



HISTORY OF THE RSL

The RSL was formed in June 1916 by soldiers returning from Gallipoli. Its aims were simple: to preserve the spirit of mateship formed amidst the carnage and horror of battle; to honour the memory of the fallen; and to help each other. The underlying philosophy of the League is mateship and this is as true now as when the League was first formed.

In 1916 there were no welfare services such as we know today, so the League committed itself to provide for the sick, wounded and needy among those who have served and their dependants including pensions, medical attention, homes and suitable employment. As a result, the RSL was instrumental in the creation of the medical repatriation system and the introduction of service, disability and war widow's pensions. The RSL was also responsible for the introduction of various employment and retraining programs and for many years operated its own employment bureau, child health program and vocational guidance service.

In effect, the RSL was the first national welfare agency in Australia and continues to maintain veterans' welfare as its prime function. The League in Tasmania provides a network of welfare and pensions officers to assist veterans and war widows with a range of support services including assistance with DVA and MRCA pensions. At a Federal level the RSL is represented on the Conditions of Service Committee and the National Defence Committee, amongst others. Through its involvement in such committees, the RSL is able to advocate for serving members of the Australian Defence Force and has achieved significant results on their behalf.

Originally known as the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia, or RSSILA, the League changed its name to the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) in 1990.