



RSL

Mount Barker
Sub Branch



Newsletter

February 2026

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They shall grow not old,
As we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun,
And in the morning,
We will remember them.

LEST WE FORGET

General Information

- 23 Hutchinson Street
MOUNT BARKER SA 5251
- ABN: 19 270 627 978
- **President— Ralph Strecker**
president@mountbarkerrsl.com.au
- **Secretary— Jenny Love**
secretary@mountbarkerrsl.com.au
- **Treasurer—Rod Cooper**
treasurer@mountbarkerrsl.com.au
- Web: mountbarkerrsl.com.au
- Phone: **0436 934 286**



I am deeply honoured and genuinely humbled to be elected President of the Sub-Branch. To be entrusted with this responsibility by people I respect so highly is something I do not take lightly. I must acknowledge Michael, who stepped into the role of President last year under unforeseen and challenging circumstances and was required to navigate very turbulent waters. Without his willingness to step forward and steady the ship, our Sub-Branch would likely be

in a very different position today. I sincerely thank Michael for his dedication, leadership, and genuine commitment to veterans and their families. Our Sub-Branch is stronger because of his service.

To the members who have placed their confidence in me—thank you. My approach to the Presidency is not to dictate, but to ensure the Sub-Branch operates within its legal framework, remains administratively and financially sound, and works toward our shared RSL goals. You, the members, set our direction; my role is to help steer the course. I am proud to represent the Sub-Branch publicly and will work hard to justify your trust. To those who may have voted differently, I hear you as well, and I am committed to being a President for all members. Please come and talk with me with your ideas and comments—let's be open and transparent but above all be fair and accepting.

Looking ahead, my focus will be on supporting veterans and their families, growing our membership—particularly by engaging younger veterans—strengthening our welfare and advocacy services, and continuing to build strong connections with our community. Our history, commemorations, and values remain the foundation of who we are and why we exist. We will face challenges, as every Sub-Branch does, but we also have great strengths: committed volunteers, passionate members, and a community that values the RSL. If we continue to work with unity and purpose, I am confident we can achieve much together.

I promise to lead with integrity, respect, and a steady hand, always putting the needs of veterans and their families first. I look forward to working with you all as we continue the proud legacy of the Mount Barker RSL Sub-Branch.

"You can get excited about the future. The past won't mind!"

~ Hillary DePiano



As we step into 2026, I'd like to thank members for their continued support and patience as our Sub-Branch moves into a new year with a newly elected Secretary.

While I am new to the role and still finding my feet, I have stepped into it with genuine commitment and a strong desire to serve the Sub-Branch to the best of my ability. I'm grateful for the guidance already offered by fellow committee members and thank you in advance for your understanding as I learn the ropes.

The year ahead will see a continued focus on improving our administrative processes, strengthening communication between committees and members, and ensuring information is shared clearly and consistently. Please keep an eye on your inboxes and newsletters, and don't hesitate to reach out if something needs clarification.

Our Sub-Branch is built on teamwork, patience, and mutual respect. With your support, I am confident that together we can continue to build on the solid foundations already in place and keep things running smoothly.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the Mount Barker RSL Sub-Branch, and I look forward to working with you throughout 2026.



From the Treasurer's desk, I'm pleased to report that the books are balanced, the bank account is behaving itself, and the calculator has once again earned a well-deserved rest. That said, I've discovered that being Treasurer is less about numbers and more about diplomacy—particularly when people approach with great enthusiasm and the famous words, "I've got an idea..."

Managing the finances of the Sub-Branch is a bit like running a household where everyone is helpful, well-intentioned, and completely convinced their expense is both essential and a bargain. I've learned that "it won't cost much," "we already have most of it," and "it'll pay for itself" are all phrases that require immediate translation into Treasurer-speak, followed by a long look at the budget and a deep sigh.

Rest assured, every dollar that comes through our doors is carefully tracked, cross-checked, and occasionally interrogated before being released. Fundraising money is guarded like buried treasure, utility bills are watched with suspicious intensity, and any receipt without a date, purpose, or explanation will trigger an investigation worthy of a crime drama.

