings, its facilities, exhibits, stored material and archives are relevant, properly presented and adequately maintained.

6.8 **War Memorials Generally**

The League believes that to deface or wilfully damage a War Memorial be considered a criminal offence.

6.9 **Commonwealth of Nations**

The League opposes any move to sever Australia's membership of the Commonwealth of Nations.

6.10 **Pledge of Allegiance**

Members of the RSL declare at their Annual General Meeting a pledge of allegiance as follows:

“I (name of member) do hereby swear allegiance to the Commonwealth of Australia and its people and do hereby subscribe to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Constitution of the Returned & Services League of Australia”.

6.11 **Allied Forces**

That the League accept the detail of DVA General Orders – Service Pension, under the VEA, for the purpose of identification of Allied Forces. This should be used in determining eligibility to participate in ANZAC Day marches and other activities controlled by the League. Schedule 1 refers.

7. DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

7.1 Preamble

The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance. The Returned & Services League of Australia gives substance to these words by active ongoing oversight of all matters influencing or likely to influence Australia's immediate and future national security. The RSL National Defence Committee provides the National President and Executive with advice about all national defence and national security matters and assists the National President and Executive in representing the RSL perspective to the Federal Parliament and to the Australian community.

7.2 Standing RSL Policy on National Defence and Security

- a. This is formulated on the basis that the ability of the RSL to affect national defence and security issues rests on the willingness of Australian governments and Ministers to accept carefully targeted, well substantiated advocacy put forward on behalf of the RSL National Executive and the members of the League.
- b. The policy relies on fundamental national defence and security considerations the more important of which are:
 - i. Australia's ability to defend itself and its people from external threats relies on the nation remaining economically strong with its technologically aware, well trained and educated workforce retaining the potential to create the wealth needed to sustain an effective national security organisation and defence force.
 - ii. Australia's ability to maintain national cohesion and internal stability depends substantially on pride in citizenship, the determination of Australians to protect their way of life and democratically elected form of governance; and their willingness to support the defence of their country against external threats.
 - iii. The security of the nation is the prime responsibility of each Australian government requiring the maintenance of a standing defence force and other national security agencies complemented by efforts to foster and develop effective diplomatic, trade and national security relations with many other nations including allies and the less wealthy and more densely populated states in South East Asia and the Pacific.
 - iv. The ongoing maintenance of robust and effective security alliances between Australia and allied or friendly states.
 - v. Continued international recognition of the authority of the United Nations Security Council to pass resolutions authorising a wide variety of actions against member nations including the use of armed force.

- vi. The near certainty of an unpredictable global security outlook for the foreseeable future due to ongoing disagreements about resources, trade barriers, nuclear proliferation, global warming, use of the seas and air space, differing ideologies and entrenched religious beliefs.
- c. The RSL policy on national security is:
- i. Unequivocal support for a fully professional Australian Defence Force capable of operations in high intensity warfare with technologically advanced, fully integrated land, sea and air forces supported by fully effective logistic support, communications, information technology and intelligence assets. These forces must be able to deploy anywhere in the world, either independently or in conjunction with UN, US or other allied forces.
 - ii. Promotion of the requirement for the nation to maintain fully effective and highly professional diplomatic, trade, and internal and external security agencies and for the work of these organisations to be effectively and efficiently coordinated with the activities of the Australian Defence Force and the nation's intelligence agencies
 - iii. Advocacy of the essential need for Australian governments to consistently and adequately fund and appropriately man the Australian Defence Force including ensuring its combatant equipment is fully compatible and interoperable with equipment deployed for high intensity warfare by Australia's major allies.
 - iv. Promotion of the need for Australian Defence Force major equipment and conflict given that armed forces structured, trained and equipped for low level contingencies and peace keeping operations cannot be used in full scale warfare. This must be done without losing our well established skills in low level operations such as counter-insurgency and peace-keeping.
 - v. Ongoing advocacy to members of Federal Parliament and the Australian people of the need for a fully effective national security organisation and a fully capable Australian Defence Force.
 - vi. The maintenance of close high level links with Australian governments and Federal Ministers to give carefully targeted and well substantiated RSL advice about national security policy reviews and major defence force equipment acquisitions the best chance of acceptance.
 - vii. Promotion of the national security benefits of maintaining viable Australian defence industries and research establishments.
 - viii. Unequivocal support for all Australian Defence Force personnel deployed on operations.

