



Lithgow WWI Commemorative Plaque Project Inc.

(Inc No. 1601171)

Please address all correspondence to the Hon. *Secretary*, Ian Burrett JP
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22 March 2017

To All Lithgow City Councillors,

HONOURING OUR RETURNED WAR HEROES

Thank you for your interest and your time spent on looking at the **facts** pertaining to this very worthwhile Project.

Please find attached a copy of the chat delivered at tonight's meeting. It's a good overall summary of the situation. This, plus the submission handed to you at the 27 February 2017 Ordinary Meeting of Council, covers most of the points we would like to raise. However, there are a few remaining points we would like to emphasize.

Matthew Johnson's Report on Item 15 of the 27 Feb 2017 Ordinary Meeting of Council. (Copy attached)

We have previously stated that we believe that Mr. Johnson has been unduly influenced by the Lithgow City RSL Sub-Branch. In his report he stated *'that Council cannot be directly involved in the project due to the lengthy and complex processes involved and authenticating people who served and returned from WWI.'* In this respect:

1. The Sub-Branch convinced him of the need to apply their **completely unnecessary** criteria of having to prove a person spent a majority of their life in Lithgow. The flexible criteria we wish to apply means that the task is a lot less complex and time consuming.
2. We have **never** asked Council to become involved in the actual research apart from asking Library staff what records may exist to assist us and how to access them. Our request was that Council show their support for the Project by appointing a Councillor or a member of Council staff to be on our committee. This would enable this representative to report to Council on the Project's progress thus eliminating lengthy correspondence between Council and our committee.
3. Council **will** need to become involved with the design and construction of the plaques and the base upon which to place them **after** the necessary research is complete. We need the numbers involved before such planning can commence.

Using Sub-Branch Criteria Will Create Future Problems

We have previously pointed out that less than 100 of the 700 plus people who rightly deserved to be named on a local memorial would miss out if the unrealistic Sub-Branch criteria was applied.

A major problem in using Sub-Branch criteria is that it will be constantly discovered that someone missed out meaning that the memorial will need

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As at 1.9.16

Thankyou.

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*Honouring Men & Women from the Lithgow Township
Who Served Overseas in World War One 1914 - 1918*

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to be regularly corrected. This has **already** happened with the memorial unveiled on 11 November 2015 naming 51 people who were killed during WWII. Applying the need for authenticity that applies to grave head stones etc. meant that many of the people who **should** have been shown on the WWII memorial missed out.

By adopting their criteria the Sub-Branch (and therefore Lithgow City Council) has made a rod for their own back because constant updating would be necessary.

The Sub-Branch is NOT the authoritative source when determining names to go a local memorial. ANNEX 'A' elaborates on why we make this statement. Another purpose of this ANNEX 'A' is to give further evidence that Mr Johnson's decision making in relation to this Project (on behalf of Council) is wrong.

Some Other Aspects

The decision of Council to grant us financial assistance was made by a committee who correctly determined that our Project has benefits for Lithgow. When discussing the fact that Council had granted us \$1,000 to assist with research a member of the Sub-Branch advised me that he had been informed by Council that this is the last of the money we will receive from Council. This statement could only have come from Mr Johnson.

Council, our committee and other community groups should not act independently on this matter. We should be united as one in correcting the wrong of our WWI (and WWII?) returned service people not being duly named and honoured on our local memorial. In this respect I'm delighted that Col Hunter has recently been elected President of our Project committee and Sue Graves has been elected as Vice President. Norm Richardson remains as Treasurer and I remain as Secretary and Public Officer.

Norm is also the President of the Portland RSL Sub-Branch where I'm the Treasurer. You may have noted that our Sub-Branch supports the Project by becoming one of our sponsors.

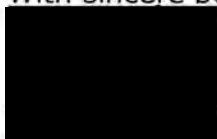
Conclusion

Thanks again for taking the time to consider this matter. We understand that you have many matters to consider and sincerely wish that we had not had to go into so much detail. If Mr Johnson had done his homework and listened to reason 18 months ago much of this volume of paperwork would not have been necessary.

Council, NOT the Sub-Branch is THE authoritative source in determining the names to go on local memorials.

Once again we ask you to act it in the best interests of Lithgow and its residents.

With sincere best wishes,



Hon. Secretary

Thank you for allowing me, on behalf of our committee, to have a chat with you tonight.

I've been informed you can only devote about 15 minutes to this topic. In order to make the most of this time I intend to speak for about 5 minutes leaving 10 minutes for questions and answers.