Despite this, the numbers do tell a good story. Thanks to sensible spending, strong fundraising, and the generosity of our members and supporters, the Sub-Branch remains financially sound. The lights stay on, the events go ahead, and the welfare support continues—proof that teamwork, patience, and a very sharp pencil can work wonders.

In closing, I can confirm that the accounts balance, the auditors remain friendly, and while I may now instinctively flinch at the word "budget," it's all worth it knowing the Sub-Branch is in good financial shape...

"People say that money is not the key to happiness, but I always figured if you have enough money, you can have a key made."

~ Joan Rivers

More Than a Meeting Place

When people think of the RSL, many picture meetings, commemorations, and formal occasions. While those are important and remain at the heart of what we do, the Mount Barker RSL Sub-Branch is — and always has been — much more than a meeting place.

It is a place where stories are shared and understood without needing explanation. A place where friendships are formed across generations, service histories, and backgrounds. For some, it's somewhere to catch up over a cup of tea or a quiet drink; for others, it's a safe space where they know they belong.

Our Sub-Branch plays an important role in bringing people together — not just veterans, but families, volunteers, and members of the wider Mount Barker community. Whether it's through social activities, commemorations, fundraising events, or simply opening our doors, the RSL remains a place of connection, support, and mateship.

Importantly, it's also a place where people look out for one another. A friendly word, a shared laugh, or a quiet check-in can make more difference than we sometimes realise. These small moments are often what define who we are as an organisation.

As we move through 2026, let us continue to see the RSL not just as somewhere we attend, but as something we contribute to. Every conversation, every helping hand, and every show of support strengthens the fabric of our Sub-Branch.

Because at its core, the Mount Barker RSL is not just a building or a meeting — it is a community. And that is something worth valuing and protecting.

Veteran's Health—Looking After Ourselves and Each Other

Health is something we all think about differently, and for veterans it can mean far more than the aches and injuries that sometimes come with service. Veterans' health is about physical wellbeing, mental health, staying connected, and feeling supported — especially as life and circumstances change over time.

Many veterans pride themselves on resilience. Service life teaches us to push through, adapt, and get the job done. Those qualities are worth respecting. But just as important is recognising that looking after your health is not a weakness — it is a responsibility to yourself, your family, and your mates.

Health challenges don't always announce themselves loudly. Sometimes they show up quietly: poor sleep, ongoing pain, low motivation, isolation, or simply not feeling like yourself. Mental health, in particular, can be easy to overlook or dismiss. Yet it is just as important as physical health, and just as deserving of care and attention.

One of the greatest strengths of the RSL is the sense of connection it provides. The Mount Barker RSL Sub-Branch is more than a place to attend meetings or commemorations — it is a community. A place where shared experiences are understood, where conversations happen naturally, and where people can feel comfortable being themselves. Often, a simple chat, a shared laugh, or knowing someone has noticed you can make a significant difference.

Looking after your health doesn't require dramatic changes. Small, consistent steps matter. Staying active within your limits, keeping a routine, attending social activities, and maintaining connections all contribute to wellbeing. Equally important is looking out for one another — checking in on a mate, inviting someone along, or reaching out if something doesn't feel right.

It's also important to remember that support is available beyond our Sub-Branch, and accessing it is a sign of strength. Professional help, confidential conversations, and specialist veteran services exist to support veterans and their families through all stages of life.

If you are struggling — or if you are concerned about someone else — help is available. You don't have to carry things on your own, and you don't have to wait until things feel overwhelming.

The RSL has always been about mateship, care, and respect. By looking after our own health and supporting each other, we continue to honour those values in a very real and practical way.

Open Arms—24/7 Veterans & Families Counselling



1800 011 046



openarms.gov.au

Lifeline—24/7 crisis support for anyone experiencing emotional distress



13 11 14



lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue—Mental health information, support, and counselling



1300 22 4636



beyondblue.org.au

What's Happening at the Sub-Branch

Christmas Digger's Raffle—Done and Dusted for 2025

Our first Digger's Raffle is done and dusted, with first prize (BBQ donated by Harvey Norman) being won by none other than our illustrious Treasurer, Rod Cooper! If you are interested in viewing all the winners, a list is held by the Secretary.