- ix. The continued application of a politically neutral approach about national security matters.
 - x. Support for involvement of elements of the Australian Defence Force in operations authorised by resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.
- d. The RSL also acknowledges that by virtue of its war fighting capabilities, deploying elements of the ADF to use its inherent skills and equipment for emergency management and support tasks in times of national or international natural disasters, is a valid use of the capacity of all three Services.

8. **CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

The RSL considers that:

- a. the Commonwealth Government should recognise the special nature of ADF service by the provision of purpose-designed conditions of service;
- b. the Commonwealth Government should ensure that service salaries and allowances keep pace with community standards as well as reflecting the unique nature of ADF service;
- c. the indexation of all components of Military Superannuation under the DFRDB and MSBS schemes be calculated with reference to both the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Male Total Average Weekly Earnings.
- d. the League should influence decision making on conditions of service by active engagement with the Commonwealth Government, Opposition, Department of Defence and the ADF;
- e. the League should ensure that conditions of service deliberations are applied to both Regular and Reserve components of the ADF where applicable and appropriate; and
- f. the League should retain its involvement in the consideration of issues before the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal.

9. SECURITY

9.1 Security

a. **Treasonable Acts**

If the ADF is engaged in any armed conflict or the imminent possibility exists, the League would condemn any person, corporation, association or organisation found to be supporting the persons or regime with which the Forces are in armed conflict.

b. **Terrorist Activities**

The League recognises that terrorism has been used as a weapon throughout history.

An act or action towards our people and/or our Nation which causes or threatens to cause death, personal injury or damage to property, and is designed to influence a government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and is carried out for the purpose of advancing a political, ideological, ethnic or similar cause, is deemed to be an act of terrorism deserving punishment to the full extent of the law. Australia's law makers are expected to maintain penalties for such acts which are a clear deterrent and reflect the harshest punishments allowed under our system of law. Specific laws to control terrorism must accommodate an appropriate balance between the management of this threat within the community and the preservation of the hard won freedoms that we enjoy.

9.2 **Subversive Organisations**

The League is opposed to those organisations that are inimical to Australia's accepted value system, or which undermine the rule of law.

10. **POPULATION AND IMMIGRATION**

10.1 **Population**

The League believes that it should maintain a watching brief on matters of population and immigration which may have a direct effect on the development of Australia as a cohesive society and comment on issues where it considers necessary.

10.2 **Immigration Philosophy**

Australia's immigration policies should aim to maintain the planned development of the nation and the enhancement and cultural development of the Australian people. The criteria for all new immigrants should be as follows:

- a. The ability of newcomers to make a positive contribution to the development of Australia.
- b. Display a willingness to adapt to the Australian way of life, to adopt Australian values and obey the laws of the nation.
- c. Seek Australian Citizenship and accept all of its responsibilities.

The League has concerns about dual citizenship in so far as it may cause divided loyalties.

The League supports the concept of an Australian Citizenship Test. Citizenship should not be granted lightly and it is expected that those seeking to become citizens demonstrate a basic level of understanding of our language, culture and values.

10.3 **Non genuine Refugees and Illegal Residents**

The League believes that those who illegally enter Australia and are not accepted as refugees, and those who illegally remain in Australia, should not have access to taxpayer funded legal aid.

10.4 **Family**

The League believes that the traditional Australian family is the base from which our nation developed and grew in strength and stature. It is the fundamental social and economic unit in Australia. The family provides family members with both personal freedom and collective purpose. It is crucial to maintaining stability in the Australian community, and inculcating in the young, loyalty to, and pride in the achievements of Australia.