I want to reinforce what we're all about. Timothy J. Cook wrote a book which was the history of the 55th Battalion in World War One. In his introduction he stated *'By the time the 'war to end all wars' was over, every man had paid a price for belonging to the battalion. Some 531 had died and thousands had been wounded. Many of the survivors, tormented by physical and mental wounds, would argue that the living, and not the dead, were the ones who made the ultimate sacrifice.'*

The Lithgow Cenotaph names 131 who were killed in World War One and only 3 who returned. Our initial research indicates that at least 700 Lithgow township people survived and deserve to have their names honoured on a Lithgow memorial. If this was done many more Lithgowites would be able to personally associate with the memorial. Such a memorial would have many civic pride and heritage benefits and would help to keep the 'Spirit of Anzac' alive in Lithgow for centuries to come.

Maree Statham showed a lot of interest when I first mentioned the project to her over two years ago. She referred me to Matthew Johnson. After I met Andrew Muir last November he referred the matter to Matthew Johnson.

It was natural for Matthew to contact the Lithgow City RSL Sub-Branch. His attitude since then has been that Council cannot become involved in the Project without Sub-Branch support. He appears to have taken no notice of the arguments we have put to him.

No guidelines or criteria in respect to memorials for returned service people have been issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs or RSL Australia. The criteria the Sub-Branch would like to use has been invented by them. They are incorrectly influenced by the strict criteria used by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in respect to war DEAD.

The ONLY criteria that will help to ensure that a majority of the returned service people who should be honoured are named is to prove that a person was born, lived and/or worked in Lithgow irrespective as to how long they lived and worked here.

The criteria the Sub-Branch insists upon is that it must be proven that a person spent a MAJORITY of their life in Lithgow. Records simply do not exist to be able to meet this criteria. No more than 100 of the 700 plus who deserve to be honoured would meet this criteria.

In respect to naming people irrespective as to how long they lived in Lithgow I wish to make the following point. Imagine if a Lithgow football team was wiped out in a plane crash and it was decided to erect a memorial in their honour. Would the names of the coach and a few players be omitted because they only moved to Lithgow at the start of the season?

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People who were living and working in Lithgow at the time of their enlistment were part of the Lithgow World War One team.

We have never asked that Council become involved in the actual research. As this is a community project it is essential that Council show their support by appointing a Councillor or staff member to our committee.

Council, NOT the RSL Sub-Branch, is THE authoritative source when it comes to naming people on a local memorial.

You basically have two choices. You can listen to a few misinformed members of the Sub-Branch and forget about our returned heroes or you can apply common sense and support this Project for the benefit of Lithgow and its residents.

If you do decide to support the project please arrange for the following motions to be moved and passed at an Ordinary Meeting of Council:

- 1. That Council appoint a Councillor or a member of Council staff to the Lithgow WWI Commemorative Plaque Project Inc. committee.**
- 2. That Council support the Lithgow WWI Commemorative Plaque Project with or without the support of the Lithgow City RSL Sub-Branch.**

If the above motions are not passed it is pointless for the Project to continue and conduct the hundreds of hours of research still required. We would like you to regard our committee as being a duly appointed Council sub-committee.

After the question and answer session I will hand out a letter which elaborates on the points made during this talk.

**ITEM-15 CORP - 27/02/17 - REQUEST FOR COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT WITH
WW1 PROJECT**

REPORT BY: M JOHNSON - MANAGER COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

SUMMARY

This report advises Council of correspondence received from Mr Ian Burrett, Secretary of the Lithgow WW1 Commemorative Plaque Project Committee, requesting Council involvement in a project to identify people from the greater Lithgow area who served and returned from WW1, and to include their names on the Lithgow war memorial.

COMMENTARY

Mr Burrett, Secretary of the Lithgow WW1 Commemorative Plaque Project Committee wrote to Council in September 2015 advising that while the Cenotaph in Queen Elizabeth Park lists the names of 131 people who were killed during WW1, his committee considers that all those who served should also be listed on a commemorative plaque to recognise their service to this country.

His initial research identifies over 700 Lithgow people who served and returned from WW1. To further assist the Project Committee, Mr Burrett has requested that Council become more involved in the commemorative plaque project by appointing a Councillor, or member of staff, to the Project Committee.

Subsequently, Council staff replied to Mr Burrett's request advising that Council cannot be directly involved in the project due to the lengthy and complex processes involved in identifying and authenticating people who have served and returned from WW1. Council did however approve \$1,000 financial assistance in 2016/17 to assist the Project Committee with its research and other expenses related to the project.

