

**AN ADDRESS TO THE SOUTH ARM RSL SUB-BRANCH ON
THE OCCASION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS
FOUNDING BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, SUNDAY 25TH MARCH 2012.**

Thank you for inviting me to join you at this luncheon to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the South Arm RSL Sub Branch. At an anniversary it is of course appropriate to look back. And I was genuinely interested to read your particular history, because it seems you have undergone a number of name changes each of which is like a signpost showing how you have grown and flourished and, along the way, taken in the broader community in these parts.

So I understand that in the beginning, in 1952, there were just 16 dedicated ex-servicemen founding this Sub-Branch, one of whom is here today. I refer of course to your patron, Eddie Marlowe, who as Terry mentioned was a famed Rat of Tobruk, and is now a well-known landscape artist. Eddie was one of those intrepid Poles – then Eddie Oleszkiewicz – who found himself after the war not back at home in Poland but on the other side of the world, working for the HEC at Liawanee way back in 1947.

The modest number of founding members meant that you initially operated as the South Arm section of the Clarence Sub-Branch of the RSL. However, membership grew until you were able to become an official Sub Branch, and then in 1955 you became the

formally registered South Arm RSL Club, with a liquor licence, operating from the Calverton Hall. This was the time that members and local residents - all volunteers - worked together to raise funds for the Cenotaph, to remember those lost in the war. Construction began in 1955 and the Dedication Service was held in 1956.

Continued growth in membership and finances enabled land to be bought and your own club to be built, that was opened in October 1962. It must not be forgotten that the Women's Auxiliary - again all volunteers - worked hard and raised funds to help furnish that new clubhouse.

There was another name change in 1968, reflecting continuing growth, and you became the South Arm RSL & Servicemen's Club. And more was to come, as membership continued to grow, exceeding 400 by the year 1975, which in turn led to planning for new developments.

In the words of Maurice Potter, your longtime member, electronics whizz and history buff, and recipient of an RSL Certificate of Merit, "By 1989 the financial position was very sound, having paid off all loans from the past operations, with thanks also to the support of some very longstanding members, past presidents, secretaries and treasurers. From here it was proposed that the club might expand by way of sponsoring a golf club. Land was purchased from Mr. Don Calvert fronting the South Arm Main Road. The new clubhouse

would cater for the sub-branch of the RSL Club and golf club. Building went ahead and the last function in the old clubhouse was in a members' and guests' luncheon. The old clubhouse then closed and the present one opened on Wednesday 1st March 1995."i It was, if I may say, a really good way to connect with your broader community, and be members of both the RSL and the Community Club.

Another landmark was your decision to build of the Wall of Remembrance, to remember lives lost during World War Two and those passed away since returning home. I have no doubt many of you will have been at the Wall of Remembrance dedication event in March 1996, at which my predecessor the then Governor of Tasmania Sir Guy Green officiated.

And so we are here today to celebrate another milestone in your history. And what a dignified and proud history it is. The reach of the RSL is long. Its obligations are diverse but set a premium on caring for service personnel and their dependents whether they are members of the RSL or not. Those obligations include advising and assisting returned men and women with respect to their pension entitlements and other benefits, contributing to Operation Care, providing scholarships for children, providing support packages for those who are serving overseas, organising and taking part in commemorative services and events and so on. The list seems endless and like so many organisations in this country the RSL is

dependent on its volunteers to discharge those obligations. At the end of last year the Minister for social inclusion, Ms Tanya Plibersek said “more than six million Australians, or 36% of the adult population, formally volunteered last year, up from just 24% in 1995. She continued, “The volunteering sector contributes more than 700 million hours of unpaid work each year to the Australian community, valued at more than \$14 billion.”ⁱⁱ

Think of that. It’s a staggering sum of money; \$14 billion a year. The work that volunteers do simply would not get done if they insisted on being paid. No government or private organisation could afford it. But of course, as many surveys have shown us, volunteering is a two-way street. As the Minister said, “Volunteering connects us, strengthens our sense of belonging and creates positive relationships that build stronger local communities.”

The RSL, this Sub-branch and all the others Branches and Sub-Branched are dependent on volunteers, as you obviously are fully aware. But I agree with the Minister when she said that “Volunteering connects us, strengthens our sense of belonging and creates positive relationships that build stronger local communities.” And it seems to me that your history over the past sixty years of working with the communities of South Arm and environs demonstrates just that.

So, on this your 60th Birthday I congratulate the South Arm RSL Sub-Branch on its success; on the good work that you all do to help the less fortunate and those in need. Long may it continue.

And now I ask you all to charge your glasses and join me in a toast to Her Majesty the Queen of Australia – the Queen.

ⁱ Maurice Potter, “Information on the South Arm R.S.L. Sub-Branch”, notes attached to his email to David Owen dated 14 February 2012.

ⁱⁱ http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02_article/default.asp?nav_cat_id=208