The Family policy of the League draws together all matters which have a direct effect on the development of a cohesive society:

- a. Government policies should be directed towards enhancing the well-being and status of the Australian family unit;

- b. The League calls on Governments to acknowledge the existence of a core of cultural and traditional values which are shared by the majority of Australians and include the concept of a traditional family.
- c. The League calls on the people of Australia to join with it in urging all Governments to provide the measures which protect and enhance the well-being and status of the traditional family unit.
- d. The League accepts that Australia should be a compassionate society and calls upon all Governments to give high priority to the provision of financial and other support to traditional Australian families and the victims of broken marriages.

11. **EDUCATION**

11.1 **Australian History**

Australian History should be taught as a core subject in primary and secondary schools. It should include the unique contribution by Australians to the development of Parliamentary Democracy, the contributions which were made by Australia's Armed Services, and our volunteer tradition in the defence of liberty and democracy.

11.2 **Practical Politics and Citizenship**

All school students, at both primary and secondary levels, should be given practical instruction in Australian political democracy and in the duties and rights of free citizens. The League believes it has a direct role through our Sub-Branche in assisting local schools and communities in furthering this process.

12. AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

12.1 The Youth of Australia

Since 1916, the League has long supported the care and development of Australian youth. War veterans can rightly expect that new generations are brought to an understanding of their sacrifice and service in defence of the nation and the values they strived to defend – the “ANZAC values” of courage, mateship, determination, humour and ingenuity.

To this end the League has adopted this charter, which is little changed from the original adopted in 1916.

THE RSL CHARTER ON AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

The Returned & Services League of Australia believes that the future well being and prosperity of this country depends upon sound democratic governance. This must include the nurturing of the Youth of Australia to ensure that the strength, vitality and security of our Nation is preserved and enhanced.

Youth must be accepted as a most important section of our society and given the respect, attention and encouragement to allow each individual to develop to his or her potential and ability. The League acknowledges that young people have rights and responsibilities as citizens to participate in community affairs and play a constructive role in society.

To this end, all youth must have a right to an education and upbringing that will provide them with the best opportunities to achieve their aims in life. This education must include a sound understanding of Australia’s political and social structure, origins and history and aimed at promoting a strong national identity. This education should also engender in youth a respect for, and understanding of themselves and others in society and an acceptance of their own responsibility as part of that society.

To further this Charter the League should look for opportunities at all levels within the RSL and in local communities to originate, support and encourage youth activities which espouse these values.

To further this Charter, the League has agreed on certain objectives and programs to give them effect. It calls on all Branches and Sub-Branchees to assist in this worthy endeavour as an investment in Australia’s future.

12.2 Objectives

- a. **Promoting pride in and loyalty to the nation.** This should be fostered through:
 - i. promoting respect for national symbols, honours and awards. Flag raising ceremonies and singing of the national anthem should be a part of primary education;
 - ii. teaching of Australian history. This should be a core subject during primary and secondary education and should include the origins of Australia as a nation, and the part played by the ADF in its defence; and
 - iii. teaching in practical politics and citizenship. This should be a core subject during primary and secondary education that traces the development of our national constitution from our British and colonial heritage and gives practical training in political democracy and in the duties and rights of citizens.

- b. **Inculcating shared community values.** This relates especially to the ANZAC values. They will be fostered in the teaching of Australian history but can be further developed through:
 - i. participation of young Australians in ANZAC Day ceremonies, where practicable, in a meaningful and structured way;
 - ii. commemorating the memory of Australian servicemen and women. Children should be encouraged to learn of the experiences of at least some individuals who need not necessarily be relatives; and
 - iii. visits to the Australian War Memorial, local memorials and museums.