Councillors may recall that the WW11 memorial plaque in the Queen Elizabeth Park cenotaph was installed in 2014/15 following lengthy research by Mrs Janice Marshall and Mrs Lorraine Ryan. The WW11 plaque lists the names of approximately 50 people who died, not of those who served and returned home. The research involved at that time proved to be very time consuming and difficult as official war graves records do not necessarily include the names of all people with a connection to Lithgow who died or served. A considerable amount of local research was therefore required using local records.

The task is therefore likely to be much greater for a WW1 memorial plaque which includes many hundreds of names of those who served. Mr Burrett has discussed his proposal with the Lithgow RSL Sub Branch which does not support it. This is highly significant as the RSL sub branch is the body that Council would see as representing returned servicemen and women and it would be difficult to add Council's support in the absence of the RSL sub branches support. There are currently commemorative plaques in the Lithgow cenotaph commemorating those who died in WW1 and WW11, those who served in the Vietnam war and those missing in action from the Korean war.

In addition to the \$1,000 financial assistance already provided to Mr Burrett's committee, some research assistance can be provided as required by Council's Local Studies Librarian however it is recommended that Council decline Mr Burrett's request for Council involvement in his WW1 research project.

Mr Burrett has submitted a second request in November 2016 that Council be involved in the commemorative plaque project, and has asked this matter be considered at a meeting of Council. Mr Burrett would like to speak at a Council meeting in support of his request.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. Correspondence from Mr Burrett including Council's response to Mr Burrett's initial request and correspondence from Lithgow RSL Sub-Branch

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council decline Mr Burrett's request for Council involvement in his WW1 research project.

ANNEX 'A'

WHY THE RSL SUB-BRANCH IS NOT THE AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE WHEN DETERMINING NAMES TO GO ON A LOCAL MEMORIAL

It **is** natural that Matthews Johnson and others would think that the local RSL Sub-Branch should be the authoritative source in respect to local memorials.

We would again like to emphasize that the Lithgow City Sub-Branch does a good job in respect to commemorative services and to providing support to returned service people and their families. However, their stance and advice in respect to local memorials is **wrong** and **not** in the best interests of the local community.

Why is this so? A major reason is that the policy making and directions of the RSL movement is terribly fragmented. Each State and Territory RSL body has established their own legislation. In the absence of direction from the national body each State and Territory does their own thing resulting in much disparity within the RSL movement.

Similarly, each State & Territory allows each Sub-Branch to determine how it conducts its own Sub-Branch. Guidelines as to how each Sub-Branch should direct their activities on certain matters, such as memorials, simply do not exist.

We can only say thank God that past, present and future Defence Forces did and do not suffer from such an absence of chain of command in decision making.

To emphasize this disparity please consider the following membership statistics contained in the 2015 National RSL report:

State	Service Members	Life, Hon Life/Life Subscribers	Affiliates	Total Members (Incl. Affiliates)	% of RSL	Women's Auxiliary Members
ACT	1,286	148	159	1,593	0.93%	nil
NSW	32,051	4,620	2,042	38,713	22.66%	2,335
QLD	15,880	19,048	0	34,928	20.44%	539
SA/NT	6,214	497	5,359	12,070	7.06%	207
TAS	2,539	91	1,487	4,117	2.41%	345
VIC	28,193	539	40,670	69,402	40.62%	1,208
WA	7,704	179	2,152	10,035	5.87%	n/a
TOTAL	93,867	25,122	51,869	170,858	100.00%	4,634

You will note that there is much disparity between the States & Territories in respect to the numbers of Life and Affiliate Members. This clearly points out that the National body gives complete control to the States & Territories as to how to attract members and the type of members they attract.

Affiliate Members are basically people who are a relative of a person (living or deceased) who is or was eligible to be a Service or Life Member of the RSL or people who are deemed by a Sub-Branch committee to have provided significant service to the Sub-Branch and support the objects of the RSL.

To the best of my knowledge the Lithgow Sub-Branch continues to remain an 'old boys' club and refuses to accept Affiliate Members. The Portland Sub-Branch accepts that their members are getting on in years and actively encourage Affiliate Members to enable the Sub-Branch to continue providing assistance and conduct commemorative services.