As Rod had no need for the BBQ, he promptly donated it to the Sub-Branch to use at our BBQ fundraisers. Many thanks to Rod and Jeanette for this very kind and useful donation. After some effort assembling the box full of parts (lucky we have some Ikea building skills), it was christened at Aston Hills Shopping Centre on Saturday 17 January.

Chairlift to the second floor

After having succeeded in gaining some funding support from Mount Barker Council in support of the installation of a stairlift, all hopes were subsequently dashed when council inspectors rejected that concept of installing a stairlift on the current stairs. Apparently, the staircase is too narrow and we need a staircase over 1 metre wide (being that we are a commercial premises). So the committee is currently reviewing other options. All options are on the table and it will come down to cost, funding and viability. Watch this space but time will be our enemy with regard to obtaining quotes and drafting applications for separate and new funding..

Front Office Refurbishment

It was decided last year that the sub-branch needed to refurbish the front office. It was further decided that once completed and in order to gain an income stream, it would be advertised as an office space. There is already some interest, but if you know of any person or business that would like to lease some office space, then come see the committee.

The first order of business was the removal and refurbishment of the window. Andy attacked that with vigour before Christmas and is now mostly completed. He then started to look at the walls and even while looking at them, the plaster started to fall off in places. The wall around the window and around the old fire place were in the worst condition. After removing a significant amount of render/plaster, the focus moved to the floor. To say the floor was spongy was an understatement. Some older members were of the opinion that the building had a basement area that was originally accessed from this room by way of a trap door.

Andy and Ralph started the process of removing the carpet. No trap door was found—there was only a reasonably recent false floor. A couple of strategic cuts with a circular saw and it was found that the previous floor was still there although in quite poor condition. The decision was made to remove all the newer flooring and see if the original flooring could be salvaged and brought to life. After removing the updated floor panels a few things were discovered.

1. There was no trap door or access point to any kind of basement.
2. The original flooring was in very poor condition and to say it was unsafe would be an understatement.
3. There were little wood eating vermin noticed—not a major invasion, as yet!

Then the fun really began; removing the old floor boards. After a couple had been removed it was discovered there indeed was a basement and the ghosts were released. The room below is the same size as the room above with around a 2metre floor to ceiling space. Anyway, after all the floor boards were removed additional bearers were installed to adjust the levels and new floor panelling installed. The floor is now 38mm thick and as close to level as could reasonably be done. Certainly flat and safe!

Work is continuing, with end of February being the target completion date!

Bangka Island Massacre

The Bangka Island massacre stands as one of the most brutal war crimes committed against Australians during the Second World War. It occurred on 16 February 1942 on Bangka Island, off the eastern coast of Sumatra, during the chaotic collapse of Allied defenses following the rapid Japanese advance through Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. The massacre has since become emblematic of the extreme dangers faced by non-combatants in war, particularly medical personnel who were clearly identifiable and protected under international conventions.

After the fall of Singapore, a group of Australian Army nurses and wounded soldiers attempted to escape the advancing Japanese forces by sea. Their ship was attacked and sunk by Japanese aircraft, forcing survivors to swim ashore at Radji Beach on Bangka Island. Exhausted, injured, and without supplies, the survivors believed they would be treated as prisoners of war. Instead, they were rounded up by Japanese troops. Twenty-two Australian nurses, along with several British soldiers and civilian crew, were ordered to walk into the sea. Those men able to walk were taken to another location while the nurses and wounded remained at Radji Beach. When they reached waist depth, they were machine-gunned from behind. The wounded soldiers who remained on the beach, many unable to stand, were bayoneted and killed where they lay.