- c. **Promoting service in the ADF.** This can be fostered through:
 - i. encouraging service in the ADF Cadets and local Reserve units;
 - ii. providing an understanding of Service life to young people; and
 - iii. positive support to currently serving ADF members and their families.

12.3 Programs

- a. **Assistance to local ADF Cadet Units.**

This is given priority as a National RSL program. All Sub-Branches which have an ADF Cadet unit in their area are encouraged to contact and maintain liaison with those units. Practical assistance can be provided through assisting regional units, prize giving and encouragement of individuals.

b. **Remembrance – RSL Community Link.**

Sub-Branches are asked to encourage younger children to honour and respect the memory of a deceased serviceman or woman. Where practicable, Sub-Branches are encouraged to adopt the nationally endorsed program – RSL Community Link. Details of the RSL Community Link program are set out in the program Handbook.

c. **Youth Clubs.**

Sub-Branches are encouraged, where resources permit, to sponsor or assist youth clubs in the community. Where practical assistance is not possible, the work of such clubs could be encouraged.

d. **Youth Sports Activities.**

Sub-Branches are encouraged to sponsor or assist in youth activities in the community. “Lest We Forget” Runs on a Sunday near ANZAC Day are recommended. Junior sporting membership in RSL Clubs is to be welcomed.

e. **“The RSL War on Drugs”.**

Sub-Branches are encouraged to lend their weight in the local community to efforts to prevent the use of illicit drugs. Practical measures might include support for Life Education Australia, and education programs promoted by Drug Free Australia.

g. **History Competitions.**

The RSL supports the Government’s National Simpson Prize awards. Branches and Sub-Branches are encouraged to promote or assist in history competitions for school children in their communities, especially those which deal with Australia’s experience in war.

13. GENERAL STANDING POLICY ON VARIOUS MATTERS

13.1 Foreign Investment

- a. That all Australians be aware of:
 - i. the extent of foreign control which gives foreigners the potential to make decisions concerning Australia's economic future; and
 - ii. the magnitude and composition of foreign investment in Australia.
- b. The League believes that the Australian Government should give the Foreign Investment Review Board responsibility for maintaining a register of all foreign owned land and business in Australia.

13.2 Acquisition of Land

That proper compensation should be paid to owners whose land is being compulsorily acquired.

13.3 Drugs

- a. The League recognises the detrimental effects on Australian Society of the import, production, sale and use of illegal drugs.
- b. Consequently the League believes there should be no leniency in the application of the law in respect to those found to profit from drugs or the use of drugs.
- c. The League recognises that there is merit in the policy of 'harm minimisation' but that this should be undertaken within a framework of 'harm prevention'.
- d. The League has an effective partnership with Drug Free Australia and encourages Branches and Sub-Branched to become directly engaged in DFA's local programs.

13.4 The Australian People

That all Australians are equal. There is to be no discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic background or sex.

13.5 Identification of Adult Australian Citizens

That the Federal Government be requested to introduce a form of identity card for all Australian citizens over the age of 16 years. In view of the present and developing international situation and terrorist dangers, this is imperative to our maintenance of security.

13.6 **Australian Government**

That the League supports debate in the Australian Community on the issue of Australia becoming a Republic.

13.7 **Same-Sex Relationships**

The League recognises that for more than ten years, Defence has successfully managed the presence of homosexuals and transsexuals in the Defence Force through appropriate gender-neutral anti-harassment policies.

The League also recognises and accepts that in-service entitlements pertaining to accommodation, removals, leave and leave travel are now extended to same-sex partners of servicemen and women as a gender-neutral extension of prevailing policies for recognised de-facto couples.

13.8 **Nuclear Energy**

a. **Introduction**

The RSL National Congress of 2006 referred Item 2.5.9. “That the RSL consider adopting an RSL Policy on Nuclear Energy” to the RSL National Defence Committee.

b. **Discussion**

There are three main ways in which nuclear energy is harnessed:

- i. To produce nuclear weapons.
- ii. To power steam turbines for the production of electricity for civil use.
- iii. To power steam turbines for the production of motive power for ships including warships and submarines.

c. **Nuclear Weapons**

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which entered into force in March 1970.