The A.D.S.O. - ALLIANCE OF DEFENCE SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

If you take the time to check out the ADSO web site I would be surprised if you do not also conclude that **the ADSO is doing much more than the RSL to assist current and former members of the Australian Defence Force.**

The ADSO was formally constituted in July 2010 to fight for a fair go for Australian Defence Personnel, Veterans & families. It was formed as a result of the constituent organisations desire to work in a more cooperative and coordinated manner. The Alliance comprises:

- The Defence Welfare Association (DFWA)
- Naval Association of Australia (NAA)
- RAAF Association (RAAFA)
- Royal Australian Regiment Corporation (RARC)
- Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA)
- Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA)
- The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Service Men and Women
- The Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia
- Partners of Veterans Association of Australia.
- Royal Australian Armoured Corps Corporation (RAAC)
- The National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association Australia (NMBVAA)
- The Defence Reserves Association (DRA)
- The Australian Gulf War Veterans Association
- Military Police Association Australia (MPAA)
- Australian Army Apprentices Association
- The Australian Commando Association
- The War Widows Guild.

The Alliance represents over three million members of Australia's Defence family on national advocacy and representative matters to the Australian Federal Parliament and political parties. Its objective is to provide a stronger voice on issues impacting the conditions and wellbeing of currently serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families to the Australian Government, Parliament and all Australians.

There would have been no need to establish the ADSO if the RSL was doing its job!

The problems I've encountered with the Lithgow City RSL Sub-Branch made me realise that there are hundreds of thousands of returned WWI & WWII service people who do not have their names rightly honoured on any Australian community memorial. I've mounted a national campaign in an attempt to correct this wrong.

I wrote to the ADSO requesting their support. Mr Alf Jaugietis, the Executive Director, replied *'I can see merit in what you are trying to achieve but a little perplexed as to why most everyone with who you corresponded seemed not inclined to support your initiative. I would have thought that the RSL at least would have been interested. I'll get back to you soonest as to what we think are possible options for ADSO to support you going forward.'*

The ADSO web site posted a blog from Kel Ryan who is a life member of the RSL in Queensland. He has also held elective office in a number of other ex-service organisations. He is currently completing a PhD on Pathways for the advocacy of the issues of the Australian Defence Community in the 21st century.

In his blog Kel Ryan states *'Once Australia's premier veterans' advocacy organisation **the RSL is in rapid if not terminal decline.** The RSL national leadership has failed the challenges of the 21st century as sub-branches close, local leadership ages and resists change. Young veterans shun the organisation. The RSL's problems are broader than NSW where the erstwhile National President Rod White and his former state board colleagues face serious misconduct allegations. The RSL is not a national organisation but rather a federation of state organisations established under separate (RSL) state legislation.'*

I certainly agree with the statements made by Mr Ryan. I understand the previous NSW President is accused of misappropriating about \$450,000 over a 6 year period.

The annual membership fee to be a member of the Sub-Branch is \$35. Of this a \$27 capitation fee is forwarded to RSL NSW who remit \$5 to RSL National.. The only way the Portland Sub-Branch survives is by selling items prior to Anzac and Remembrance Days.

The major focus of RSL NSW appears to center around raising funds. They also make a good profit out of the goods they supply us for Anzac and Remembrance Day appeals. In this respect our potential profits have been reduced by the RSL now allowing Post Offices and Woolworths to sell items prior to Anzac & Remembrance Days.

One cannot help but wonder how much of the money received by RSL NSW goes to fund welfare services after meeting their 'administrative' expenses?

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RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE



LITHGOW CITY SUB-BRANCH

4/04/2017

Dear Councilors,

The members of the Returned and Services League (R.S.L.), Lithgow City Sub-Branch, wish to present the Lithgow City Council our opinions of the proposal from Mr. Ian Burrett and the Lithgow World War One Commemorative Plaque project.

Mr. Burrett originally approached the Sub-Branch in January 2015 with the idea of producing a plaque with the names of those persons who enlisted in Lithgow during World War One and at the time we believed that his idea did have merit, however, over time we also saw a large number of problems involved within a project of this scope and magnitude, including some aspects of his proposal which our Sub-Branch will not support at any time.