Remarkably, one nurse, Vivian Bullwinkel from Adelaide, survived despite being shot and seriously wounded. She pretended to be dead and later escaped into the jungle before eventually being recaptured. Bullwinkel endured more than three years as a prisoner of war under harsh conditions. During captivity she concealed the truth of the massacre, fearing reprisals against fellow prisoners if the story became known.

After the war, her testimony provided vital evidence of the atrocity and ensured that the massacre was formally documented. The Bangka Island massacre shocked the Australian public and remains a powerful symbol of sacrifice, courage, and loss. It serves as a lasting reminder of the human cost of war and the duty to remember those who were killed while caring for others in the darkest circumstances.

Before she died, Ms Bullwinkel confided that “most of” the nurses were “violated” before being shot, and that she’d wanted to reveal this but couldn’t—a secret, she said, that “tortured” her.



HMAS Voyager Disaster

The HMAS Voyager disaster stands as one of the most tragic peacetime events in the history of the Royal Australian Navy, claiming the lives of 82 sailors and leaving a deep and lasting impact on Australia's defence community. The disaster occurred on the night of 10 February 1964 during routine naval exercises off the coast of Jervis Bay, New South Wales.

HMAS Voyager, a Daring-class destroyer, was operating as a plane guard for the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne. As part of this role, Voyager was required to manoeuvre astern of the carrier to rescue aircrew should an aircraft crash during night flying operations. At approximately 8:56 pm, a catastrophic collision occurred when Voyager crossed the carrier's bow at close range. HMAS Melbourne struck the destroyer amidships, cutting it in two. The impact was devastating. Voyager's forward section sank almost immediately, while the stern remained afloat for a short time before also sinking. Despite swift and courageous rescue efforts by the crew of HMAS Melbourne and other nearby vessels, only 232 of the 314 men aboard Voyager survived. Many were trapped below decks, and the rapid flooding left little chance of escape. Acts of bravery during the rescue were later recognised, but the loss of life deeply shocked the nation.

In the aftermath, the disaster raised urgent questions about command decisions, navigation procedures, and communication between the two ships. Two Royal Commissions were convened to investigate the circumstances surrounding the collision. The first inquiry concluded that the fault lay primarily with Voyager's bridge team, while the second, held several years later, re-examined the evidence amid growing public concern. Although the findings were complex and controversial, the tragedy ultimately prompted significant changes to naval training, operational protocols, and bridge resource management within the Royal Australian Navy.

Beyond its procedural consequences, the HMAS Voyager disaster remains a solemn reminder of the dangers inherent in naval service, even outside of wartime. Memorials have been erected to honour those who lost their lives, and the event continues to be commemorated by the Navy and the broader Australian community. More than six decades later, the disaster endures as a powerful symbol of sacrifice, professionalism, and the enduring obligation to learn from tragedy to protect future generations of sailors.



BINGO at the RSL



- ✓ Every **Tuesday** at the RSL, in the downstairs dining area.
- ✓ Doors open at **12 midday**
- ✓ Eyes down at **1:00pm**
- ✓ 10 games plus a flyer game.
- ✓ Cash Prizes - Lucky Door Prize.
- ✓ We will always endeavour to have a snack available on the day at a very reasonable cost.
- ✓ Come along and bring your friends and neighbours for a fun afternoon.
- ✓ Scheduled to finish around **2:45pm**

WINNERS



Dinner Menu — February



Friday 6th of February

- ✓ Roast Pork, Vegetables and Gravy
- ✓ Cookies and Cream Cheesecake



Friday 13th of February

- ✓ Lasagne with Salad and Garlic Bread
- ✓ Fruit Salad and Icecream



Friday 20th of February

- ✓ Chicken Schnitzel with Gravy, Salad and Chips
- ✓ Warm Apple Pastries with Caramel Sauce and Whipped Cream



Friday 27th of February

- ✓ Fellowship night
- ✓ Pizza Night. \$10 per person. All welcome

Members are eligible for a FREE meal during the month of their Birthday!