The aim of this treaty is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. By signing the treaty Australia agreed not to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

The RSL:

- i. Supports the aims of the United Nations Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970.
- ii. Believes that there is no present justification for Australia developing or acquiring nuclear weapons.

d. **Nuclear Energy for the Production of Electricity**

As at August 2006 there were 422 nuclear powered power (NPP) stations in the world in 30 different countries with 27 more under construction. The largest NPP station is at Chooz, France where two reactors produce a total of 2910 MW. 17% of the world's electricity is produced by NPP stations with the largest user being France with 75% of its power met from nuclear sources.

For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the need to reduce the environmental impact of fossil fuelled power stations, the number of NPP stations continues to increase.

The generally agreed reasons for opposing the construction of NPP are that:

- i. They are more expensive to construct, operate and maintain than fossil fuel powered power stations;
- ii. The world has yet to decide upon an acceptable method of dealing with the nuclear waste generated by NPP as a by-product.

The economic comparison between operating fossil fuel powered power stations and NPP favours the former because, to date, no cost has been attached to the environmental impact of these facilities. The Australian government has resurrected the debate about NPP because of the increasingly strident demand for the world's governments to take action to reduce the pollution of the earth's atmosphere caused by fossil fuelled power stations and other causes. It is also pertinent that Australia is the world's largest supplier of uranium, the primary source of nuclear energy.

The main reason that nuclear waste is a problem is that few governments have the political will to come to grips with a long term solution. Australia has vast open areas of geologically safe ground suitable for the establishment of a nuclear waste repository of sufficient size to take all of the world's nuclear waste. Australia should set itself up as a 'good citizen to the world' by establishing a nuclear waste repository in a secure facility remote from centres of population.

Other reasons given for opposing the construction of NPP are that:

- i. NPP can be used to produce material needed to construct nuclear weapons.
- ii. The risk of radioactive material escaping into the atmosphere from NPP is seen as too high.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has a UN mandate to inspect and report on all NPP to ensure that they are not being used for the production of material able to be used in the production of nuclear

weapons. Though this international monitoring system is imperfect (as North Korea and Iran show), it would be given full access to any Australian NPP thereby ensuring Australia did not produce material for nuclear weapons.

Sound engineering practice and rigorous maintenance and safety precautions have lessened the risk of radiation escaping from NPP since the malfunctions at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. Provided these standards are maintained and improved, the risks associated with NPP should continue to diminish.

Despite claims to the contrary, a small Australian research nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights, Sydney has operated safely for decades.

NPP are accepted as a fact of life by the bulk of the population in many nations.

For these reasons the RSL supports the establishment of NPP in Australia.

e. **Nuclear Energy for Ship Propulsion**

Since the submarine USS Nautilus reported on 17 January 1955 that it was “underway on nuclear power”, nuclear power has been used to propel warships and other vessels from several nations, including the USA, Russia, Great Britain and France.

As at December 2006 there were over 150 ships powered by more than 220 small nuclear reactors and more than 12,000 reactor years of marine operation have been accumulated.

Most of these vessels are submarines but they range from icebreakers to aircraft carriers. The Russian experience with nuclear powered Arctic ships had totalled 250 reactor years by 2003.

Nuclear power plants in ships have an exemplary safety record.

Nuclear power plants are the favoured method of propulsion for submarines for the following reasons:

- i. Conventionally powered submarines have to snort or surface to recharge their batteries thereby providing ‘detection’ opportunities. Nuclear powered submarines have no such need.
- ii. Nuclear powered submarines have the full range of speed available to them at all times whereas conventionally powered submarines are limited by the power stored in their batteries. This provides the nuclear powered submarine with a massive tactical advantage.

The strategic need for Australia to maintain a world class submarine force remains; and it would be unwise to presume that a conventionally powered submarine force will suffice in the future.