Some of the problems we have identified are that:

- There were many people who enlisted during World War One using a false name, or, a false date of birth or both, therefore trying to find the correct details for these individuals (including the correct spelling of all of the names) would be an almost impossible task.
- Mr. Burrett has stated that he has approximately 700 names of people who enlisted within Lithgow and has conducted this research over the last 18 months to 2 years. With no disrespect intended, we find this problematic as the World War Two, Killed in Action plaque (installed at Queen Elizabeth Park and dedicated on 11th November 2015) took the two ladies who conducted the research, over 5 years to correctly identify just 53 locals who were Killed in Action during the Second World War, therefore we must challenge the accuracy of the research, especially since Mr. Burrett had originally told us that he wished to have the plaque completed by Nov 2018.
- We have advised Mr. Burrett that our Sub-Branch has a general criteria with regards to placing names on plaques or memorials to our Servicemen and women, and we believe that most Sub-Branches across the Nation would have similar: **A)** The person has to have been born in their respective district. **B)** The person has lived and worked within their local district for more than a specified period of time (we believe that 2 years is sufficient). This criteria is not as strict as some others which have been pointed out, such as the Wallerawang Ex-Servicemen's Memorial, where for an Ex-Service person's name to be placed on that memorial, you have to have been either born in Wallerawang or lived there for a minimum of 30 years.
- Mr. Burrett has stated that he also wishes to include people who had ***absolutely no association*** with the Lithgow District until after the First World War was over. All war Memorials that are erected across the Nation have the names of those from their respective

local area that were killed during the war and/or (such as Tarana for example) also included those who served and returned to their local area after their service. However, in our opinion placing people who had *no association* with Lithgow or the District until *after* the war should **never** happen, as it will diminish and degrade the memory of those locals who willingly enlisted and who may or may not have returned home. We believe that every R.S.L. Sub-Branch in the Country would not even contemplate sanctioning such an action for the same reasons.

- If, as Mr. Burrett contends that there are over 700 people to be listed, are there any surviving family members? We contend that if there are still family members of these people who enlisted in World War One, what would their wishes be? Would they be willing to have their ancestors name placed on a plaque? Even though there may or may not be something written down officially with regards to asking the next of kin, wouldn't asking the families of their wishes, be the honorable and decent thing to do instead of just going ahead and placing a name on a plaque, at which time the family may object? (*A case in point is my great Uncle, Austin Harry COX, killed in action in 1945. I was approached by one of the ladies conducting the research for the WW2 plaque, and was asked if my family would object to having his name included on the plaque to wit our answer was no*)

If some of the councilors feel that our contentions (especially with regards to where other Sub-Branches are mentioned) may not be sound, we would request that they contact some of the other R.S.L. Sub-Branches within the Country and make some enquiries, about their local criterion for plaques and memorials and as to their opinions as to their opinions about placing names on a memorial who had/have no connection to their area until after the war was all over..

We know that Mr. Burrett has a direct personal connection with World War One, and we respect that, however, apart from himself and possibly a few others, to most of the local citizens (especially those under 50) the closest connection to people who served during World War One would possibly be a Great Great Uncle or Great Great Grandfather.

Mr. Burrett has stated that one of his principal motivations for this plaque is to 'keep the ANZAC spirit alive'; however, we have to respond by saying that it is not the memorials which keep the ANZAC spirit alive, it is the people themselves who keep the spirit alive, by remembering on ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and other days of commemoration, the sacrifices that all members of the Army, Navy and Air Force have made in the defence and protection of our Nation, our way of life and the freedoms that we all enjoy today.

As members of the Returned and Services League it is our duty to never forget the sacrifices made by our Servicemen and women for our Nation during times of both conflict and peace and to honour and remember those who not only paid the supreme sacrifice, but also those who returned and suffered and continue to suffer because of their service, that is why the R.S.L. exists today! Our primary aim, in which all members of the R.S.L. must aspire to, is for the **providing for the well-being, care, compensation and commemoration of serving and ex-serving Defence Force Personnel and their dependents**, which is why the Lithgow Sub-Branch is open almost every day.

The points previously mentioned are just some of the problems that our Sub-Branch members have identified, there may be many more, which is why the members of the Lithgow City R.S.L. Sub-Branch are not willing to support this project, as we see that it is so fraught with unexpected problems, that we are not willing to accept the results of any unforeseen ramifications of this project.

If this project is approved as it currently stands, we respectfully request that it be made known that the Lithgow City R.S.L. Sub-Branch has nothing to do with this project and that it is solely the responsibility of the Lithgow World War One Commemorative Plaque project and Mr. Burrett.

If any of the Councilors wish to discuss anything with regards to our response, please do not hesitate to contact me at the Sub-Branch, our office is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10.00am and 2.00pm, and our telephone number is 6351 2498.

We wish to thank the Lithgow City Council for allowing us to make our position known and we hope that serious thought is given to our feelings with regards to this project.

Sincerely

Michael Cuthbert JP
Honorary Secretary
Lithgow City R.S.L. Sub-Branch

*The Price of Liberty Is Eternal Vigilance
Lest We Forget*