Cost is: \$27.00 for members
\$27.00 for under 18yrs

\$30.00 for non-members
\$22.00 for children under 12yrs

Bookings are essential. Either in person or call/text **0436 934 286**.
Bookings must be made by 12 noon on the Wednesday prior.

Celebrate
MOTHER'S DAY

**2026 AT THE
MOUNT BARKER RSL**

Saturday, 9th May 2026 at 2:30pm

High Tea

Cost for Mothers:

Members – Free

Guests – TBA

Confirm Attendance by
Wednesday 6th of May

\$2 a ticket

Mother's Day Raffle

1st Prize

\$100 Spotlight Voucher

2nd Prize

\$50 Foodland Voucher

3rd Prize

\$25 Nairn Pharmacy Voucher

Hidden Word Search

H	C	E	H	F	P	C	O	U	N	T	R	Y	Q	Z	L	D	E	M	U	C	Y	D	I	E	F	L	A	G	X
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RSL
VETERAN
WELFARE
REMEMBRANCE
MEDAL
POPPY
SACRIFICE
VALOUR
ODE
SILENCE
DEFENCE
COUNTRY

MEMORIAL
LEGACY
FREEDOM
CENOTAPH
ANZAC
REMEMBER
LESTWEOFORGET
LEADERSHIP
SACRED
SUPPORT
MEMBERS
ENLIST

CHAPLAIN
ENSIGN
WREATH
CEREMONY
RANK
DEPLOYMENT
MATE
CARE
VICTORY
PEACE
COMMUNITY
ARMY

NAVY
AIRFORCE
UNIFORM
CAMARADERIE
AUSTRALIA
SILENCE
LASTPOST
FLAG
TRUST
COMMITMENT
BRAVERY
FORTITUDE

REUNION
DAWN
DUTY
HISTORY
MTBARKER
SALUTE
BUGLE
REGIMENT
SQUADRON
FLEET
ARMISTICE

Word
List

Harvey Norman

Mount Barker



Specsavers

NOVA

HAIR & BODY

Tim Adams

CLARE VALLEY

urbancellars

Woolworths



NAIRNE
COMMUNITY
PHARMACY



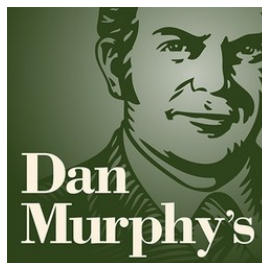
Mount Barker Central

Simply Style

Mount Barker



FROM THE FAMILY FARM
BEERENBERG
SINCE 1839



MBFC

Bakers Delight

STRAND
Strandbags Mt Barker



AstonHills
nail&beauty

THE Coffee Tin

Beacon
LIGHTING



About the RSL

We are Australia's largest ex-service organisation, founded in 1916 to support veterans and their families. Initially focused on repatriation and medical services for WW1 veterans, the RSL's mission has evolved to address the changing needs of each generation of servicemen and women.

Core Functions:

- Veteran Welfare
- Advocacy
- Commemoration
- Support for Families
- Camaraderie
- Public Education

Membership

We are always looking to bring new members into our group! If you know anyone that may be interested in joining us, please pass them our contact details, or even just give them this newsletter.

No doubt, there are many Veterans out there in the community that have not thought about joining their local RSL. There are many more community members that we would like to invite into our ranks as well. They just need to be aware that we are here!

We are here to provide a place for the Veteran community and members of the community in general to mix, relax and enjoy some like-minded company.

Change of Contact Details

We don't want to lose contact with members. So please let the Secretary know if you change your address, phone or email details.

Significant Dates

General Meetings	Committee Meetings	Morning Tea and Chat
Monday—2 Feb 2026 Monday— 2 Mar 2026 Monday— 6 Apr 2026	A decision was made last year that Committee Meetings would be called as deemed necessary.	Don't forget that the Sub-Branch hosts a Morning Tea every Wednesday morning at 10:00am. Light refreshments available for a small donation. This is open to everyone, so bring along a friend or neighbour!