The development of an Australian nuclear industry for NPP would be the optimum time to concurrently develop and introduce Australian nuclear powered submarines.

For these reasons the RSL supports the development of Australian nuclear powered submarines.

f. **RSL Policy on Nuclear Energy**

The RSL supports the development of nuclear powered power stations in Australia and the development of Australian nuclear powered submarines.

The RSL supports the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and considers there is no present justification for Australia to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

14. AGED CARE IN THE VETERAN COMMUNITY

14.1 Preamble

The RSL recognises the special contribution of veterans and is committed to ensuring that veterans, their families and carers are supported to age with dignity, control and independence and are able to contribute to the community and enjoy the full benefits of citizenship.

14.2 Objectives

- a. That veterans are recognised by all levels of government as a ‘Special Needs Group’.
- b. That an RSL Aged Care Forum be established to review policy, develop implementation strategies and advise the National Veterans’ Affairs Committee on ageing issues.
- c. That aged veterans, their families and carers have access to a range of Services and accommodation that will support and enhance their control, independence, and dignity and are consistent with their preferences and needs.
- d. Acknowledge that aged care issues, including home, care, transport and personal growth require continuous planning ongoing co-ordination and periodic review.
- e. That aged veterans, their families and carers are provided with sufficient information to make an informed choice about future care.
- f. That the special needs and role of carers are recognised, and that they are given adequate support.
- g. That veterans are able to continue in old age to fully participate as citizens.
- h. That, in order to identify and priorities their needs, veterans, their families and carers will be consulted.
- i. That the need for intervention programs is identified and action taken to ensure their introduction, and that healthy ageing, wellness and prevention programs be strongly promoted.
- j. That veterans have access to individualized programs and services which will enable them to age in place.
- k. That veterans are not disadvantaged because of financial limitations, and financially disadvantaged veterans receive support to access appropriate accommodation, care and support services.
- l. That veterans, their families and carers who live in rural and remote areas are recognised as having additional needs.

- m. That governments and their bureaucracies acknowledge and plan for the growth of the numbers of aged in the veteran community.
- n. That aged care residential facilities and programs are maintained at a standard which, as a minimum will meet federal standards and accreditation requirements.
- o. That aged care organisations and establishments within, and supported by the RSL, be non-profit.

14.3 National Aged Care Forum

The RSL has established the RSL National Aged Care Forum to examine aged care issues, provide expert advice to the National Executive via National Veterans' Affairs Committee and to be a resource to State Branches and as appropriate inform, support and/or complement the role of wider forums.

Terms of Reference for this committee are:

Under the direction of and reporting to the RSL National Veterans' Affairs Committee to:

- a. Review and recommend RSL Standing Policy on Aged Care in the Veteran Community.
- b. Research and prepare comments and recommendations (proactive and reactive) to the National Veterans' Affairs Committee and State Branches and as appropriate to government and other bodies regarding aged care issues for the veteran community.
- c. Represent the RSL/veteran community on relevant aged care committees, task groups and other forums, in particular regarding the nature and delivery of services and quality of care.
- d. Represent the RSL/veteran community and actively participate in relevant aged care conferences and seminars to promote understanding of veterans' special needs and encourage best practice.
- e. Establish a network for consultation and sharing, distribution of information and experiences regarding aged care issues and for collecting information and other feedback from State Branches.
- f. Provide comment and recommendations on RSL motions prior to each State and National Congress and assist in submissions to government and other organisations on accepted resolutions.
- g. Identify particular groups within the RSL and/or wider ex service community who have needs that require specialized support and advocacy. For example accommodation for veterans' adult dependants with severe disabilities, and indigenous veterans.

- h. Promote and encourage best practice in the recruitment, training and support of volunteers who provide a range of RSL aged care welfare support activities for members of the veteran community.
- i. Prepare and review an Action Plan to establish priorities and measure outcomes of the NACF.