On This Day	Event	Remarks
10 February 1964	Melbourne/Voyager Collision	82 Sailors from HMAS Voyager lost their lives.
14 February	National Servicemen Day	Recognising NASHO's
15 February 1942	Fall of Singapore	Leading to over 15,000 Australians becoming POW's
16 February 1942	Bangka Island Massacre	21 Australian Nurses murdered 60 Australian and British soldiers murdered Crew members from the Vyner Brooke murdered.
19 February 1942	Bombing of Darwin	Largest single attack on Australia.
24 February	National Day for War Animals	Remembering the animals that were taken to battlefields.
28 February	Sinking of HMAS Perth	Of 686 personnel on board, only 218 were eventually repatriated. The remainder were killed during, or soon after, the action, or died as POWs.



RSL-SA Application for Service Membership

I hereby apply to be admitted as a Service Member of the Returned & Services League of Australia and a member of the: _____ Sub-Branch.

Personal Details

Title: _____ Given Names: _____
Surname: _____
Honours / Awards / Decorations (Post Nominals): _____
Sex: _____ D.O.B: _____ Country of Birth: _____
Postal Address: _____
Suburb: _____ Post Code: _____ State / Country: _____
Phone(W): _____ (H): _____ (M): _____
Email: _____

Service Details (Please attach proof of service)

Service Number: _____ PM Keys Number: _____ Rank: _____
Service: ☐ Air Force ☐ Army ☐ Navy Type: ☐ Regular ☐ Reserve ☐ National Service ☐ Other
If Other: (Provide Details) _____
Date of Enlistment: _____ Discharge Certificate No (if applicable): _____
Date of Discharge: _____ Length of Service: _____ Years: _____ Months: _____
Campaign & Service Medals: _____

Theatres of Operations or Conflicts (Check all applicable)

☐ World War 2 ☐ Vietnam ☐ Peacekeeping ☐ Regular Forces ☐ East Timor
☐ Korea ☐ BCOF (Japan) ☐ Somalia ☐ Reserves / CMF ☐ Afghanistan
☐ Malayan Emergency ☐ Borneo Confrontation ☐ Gulf War / Kuwait ☐ National Service ☐ Iraq
Other: _____

Previous Membership Details (If applicable)

Previous Membership: ☐ Yes ☐ No Date first joined the League: _____
Badge number of previous membership: (if applicable) _____
State & Sub-Branch of previous membership: (if applicable) _____

Declaration and Agreement

☐ I declare that the above information is true and correct.
☐ I agree to uphold the Constitution of the League and its By-Laws

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____
Proposed By: _____ Seconded By: _____
Sub-Branch Member Sub-Branch Member
Accepted by Sub-Branch: _____ (Honorary Secretary) Date: _____

Privacy Statement

We will not use any of the information on this membership form without your specific permission in writing, other than to record you as a member of the League and will not pass that information to anyone outside the League.
ABN 19 219 796 904

October 2017



RSL-SA Application for Affiliate Membership

I hereby apply to be admitted as a Affiliate Member of the Returned & Services League of Australia and a member of the: _____ Sub-Branch.

Personal Details

Title: _____ Given Names: _____
Surname: _____
Sex: _____ D.O.B: _____ Country of Birth: _____
Postal Address: _____
Suburb: _____ Post Code: _____ State / Country: _____
Phone(W): _____ (H): _____ (M): _____
Email: _____

Are you related to a Service person ☐ Yes ☐ No
If "yes" please specify: Service Number: _____ Name: _____
Unit Served With: _____ Conflict: _____

Previous Membership Details (if applicable)

Previous Membership: ☐ Yes ☐ No Date first joined the League: _____
Badge number of previous membership: (if applicable) _____
State & Sub-Branch of previous membership: (if applicable) _____

Declaration and Agreement

☐ I declare that the above information is true and correct.
☐ I agree to uphold the Constitution of the League and its By-Laws

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____
Proposed By: _____ Seconded By: _____
Accepted by Sub-Branch: _____ (Honorary Secretary) _____ Date: _____
Sub-Branch Member Sub-Branch Member

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